

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

**Date of meeting: 11 November 2014**



**Portfolio:** Finance and Performance Management (Councillor S. Stavrou)

**Subject:** Equality Objectives 2012-2016 – Quarter 2 Progress 2014/15

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## **Recommendations/Decisions Required:**

**That the Scrutiny Panel review progress against the Council's Equality Objectives (2012-2016) for the first six-months of 2014/15, and other work to meet its statutory equality duties.**

## **Executive Summary:**

1. 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.
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 these objectives as at the end of the second quarter of 2014/15.

## **Reasons for Proposed Decision:**

3. In view of the corporate importance of the achievement of these objectives, and ensuring compliance with the PSED. From 2014/15, reporting of progress against the equality objectives and the specific duties has moved from quarterly to six monthly, which is considered by the Scrutiny Panel to be adequate for the review of progress.

## **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 Council, and were subject to public consultation. These objectives are focused on the following key areas where improvement in relation to equality has been identified as a priority:
  - Objective 1: Equality information
  - Objective 2: Equality ownership
  - Objective 3: Engagement
  - Objective 4: Equality in workforce development
  
6. The achievement of these 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 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 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
  
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 objectives.

### Equality analysis

8. A further duty under the Act involves developing an understanding of how our functions impact on service users and employees. This understanding is developed by carrying out equality analysis on our functions, the results of which are included as a mandatory consideration in decision making at a strategic level, and in service delivery.
  
9. Following the conclusion of the previous equality analysis programme in 2013, a new programme of analysis for 2014-2017 has been implemented. Progress against this new programme will be subject to audit by Internal Audit to encourage completion, and in a timely manner.

10. To improve the provision of information about the relevance of equality to the subject of reports to Cabinet and Portfolio holders, a Due Regard Record (DRR) has been introduced to replace existing systems. The DRR sits at the end of the report template and should contain sufficient information about the equality relevance of the subject of the report to enable equality to be considered as a mandatory part of the decision making process.

### **Equality Information**

11. Equality Information must be published annually to show progress against the public sector equality duty across all Council services relevant to equality. Information has been published since 2011, and the latest report was published in August 2014.

### **Equality Training for elected Members**

12. Ten councilors attended an introduction to equality course in June 2014 which included information about how to recognize matters relevant to equality, and familiarization with the Due Regard Record system. Further training sessions will be provided through the Councilor Development Programme as appropriate.
13. 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.