

# **Report to the Services for Older People and Disabled People Task and Finish Panel**



**Epping Forest  
District Council**

**Date of meeting: 2 November 2006**

**Subject: The Disability Equality Duty**

**Officer contact for further information: J Scott (Joint Chief Executive)**

**Committee Secretary: S Hill**

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## **Recommendations/Decisions Required:**

To consider the implications of the Disability Equality Duty for the District Council and the Council's proposed response.

## **Report:**

The terms of reference of the Task and Finish Panel include a requirement to consider the implications of the Disability Equality Duty for the District Council and the Council's proposed response.

The Disability Rights Commission has produced an overview document entitled "Doing the Duty" a copy of which is attached hereto for Members' information. An outline of the duty is set out on Pages 5 to 8 of the document.

## **Progress within the Council**

In 2004 the Council developed a Race Equality Scheme (RES) as required under the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000. Our approach in developing this was that we would not look at a range of equality issues beyond race, i.e. gender and disability discrimination issues, so the RES effectively became the first stage of a corporate equality scheme.

Following the adoption of the RES by Cabinet, a number of pilot impact assessments (IAs) were carried out in late 2005. However, it was not possible to complete them internally due to pressure of work. It was therefore agreed that an independent equalities consultant be brought in to complete these in consultation with Heads of Service and managers. This exercise was completed in January 2006, and Management Board considered a comprehensive report which made general recommendations for the development of a full equalities scheme and associated action plan. It was agreed to prioritise those actions which had an impact on our future CPA assessment. The IAs identified a number of issues which would impact on disabled service users, but no full analysis has been carried out yet.

Unfortunately, it has not been possible to progress matters due to lack of resources within the authority. We are seeking to rectify this through recruitment to vacant posts.

In addition, we are re-engaging the independent equalities consultant to draw up a Disability Equality Scheme in November 2006. This will involve analysing the results of the Impact Assessments and consulting the community to ensure that our services are responsive to the needs of disabled service users.

It was not possible to bring forward this work to an earlier date due to the non-availability of the external consultant. It seems unlikely that the 4 December 2006 date will be hit.