

COMPREHENSIVE EQUALITY POLICY AND EQUALITY SCHEMES

PORTFOLIO RESPONSIBILITY: CORPORATE AND CUSTOMER SERVICES AND HUMAN RESOURCES

CABINET

20TH SEPTEMBER, 2007

Wards Affected

County-wide.

Purpose

To advise the Cabinet on progress regarding the Council's commitment to and delivery of the Council's statutory obligations to the Diversity agenda.

Key Decision

This is not a Key Decision.

Recommendation

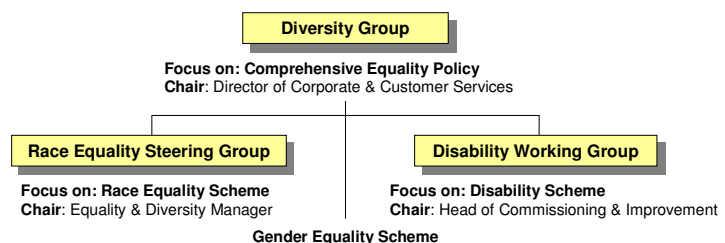
THAT progress of the Comprehensive Equality Policy and associated equality schemes be noted.

Reasons

The changing and diverse nature of the community of Herefordshire should be recognised and acknowledged, along with the challenges this brings. The Comprehensive Equality Policy (CEP) is the umbrella document that sets out the Council's commitment to achieving excellence and meeting its statutory responsibilities to promote and implement equality when it is:

- Providing services
- Purchasing services
- Employing staff
- Working in partnership with other organisations

The CEP provides the focus to ensure that the Council meets the criteria needed to reach Level 3 of the Equality Standard by March 2008. The CEP is underpinned by the Race Equality Scheme (RES) Disability Equality Scheme (DES) and the Gender Equality Scheme (GES). It should be noted that the RES the DES and the GES are incorporated within the CEP, and therefore their action plans sit as appendices to it.



Further information on the subject of this report is available from
Carol Trachonitis, Equality & Diversity Manager, on 01432 260616

Considerations

1. Community/Social Cohesion

Community cohesion was not included in our original CEP. However the local government white paper “strong and prosperous communities”, published in October 2006, aims to give local people and local communities more influence and power to improve their lives. The vision is to revitalise local authorities working with their partners to reshape public services around the citizens and communities that use them. This means changing the way we work – to enable Herefordshire council and local partners to respond more flexibly to local needs. It was agreed through the Diversity Group that we would not have a separate community/social cohesion strategy and that this should be incorporated within the CEP.

2. Tension Monitoring (not previously included in CEP)

Within all communities there is the potential for an element of competition and for tensions to arise, which may lead to conflict. The nature of tensions, conflicts and divisions will differ from one area to another, and between one group and another. For example there may be tensions and mistrust between different ethnic or faith groups, urban and rural dwellers, new arrivals and long-term residents, or along inter-generational lines. Councils need to be able to track and monitor local trends and ‘hot spots’, alongside any national or international events/incidents which may threaten cohesion, and agree and implement actions to manage tensions on the basis that early intervention can make a real difference in preventing incidents of public disorder.

3. The CEP action plan sets out how we will monitor, track and put in place an intervention initiative where any potential “hot-spots” may threaten social cohesion. The delivery of any intervention will be through a partnership approach. Herefordshire has a well established equality partnership (the Herefordshire Equality Partnership was formed in 2001, then known as the Herefordshire Race Equality Partnership). Through this mechanism we will agree and implement actions, manage tensions and intervene at the earliest opportunity to prevent incidents that could escalate into public disorder.

4. Equality schemes – headline achievements to date:

a. Comprehensive Equality Policy

- Achieved Level 2 of the Equality Standard for Local Government in March 2007.
- Completed 150 EIAs between 2004-2007. A new programme of EIAs for 2007/09 agreed and on track.
- Review and incorporated equality content in strategic documents/policies/Community Strategy.

b. Race Equality Scheme (RES)

- Race equality awareness sessions delivered for staff, councillors and community groups and incorporated in central induction process for all new starters.
- Production of the “Me We” film evidencing the impact of racism on Herefordshire and its people.
- Ensure that race equality issues are highlighted in directorate and service planning through the EIA process.

c. Disability Equality Scheme (DES)

- Automatic doors to the rear of the Butter Market - now on plan of works for May 2008 as a direct result of public consultation.

- Guidance document produced for managers and staff on issues of disability.
- Mailing list of local disability organisations formalised.

d. Gender Equality Scheme (GES)

- Gender equality incorporated into central induction and EIA process.
- Equal pay review as part of the Pay & Workforce Development Strategy completed July 2007.
- Work with the Rainbow Forum to progress and raise awareness of challenges for Trans people in Herefordshire.

5. The CEP action plan will be brought to Cabinet every six months to report on progress.

Financial Implications

Withdrawal of resources would mean that we would be unable to implement the Action Plans associated with the Council's equality schemes and reduce our effectiveness and influence in partnership working/responsibilities.

Risk Management

It is a legal requirement to have the equality schemes in place.

If we do not continue to drive the equality and diversity agenda, act on the findings of Equality Impact Assessments, and demonstrate actions taken, we are unlikely to fulfil the criteria required for Level 3 of the Equality Standard, and may fail in our statutory duties.

Alternative Options

There are no Alternative Options.

Consultees

All diversity groups.

Appendices

Appendix 1. Comprehensive Equality Policy
 2. Comprehensive Equality Policy Action Plan

Background Papers

- Race Equality Scheme 2005/08
- Disability Equality Scheme 2006/09
- Gender Equality Scheme 2007/10