

**Report to: Finance and Performance
Management Scrutiny Panel**

Date of Meeting: 11 March 2014



Portfolio: Leisure and Wellbeing (Councillor E. Webster)

Subject: Equality Objectives 2012-2016 - Progress

Officer contact for further information: B. Copson (01992 564042)

Democratic Services Officer: A. Hendry (01992 564246)

Recommendations/Decisions Required:

That the Scrutiny Panel review current progress against the Council's Equality Objectives for 2012-2016 and other work to meet statutory equality duties.

Executive Summary:

1. The Equality Act 2010 placed a number of responsibilities on the Council, including a general equality duty to have due regard to equality in the exercise of its functions, 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 through the introduction of a Public Sector Equality Duty, requiring the adoption of equality objectives to improve equality for service users and employees, and publishing equality information.
2. In March 2012, the Cabinet agreed a range of equality objectives for the four years from 2012 to 2016, designed to help the Council meet the aims of the general duty and bring about positive improvements to service design and delivery. This report reflects progress against the equality objectives as at the end of the second quarter of 2013/14.

Reasons for Proposed Decision:

3. In view of the corporate importance of the achievement of the equality objectives and ensuring compliance with the Public Sector Equality Duty. From 2013/14, reporting of progress against the equality objectives and performance with other equality work has moved from annual to quarterly monitoring, to ensure adequate review of progress against actions to deliver the objectives.

Other Options for Action:

4. 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

5. The Equality Act 2010 placed an obligation on the Council to adopt 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. The objectives are based in evidence, proportionate to the organisation, and were subject to public consultation. The equality objectives are focused on the following key areas where improvement in relation to equality has been identified as a priority:

Equality Objective 1: The use of equality intelligence

Equality Objective 2: Ownership of equality

Equality Objective 3: Engagement

Equality Objective 4: The workforce equality profile

6. The achievement of the equality objectives is supported by an action plan spread across their four-year time-frame. A schedule detailing cumulative progress (from 1 April 2012) against individual outcomes and deliverables designed to support the achievement of each of the equality objectives, is attached as Appendix 1 to this report. In reporting progress, the following 'status' indicators have been applied to the current position for each individual outcome or deliverable:

Achieved (Green) - specific outcomes or deliverables have been completed or achieved in accordance with in-year targets;

On-Target (Green) - specific outcomes or deliverables will be completed or achieved in accordance with in-year targets;

Under Control (Amber) - specific outcomes or deliverables have not been completed or achieved in accordance with in-year targets, but completion/achievement will be secured by a revised target date or by year-end;

Behind Schedule (Red) - specific outcomes or deliverables have not been completed or achieved in accordance with in-year targets and completion/achievement may not be secured by year-end; and

Pending (Grey) - specific outcomes or deliverables cannot currently be fully completed or achieved, as they rely on the prior completion of other actions or are dependent on external factors outside the Council's control.

7. Some of the outcomes and deliverables identified in the action plan can only be achieved incrementally or are dependent upon other pieces of work. The action plan is intended to be fluid to reflect changes in service delivery and the development of work to achieve greater fairness, and is therefore likely to be subject to revision and addition over the four-year life of the equality objectives.

Equality Analysis

8. A further requirement of the Act involves understanding how the Council's activities impact on service users. This understanding is developed by carrying out equality analysis of relevant functions, the results of which are included as a mandatory consideration in decision-making at a strategic level, and in service delivery.
9. The last programme of equality analysis was completed in March 2013 and feedback from the exercise has been used to develop a new and more user-friendly analysis toolkit. A screening exercise is currently underway to identify activities relevant to equality for inclusion in a new three-year analysis programme.

10. The method of reporting relevant equality information to decision-making bodies such as the Cabinet has been replaced with a Due Regard Record, designed to evidence consideration of equality implications and information relevant to specific issues to enable due regard to be paid to equality in decisions. This approach has been the subject of a pilot exercise over recent months, the results of which are currently being evaluated.
11. The Scrutiny Panel is requested to review current progress against the equality objectives for 2012-2016 and other work to meet the Council's statutory equality duties.

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:

Quarterly 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

this the recommendations of 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.