

**OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY PANEL
(SOCIAL WELL-BEING)**

7TH SEPTEMBER 2010

EMPLOYMENT PANEL

15TH SEPTEMBER 2010

CABINET

17TH SEPTEMBER 2010

**SINGLE EQUALITY SCHEME
(Report by the Head of People, Performance and Partnerships)**

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide an update on progress with the achievement of the Council's Corporate Equality Policy (CEP) Action Plan and to seek endorsement of a new Single Equality Scheme, containing a number of existing policies and schemes.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The CEP and action plan shows how the Council will meet its statutory responsibilities, in particular how we take account of:

- legislation relating to race, disability and gender equality; and
- achievement against the Equality Framework for Local Government.

Furthermore, it translates the Council's aim and objectives for equality and diversity into corporate and Directorate actions and targets and is compatible with the "achieving" level of the Equality Framework for Local Government.

- 2.2 The Council has concluded a three year timetable to meet the statutory requirement to assess (Equality Impact Assessments). It is intended to continue to have an EIA programme which will be less intrusive and to monitor progress through the Council's performance management framework.

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 levels); all councils at Level 3 of the Standard will automatically transfer over to the Achieving level within the new Framework.
- 3.3 The Council underwent a successful external assessment for validation of achievement against Level 3 of the Equality Standard in July 2009; and we automatically became Achieving Council within the new Framework. This was a considerable achievement by the Council. Some areas of development were identified during this

assessment; these have been included in the action plan. A Peer Assessment against the Achieving criteria will be required in 2012. Rather than creating any new work to prepare for this external assessment we intend to adapt what we already do to provide the evidence to show how we are meeting the Achieving criteria.

4. The purpose of a Single Equality Scheme

4.1 The Equality Act 2010 established a duty on public bodies to tackle discrimination, promote equality of opportunity and encourage good community relations. The new duty covers race, disability, gender, age, sexual orientation, gender reassignment and religion or belief, replacing the three existing, separate duties with a single framework. This will bring together the existing public sector equality duties of tackling discrimination and promoting equality for race, gender and disability so that the requirements do not vary between groups. This new Single Equality Scheme brings together all the equality strands within one document and streamlines our work in this area and also ensures that we meet our statutory requirements

4.2 Having a single equalities action plan will allow for and ensure robust monitoring. It provides a framework to help us to improve our services and also ensure we take a proportional response.

5. PROGRESS

5.1 The Corporate Equality Policy identified two outcomes and two measures that told 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. Residents' perceptions of how well we are doing in this area have been measured through a variety of surveys and are set out below -

	2008/09	2009/10
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%	82.1%
In the last year would you say that you have been treated with respect and consideration by your local public services	78.9%	72.7%

5.2 The Corporate Equality Policy Action Plan for 2009/10 contained 18 actions, of which

- 12 have been fully completed
- 6 are on-going.

5.3 Seventeen individual services carried out EIA's during 2009/10, this equated to 35 different EIA's; 21EIA's were completed. Those not completed on time have been re-scheduled for completion during 2010/11. A list of outcomes/actions arising out of completed EIA's is in Appendix G; no significant actions were identified.

5.4 The Council has a statutory responsibility to report findings from progress made with the equality schemes, this is set out in Appendix F along with other related achievements.

5.5 Supporting appendices are available and they include:

- About Huntingdonshire
- Responsibility, monitoring and review of the Single Equality Scheme
- Links with other strategies and policies
- Outline of the law relating to equality
- Progress with equality 2007-2010
- How we involved people in developing the Scheme

6. **RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS**

6.1 The Council has a revenue budget of £12,000 to meet the direct cost of achieving objectives, the majority of which is used for employee and Member training. Other costs include the time taken to review and make changes to services/policies in response to assessment of residents needs and completing activities set out in the Action Plan. 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.

7. **RECOMMENDATIONS**

7.1 Cabinet is asked:

- endorse the new Single Equality Scheme and action plan; and
- to note progress and the findings from Equality Impact Assessments conducted during 2009/10 (Appendix G)

Background Papers

Single Equality Scheme

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