

**THE CORPORATE EQUALITY POLICY AND ACTION PLAN
(Report by Head of Policy & Strategic Services)**

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek approval to a Corporate Equality Policy and associated Action Plan.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The Council recently underwent an (informal) external assessment of the Council's achievement against the Equality Standard for Local Government (Equality Standard). This is a standard against which the Council is judged (by the Audit Commission) in terms of meeting statutory equality and diversity responsibilities. The achievement against the Equality Standard is a statutory performance indicator.
- 2.2 A number of actions were identified which needed to be achieved if we were to attain Level 2 of the Equality Standard. The majority of these have been completed, one of the last things we need to do is to review and update our corporate equality policy (formerly Equality & Inclusion Strategy). The attached policy incorporates an action plan of issues to consolidate and develop further the council's achievement of the Equality Standard. This action plan is a dynamic document which will change as activities are achieved and new actions identified.
- 2.3 The Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Service Delivery) considered the draft policy at their meeting on 6th March 2007 and supported its adoption by the Cabinet. Minor changes to the policy have been made to reflect comments made by the Panel.

3 KEY FEATURES OF THE POLICY

- 3.1 The Policy is a statement on equalities and reflects the direction in which the Council is moving; including:
- Acknowledgement of and commitment to current equality duties and a commitment to improve equality practices (as they relate to disability, race and gender) at a directorate and service level;
 - Commitment to monitoring services including equality action planning and target setting;
 - Commitment to identify groups within communities whose needs are less well met.
 - To ensure that the policy is comprehensive and consistent we have included the action plans from both the Disability & Race Equality Schemes. These have already been adopted by the Council (December 06 & July 06 respectively).
- 3.2 The policy is supported by an action plan that sets out how we are going to consolidate achievement of Level 2 of the Equality Standard, most of the activities in the plan have been or are about to be completed. In due course it will be updated to reflect the activities that the Council will be undertaken to work towards Level 3 of the Standard. The action plan

will form the basis of monitoring performance in the achievement of the Council's equality objectives and achievement against the Standard.

4. TRAINING

- 4.1 A briefing/training session is being offered to Members on 29th March 07, this will provide an opportunity to find out about the Equality Standard for Local Government, Corporate Equality Policy and Action Plan and Equality Impact Assessments.

5. RECOMMENDATION

- 5.1 The Cabinet is invited to adopt the Corporate Equality Policy and note the current Action Plan.

Background Papers

The Equality Standard for Local Government

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