

CORPORATE EQUALITY POLICY – Progress
(Report by the Head of People, Performance and Partnerships)

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to inform the Cabinet of progress with the council's Corporate Equality Policy (CEP) Action Plan.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The CEP sets out the Council's aim and objectives for equality and the accompanying action plan sets out the corporate and directorate actions and targets. It is supported by three equality schemes (Race, Disability and Gender). The action plan combines activities which are compatible with the Council's achievement of Level 2 of the Equality Standard for Local Government (the Equality Standard) and the statutory requirements contained within the three equality schemes.

- 2.2 The CEP and action plan shows how the Council will translate its statutory responsibilities into objectives and actions and in particular takes account of:
- Equalities legislation relating to race, disability and gender
 - The achievement against the Equality Standard

- 2.3 In working towards achieving Level 3 of the Equality Standard, the Council is in a process of assessing the impact of all services in terms of the needs of service users. A three year timetable was adopted with those services with a more 'public facing' role placed in years 1 and 2. Equality Impact Assessments are a statutory requirement and they are the primary method by which the Council can assess whether it is providing equal access to services in terms race, disability and gender. Many of the equality impact assessments have also considered other issues such as sexuality, religious belief and age.

3. Equality Framework for Local Government

- 3.1 The Equality Framework for Local Government was introduced in April 2009 to replace the Equality Standard for Local government. The new Framework has fewer indicators and an emphasis on self assessment and peer challenge. It relates better to the performance framework for local government and uses a broader definition of equality.
- 3.2 The Framework will consist of 3 levels; 'Developing', 'Achieving' and 'Excellent' (the Equality Standard had 5); all councils at Level 3 of the Standard will automatically transfer over to the Achieving level within the new Framework.

- 3.3 The Council will be undergoing an external assessment for validation of achievement against Level 3 of the Equality Standard in July. If councils can achieve Level 3 before September 2009 they automatically transfer over to the Achieving level within the new Framework. If we can do this it will demonstrate considerable achievement made by the Council and it will reduce the burden of additional assessment in the future.

4. PROGRESS

- 4.1 The Corporate Equality Policy identified two outcomes and two measures that will tell us how successful we have been in terms of understanding the diverse needs of local people, that our services meet those needs and that they are provided in a fair and accessible way. These outcomes and measures are:

Outcome	Measure	2006/07	Target (2007/8)	Actual 2007/08	Target for 2008/09
That our services are provided in ways that meet diverse local needs	% of local people who believe that Council services meet their needs	* baseline not available	*75%	84%	85 %
That the Council is recognised for promoting equality and inclusion in communities	% of local people who believe that the Council promotes equality and inclusion in their community	64%	70%	83%	85%

- 4.2 Residents' perception of how well we are doing in this area are usually measured through an annual survey. However in 2008/09 the Council was required to carry out a Place Survey and it was decided not to carry out a separate survey on the grounds of additional cost and potential duplication.
- 4.3 There were two questions within the Place Survey, included in the table below. We need to consider how to measure progress in the future; we will amend the corporate equality policy to reflect any changes.

2008/09 Place Survey	Actual
To what extent do you agree or disagree that your local area is a place where people from different backgrounds get on well together	79.4% (77% in 06/07)
In the last year would you say that you have been treated with respect and consideration by your local public services	78.9%

- 4.4 The appended progress report covers:

- the achievement made against the actions and targets set in March 2008 (appendix 1)
- an action plan for 2009/10 (appendix 2)
- results from equality impact assessments conducted over the last 12 months (appendix 3)
- revised timetable for equality impact assessments during 2009/10 (appendix 4)

4.5 The Corporate Equality Policy Action Plan for 2008/09 contained 26 actions, of which

- 15 have been fully completed
- 11 are on-going

4.6 Twenty seven individual services were selected to undertake equality impact assessments (EIA's) during 2008/09. 17 services completed all of their EIA's; 4 services completed some of their EIA's and 6 services didn't complete any of their EIA's. Those not completed on time have been re-scheduled for completion during 2009/10. A list of outcomes/actions arising out of completed equality impact assessments is contained in Appendix 3. A revised timetable for equality impact assessments during 2009/10 is set out in Appendix 4.

4.7 The Corporate Equality Steering Group (comprising officers from all three directorates plus an employee representative) is responsible for overseeing progress with the equality standard and equality impact assessments. Actions that come out of equality impact assessments will be delivered through individual services however, the steering group takes an overview and co-ordinates activity to ensure there is no duplication of work.

4.8 An initial equality impact assessment establishes how the policy or service meets different needs and also examines whether there are any obvious barriers and if any improvements can be made. All of the assessments conducted over the last 12 months needed only an initial assessment; a full assessment is required if areas of concern are identified.

4.9 The Council has a statutory responsibility to report findings from progress made with the equality schemes, as set out in Appendix 1.

5. **RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

5.1 The Council has a revenue budget of £11.400 to meet the direct cost of the corporate equality policy – mainly training and assessment. In response to financial pressures this budget was reduced by 10% last year; otherwise costs involved are – the time taken to review and make changes to services/policies in response to assessment of residents needs. This also helps to achieve our statutory responsibilities. The assessments undertaken have not resulted in any significant expenditure and the Council is making a proportionate but effective response to statutory and business requirements.

6. **RECOMMENDATIONS**

6.1 Cabinet is asked:

- to note progress made with the corporate equality policy action plan (Appendix 1)
- endorse the new corporate equality action plan (Appendix 2)
- to note the findings from equality impact assessments conducted during 2007/08 (Appendix 3)
- endorse the revised equality impact assessment timetable set out in Appendix 4.

Background Papers

Corporate Equality Policy

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