



## **Chester-le-Street** District Council

**Report to:** Council

**Date of Meeting:** 31 January 2008

**Report from:** Director of Corporate Services

**Title of Report:** Review of Corporate Equality Plan

**Agenda Item Number:**

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### **1. PURPOSE AND SUMMARY**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to inform Members of progress on the implementation of, and to approve the continued implementation of the Corporate Equality Plan 2007.
- 1.2 It is not intended to undertake a comprehensive review of the CEP, which has a 3 year term, but to reflect on what has been achieved and what is still outstanding. This will determine how the CEP will contribute to the new priority based on community engagement set by Council in December, and will help the authority to meet the challenges of local government reorganisation.
- 1.3 The attached Corporate Equality Plan 2007 (CEP) monitoring form (Appendix 1) details progress against the actions contained within the CEP and Equality Scheme, up to December 2007. (This monitoring form will need to be updated with revised Equality Standard for Local Government (ESLG) references).
- 1.4 During 2007, the Equality Standard for Local Government was revised, and a self-assessment based comparison of the two standards (Levels 2 & 3 only) is given in Appendix 2.

### **2. CONSULTATION**

- 2.1 Extensive consultation was undertaken in the development of the existing and previous CEP, both internally and externally to the authority.

### **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) identified the mainstreaming of equality and diversity across the organisation as a headline objective. The continued implementation of this 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 continued implementation of the Corporate Equality Plan 2007 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 2007-2010, and is published on the council's website.

### **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, and particularly in the light of the requirements of the council's new priority – People and Place.

#### **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 continues to meet its statutory and legal obligations.

#### 4.6 Risk

The Corporate Equality Plan 2007 will continue to 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 Corporate Equality Plan is available on the Council's website, which provides read-speak facilities as well as the opportunity to see the document in different languages. 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 revised Corporate Equality Plan 2007, approved by Council in January 2007, incorporated a single Equality Scheme and updates on legislative requirements. Some policy areas, especially in terms of employment, were strengthened.

5.3 In April 2007, Council approved a new Gender Equality Scheme, which was subsequently incorporated into the single, 6-strand Equality Scheme.

5.4 The Council ought to continue to implement Corporate Equality Plan 2007 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
- to meet new council priorities
- to revoke the need for a comprehensive review of the plan, in the light of local government re-organisation and the limited life span of the authority.

5.5 This report includes details of progress made to date on the implementation of the CEP, as set out in the attached CEP monitoring form (Appendix 1). It should

be noted that the ESLG compliance references will need to be changed in future to those of the revised ESLG.

- 5.6 During 2007, the Equality Standard for Local Government, the framework on which the CEP was based, was revised. A self-assessment based comparative study of requirements for Levels 2 and 3 was undertaken to ensure that the CEP action plans meet the new requirements, and is attached as Appendix 2. This also shows what evidence is available to show how we meet the standard.
- 5.7 An options appraisal is not appropriate in this case.

## **6 MONITORING**

- 6.1 This implementation of this plan will continue to be monitored by the Equality and Diversity Working Group. Progress will be reported to Executive, as part of the quarterly performance management report.

## **7 RECOMMENDATIONS**

It is recommended that Council:

- 7.1 Approves the continued implementation of the Corporate Equality Plan 2007.
- 7.2 Considers and accepts the attached information in Appendices 1 and 2.

## **8 BACKGROUND PAPERS**

- 8.1 Corporate Equality Plan 2007
- 8.2 Equality Standard for Local Government, and revised version 2007
- 8.3 Equalities legislation, as detailed with the draft plan

**Ian Forster**  
**Assistant Chief Executive**  
**22 January 2008**  
**Version 1.0**  
**Ian Forster Tel 0191 3872130 e-mail [Ian Forster@chester-le-street.gov.uk](mailto:Ian.Forster@chester-le-street.gov.uk)**