



Report to:	Council
Date of Meeting:	25 January 2007
Report from:	Assistant Chief Executive
Title of Report:	Review of Corporate Equality Plan
Agenda Item Number:	8

1. PURPOSE AND SUMMARY

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek Council's approval and adoption of the attached revised Corporate Equality Plan 2007.
- 1.2 The attached draft revised Corporate Equality Plan 2007 (Appendix 1) incorporates the council's new Equality Scheme, which was approved by Council in November 2006.

2. CONSULTATION

- 2.1 For the existing Corporate Equality Plan (2006), consultation was undertaken:
 - Internally with the Executive, Overview and Scrutiny Board, Chief Officers, Service Team Managers, trade union representatives, and members of the Equality and Diversity Working Group were consulted on this draft plan
 - Externally, other local authorities, partner organisations, voluntary sector organisations, residents associations, tenants' panel, minority community groups and their representatives were consulted by letter. A number of those consulted were also invited to attend a launch event, held at the Riverside on 8th December 2005.
- 2.2 For the purpose of this annual review, a significant amount of consultation, both internal and external to the Authority, was undertaken for the revised Equality Scheme. As the changes to the remainder of the Corporate Equality Plan are fairly minimal (see section 5 below), consultation was limited. Managers, employees, TU representatives, external members of the Equality and Diversity Working Group, and members of the Learning District Partnership Equality and Diversity in Learning Working Group, were consulted.
- 2.3 The following amendments were made to the consultation draft:

- Typographical errors
- Action to develop over-arching corporate harassment policy (re community / service users) incorporated at Appendix A 2.1.5
- Page 12, para 6.4. Extended to include note on employee competency.
- Page 32, para 20.9. Amended to detail new approach to equalities based customer care training. Appendix A (page 79) also amended to reflect this change.
- Para 18.2 extended to include Podcasts and DVDs as a way of publishing data or consulting stakeholders

3. CORPORATE PLAN AND PRIORITIES

- 3.1 The production and implementation of a Corporate Equality Plan was a clear priority within the Improvement & Recovery Plan – Phase 1, under the People and Performance theme. The second phase Improvement and Recovery Plan (IRP2) identifies the mainstreaming of equality and diversity across the organisation as a headline objective. The implementation of this revised Corporate Equality Plan will ensure that this objective is achieved.
- 3.2 There are no direct policy implications arising from this report. It is inevitable however that the implementation of the revised Corporate Equality Plan itself will have profound policy implications for the Council.
- 3.3 An Annual Report on progress on the Corporate Equality Plan implementation was included in the Corporate Plan 2006-2009.

4. IMPLICATIONS

4.1 Financial

Much of the actions contained within this plan will need to be delivered from existing service team budgets. However, there are some 'corporate' actions for which no budget currently exists. This is being considered as part of overall budget setting currently in process.

4.2 Legal

Legislative requirements are detailed within the plan.

4.3 Personnel

The Council has a duty to ensure fair and equitable employment practice. There are a significant number of actions contained within the plan that are designed to ensure that all policies, procedures and practices are fair and equitable.

4.4 Other Services

The Corporate Equality Plan will have major implications across the organisation and will impact on every service.

4.5 Diversity

The purpose of the Corporate Equality Plan is to ensure equality of service and to recognise and celebrate diversity. It will also ensure that the organisation meets its statutory and legal obligations.

The Council has already made a significant commitment to equality and diversity through its Improvement and Recovery Plan (IRP1), in particular providing relevant training for all employees and for Councillors. IRP2, which was approved by Council in December 2005, includes actions to ensure that equality and diversity is mainstreamed into all activities of the Council. This revised Corporate Equality Plan 2007 underpins that objective, particularly by the implementation of its action plans, which have been updated.

4.6 Risk

The IRP 2 project on equality and diversity will be monitored and risk managed through the Programme Management Board. The Corporate Equality Plan itself will be monitored and risk managed through the Equality and Diversity Working Group.

4.7 Crime and Disorder

There are no specific implications of the report on Crime and Disorder.

4.8 Other implications

The full plan will be made available on the Council's website, which provides read-speak facilities as well as the opportunity to see the document in different languages. Paper copies of the full plan will be distributed to libraries and made available in the reception area of the Civic Centre. Again, hard copies in various formats, or audio tape, will be made available on request.

5 **BACKGROUND, STATEMENT AND OPTION APPRAISAL**

- 5.1 The original Corporate Equality Plan was approved by Council in January 2006. It incorporated a (revised) Race Equality Scheme and comprehensive Equality Policy. As a result of its implementation, the council were able to declare the achievement of Level 2 of the Equality Standard for Local Government in March 2006, a year ahead of schedule.

- 5.2 The main revisions to the Plan are:
- References to the Race Equality Scheme have changed to simply Equality Scheme
 - The new Equality Scheme, approved by Council in November 2006, is incorporated within the Plan
 - References to legislation have been updated with new requirements
 - Changes to the Equality Policy, Sections 27 and 38, and in particular Section 28 which has been significantly strengthened with employment policy. This has made having a separate Equal Opportunities Policy unnecessary
 - The action plan, at Appendix A, has been updated with progress to date including some changes to date in line with monitoring by EDWG, and new actions added as a result of the new Equality Scheme
 - Appendix K added (Equalities Monitoring Protocol)

- 5.3 The Council ought to adopt and implement the attached revised Corporate Equality Plan for the following reasons:
- to ensure that the services we provide are fully accessible and meet the needs of all diverse sections of our communities;
 - to provide a framework and action plan by which performance can be monitored and measured;
 - to meet all legislative and statutory requirements

This report puts forward proposals for the adoption of such a document. An options appraisal is not appropriate in this case. The following paragraphs provide a synopsis of the proposed plan. The plan is fully set out in Appendix 1.

Corporate equality plan

- 5.2 The aims of the Plan are to:
- Bring together all the legislative requirements, policies and strategies which are relevant to all forms of equality and form these into a coherent and cohesive plan to implement equality corporately and throughout all services
 - Become the focus for promoting equality issues across the Council to ensure an equality perspective is integrated into all aspects of our policies, strategies, procedures and practices
 - Incorporate the Corporate Equality Plan requirements into the corporate and service planning processes
 - Increase confidence in our public services across the diverse groups of our District by strengthening the effectiveness of our consultation methods
 - Develop robust arrangements for monitoring policies and service delivery for adverse impact on different groups
- 5.3 The Equality Standard for Local Government (ESLG) has been used as the framework for the plan, thereby ensuring that we not only meet its requirements but are able to demonstrate this clearly. Roles and responsibilities for the continuing management of equality and diversity within the organisation are

defined. An updated three-year action plan as to how we will achieve the aims above, including deadlines, objectives and targets, is provided in Appendix A of the draft plan.

Equality scheme

- 5.4 Under the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000, and the Disability Discrimination Act (Amended) 2005, local authorities have general duties to:
- Eliminate unlawful discrimination
 - Promote equality of opportunity
 - Promote good relations between people from different backgrounds

These Acts also have a number of specific duties, one of which is the production of a Race Equality Scheme and a Disability Equality Scheme.

- 5.5 In November 2006 Council approved a revised Equality Scheme, which not only addressed race and disability, but also the other four strands of equality – religion, age, sexual orientation and gender. This entire scheme has been incorporated into the attached revised Corporate Equality Plan.
- 5.6 The Council is also required to have in place a Gender Equality Scheme by April 2007. By taking this broader perspective, all that will be required is an action plan that will be developed over the next 3 months in consultation with the community and employees. The completed action plan will be submitted to Council for approval in March 2007.

Equality policy

- 5.7 The objectives of the equality policy are to:
- i) Detail all current statutory and non-statutory equalities duties and identify the Council's commitment to meet them.
 - ii) Establish clear lines of responsibility for the actions set out in the policy.
 - iii) Demonstrate the Council's commitment to systematic consultation and to sign post methods of so doing.
 - iv) Detail how equality practice will be improved at both corporate and service level.
 - v) Establish the resources required to improve equality practice.
 - vi) Detail how the Council will provide fair services to all sections of the community.
 - vii) State how the Council will identify and eliminate discrimination within services and employment practices.
 - viii) Signpost the methods by which groups within the community whose needs and/or requirements are less well met by Council services will be identified and such services improved.
 - ix) Identify how the community and workforce will be profiled.
 - x) State the methods by which access to services, service delivery and usage will be monitored using disaggregated data.

- xi) Detail how equality action planning and target setting will be undertaken by services.
- xii) Detail how fairness will be built into recruitment and employment practices and the equal pay policy.
- xiii) State how recruitment, promotion, training, pay, disciplinaries, grievances and exit from employment will be monitored.
- xiv) Demonstrate commitment to self assessment, audit and scrutiny using nationally and locally developed performance indicators.
- xv) Identify how the Council will engage in positive action.

The policy also sets out key responsibilities, and how we will ensure:

- Equality practices, by effective corporate and service planning and ensuring adequate resources are available
- Equality of service delivery
- Elimination of discrimination
- Proper consultation and involvement of the community and employees
- Accurate and regular monitoring of performance on equality objectives and targets
- Self-assessment, audit and scrutiny

6 MONITORING

- 6.1 This implementation of this plan will be monitored by the Equality and Diversity Working Group. Progress will be reported to Executive, as part of the quarterly performance management report.
- 6.2 In addition, Overview and Scrutiny Panels will scrutinise various aspects of the plan, in line with their respective work programmes.
- 6.3 The Corporate Equality Plan will be reviewed annually, however its is intended to be a 'living document', being regularly reviewed for continued appropriateness. Any significant changes will be submitted to Council for approval.

7 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 7.1 It is recommended that Council approves and adopts the attached draft revised Corporate Equality Plan 2007.

8 BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 8.1 IRP1, project P2: Project File
- 8.2 Equality Standard for Local Government
- 8.3 Equalities legislation, as detailed with the draft plan
- 8.4 Consultation responses

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13 January 2006

Version 1.0

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