

Report to: Governance Select Committee

Date of meeting: 7 July 2015



Portfolio: Governance and Development Management (Councillor J. Philip)

Subject: Equality Objectives 2012-2016 – Quarter 4 Progress 2014/15

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Recommendations/Decisions Required:

- (a) That the Select Committee review progress against the Council's Equality Objectives (2012-2016) up until March 2015, and other work to meet its statutory equality duties;
- (b) that the Select Committee note the ongoing development of the equality objectives for 2016-2020.

Executive Summary:

The Equality Act 2010 placed a number of responsibilities on the Council, including a Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) to have due regard to equality in the exercise of its functions, to the need to eliminate discrimination, to advance equality of opportunity, and to foster good relations between persons who share a relevant characteristic and those who do not. Further specific responsibilities were introduced requiring the adoption of equality objectives to improve equality for service users and employees, to carry out equality analysis, and to publish equality information.

In March 2012, the Cabinet agreed four equality objectives for the four years from 2012 to 2016, designed to help the Council meet the aims of the PSED. This report reflects progress against these objectives as at the end of the third year (2014/15).

The current set of equality objectives comes to the end of its lifetime in March 2016 and work is underway to identify a new set of objectives for 2016-2020.

Reasons for Proposed Decision:

In view of the corporate importance of the achievement of these objectives, and ensuring compliance with the PSED, progress is reported to the Select Committee on a six monthly basis.

Other Options for Action:

None. Failure to monitor and review progress against the Equality Objectives and to take corrective action where necessary, could have negative implications for judgements made about the Council, and might mean that opportunities for improvement are lost.

Report:

Equality Objectives

1. The Equality Act 2010 places an obligation on the Council to produce equality objectives focused towards those areas which can make a real difference to the communities of the district, and can best enable the Council to make improvements to service design and delivery. In April 2012 the Council adopted four equality objectives for the four years until March 2016 to advance equality for service users and employees.

2. The objectives are supported by an Action Plan with actions designed to secure the achievement of each of the objectives, spread across the four year time span. Many of the actions can only be achieved incrementally or are dependent upon other actions. The Action Plan is intended to be fluid to reflect changes in service delivery and the development of the work to achieve greater fairness, and is therefore subject to amendment and addition.

3. A schedule detailing progress against individual actions is attached as Appendix 1 to this report. In reporting progress against the objectives, the following 'status' indicators have been applied to individual actions:

Achieved (Green) - specific actions have been completed or relevant targets achieved;

On-Target (Green) – specific actions will be completed or achieve in accordance with targets;

Under Control (Amber) - specific actions have not been completed or achieved in accordance with relevant targets, although completion/achievement is likely to be secured by revised target date;

Behind Schedule (Red) - specific actions have not been completed or achieved in accordance with relevant targets;

Pending (Grey) – specific deliverables or actions have not been completed or achieved, as they rely on the prior completion of other actions or external factors outside the Council's control

4. Equality Objectives are focused on key areas where improvement in relation to equality has been identified, as follows:

- Objective 1: Equality information
- Objective 2: Equality ownership
- Objective 3: Engagement
- Objective 4: Equality in workforce development

The actions to deliver Objectives 1 and 2 are largely completed, and progress has been made across all actions for the remaining Objectives. Some actions are dependent upon other initiatives and therefore are unlikely to be completed before the end of the year. The Corporate Equality Working Group (CEWG) will continue to monitor progress and progress where possible.

Equality analysis

5. A new three year programme of analysis commenced in April 2014, against which Internal Audit will review completion as part of their work programme.

Equality Information Publication

6. Equality Information must be published annually, with the latest report being published in August 2014. A further report will be produced in July 2015.

Equality Objectives 2016-2020

7. The current set of equality objectives will reach the end of their lifetime in March 2016. The CEWG has therefore commenced the process of identifying the equality objectives to take the authority forward from 2016-2020.

8. Progress in relation to the achievement of the equality objectives and other equality requirements was considered by Management Board in May 2015

9. The Select Committee is requested to review current progress against the equality objectives for 2012-2016, and other work to meet the Council's statutory equality duties, and note the ongoing identification of equality objectives for 2016-2020.

Resource Implications:

Resource requirements for actions to achieve specific equality objectives will have been identified by the responsible service director/chief officer and reflected in the budget for the year. Compliance with statutory equality duties can currently be met from within existing resources.

Legal and Governance Implications:

There are no legal or governance implications arising from the recommendations of this report. Relevant implications arising from actions to achieve specific equality objectives will have been identified by the responsible service director/chief officer.

Safer, Cleaner, Greener Implications:

There are no implications arising from the recommendations of this report in respect of the Council's commitment to the Climate Local Agreement, the corporate Safer, Cleaner, Greener initiative, or any crime and disorder issues within the district. Relevant implications arising from actions to achieve specific equality objectives will have been identified by the responsible service director/chief officer.

Consultation Undertaken:

Current progress against the equality objectives for 2012-2016 and other equality work has been reviewed by the Corporate Equality Working Group.

Background Papers:

Equality objective progress submissions held by the Performance Improvement Unit.

Impact Assessments:

Risk Management

There are no risk management issues arising from the recommendations of this report. Relevant issues arising from actions to achieve specific equality objectives will have been identified by the responsible service director/chief officer. The Internal Audit Unit will monitor progress with new three-year equality analysis programme from April 2014.

Equality:

Actions to achieve specific equality objectives cover the full range of the Council's services, and its dual role of service provider and employer. Whilst no equality implications arise from the recommendations of this report, the appropriateness of actions to deliver the objectives, together with the successful achievement of the objectives, have the potential to impact on service users and employees across all protected characteristics.