

Report to: Governance Select Committee

Date of meeting: 29 November 2016



Portfolio: Governance and Development Management (Councillor R. Bassett)

Subject: Equality Objectives 2016-2020, 2016/17 Q2 report and compliance with the public sector equality duty.

Officer contact for further information: Barbara Copson (01992 564042)

Democratic Services Officer: J Leither (01992 564756)

Recommendations/Decisions Required:

- i) That the Select Committee reviews the progress in relation to the Equality Objectives 2016-2020 and other work to ensure the Council's compliance with its equality duties.

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. Additionally the council has to adopt equality objectives to improve equality for service users and employees; to understand the impact of its activities on services users and; and to publish equality information.

In April 2016, the Cabinet agreed four equality objectives for the four years from 2016 to 2020, designed to help the Council meet the aims of the PSED. This report reflects progress against these objectives at the end of September 2016, and other work to ensure compliance with the council's equality duties.

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:

1. The Equality Act 2010 places a number of obligations on the Council designed to integrate consideration of the advancement of equality into its day to day business. It

places a responsibility on bodies subject to the duty to consider how they can work to tackle systematic discrimination and disadvantage affecting people with particular characteristics. The benefits sought include better informed decision making and policy development, a clearer understanding of the needs of service users, and better quality services.

2. Progress against the Council's equality duties is reported to Management Board and the Governance Select Committee at 6 monthly intervals. This report provides progress at the 6 month position of the first year, and other work to deliver the Council's statutory equality duties.

Equality Objectives

3. Work has commenced to deliver the new equality objectives. The work is coordinated by the Corporate Equality Working Group which has prioritized and aligned delivery with other associated work, and emerging priorities. The action plan is a living plan and may be subject to changes during its 4 year lifetime to take account of developments and progress. Most actions in the plan have a number of milestones and therefore as such, the delivery of these milestones is dependent upon prior work and will not show progress until a later stage in the delivery of the action.
4. Recent case law relating to due regard in decision making has dictated that the process for reviewing the due regard process (EO3.3) is prioritized. The review was completed and recommendations were agreed by Management Board in July. From January 2017 members of Cabinet and Council, and Portfolio Holders will be provided with a full equality impact assessment to support their decision making rather than the due regard record containing a summary of the main findings of assessment, and which is currently located at the bottom of the report template.
5. Other work completed in these first 6 months is a review of the process to deliver equality impact assessment. To encourage ownership and increase completion rates, the role of the Equality Champion will be developed to provide a directorate level resource to support officers engaged in assessment. Resources will be directed to ensuring reports to Cabinet, Council and Portfolio Holders are supported by a high quality full impact assessment, and that projects or significant changes to services, are assessed at key stages of their delivery. Champions will be trained, and an ongoing programme of equality briefings will be provided to support officers to improve the quality of assessment.
6. A schedule detailing progress against individual actions is attached at Appendix 1 to this report. Progress reporting tends to be provided to the Performance Improvement Unit when the action is delivered rather than more frequent incremental reporting which explains the lack of information for some actions. However this may also be that the target date allows for commencement at a future date or that it has not been possible or expected that significant progress will be achieved in these first 6 months. That said, some additional progress has been made since 30 September, and which will be reflected in the next 6 monthly report.
7. In reporting progress against the objectives, the following 'status' indicators have been applied to individual actions as appropriate to reflect current position:

Achieved (Green) - specific deliverables or actions have been completed or achieved in accordance within targets;

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

Under Control (Amber) - specific deliverables or actions have not been completed or achieved in accordance with targets, but completion/achievement will be secured by a revised target date (specified) or by March 2020;

Behind Schedule (Red) - specific deliverables or actions have not been completed or achieved in accordance with targets and completion/achievement may not be secured by March 2020; and

Pending (Grey) - specific deliverables or actions 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.

Equality Analysis

8. A three year programme of equality analysis commenced in April 2014. Analysis is the process by which we gain an understanding of the impact of our policies and activities on people. This understanding is a requirement of the legislation. This is the process referred to at paragraph 5 and which has been reviewed. The Outturn position of the current programme will be reflected in the next report to the Committee.

Equality Information

8. Equality Information must be published annually, with the latest report being published in September 2016 after consideration by the Committee in July. As the committee was advised at the time, the report includes only some of the work which has benefits from an equality perspective, and seeks to provide a broad range of examples from across the council's services. A further report will be produced in summer 2017.

Equality policy and scheme

9. Whilst it is not a requirement of the legislation to produce an equality policy, it is felt by the CEWG that it is a good way to set out our approach to meeting our statutory responsibilities. Therefore the Equality Policy 2011 has been reviewed and the Equality Policy 2016 was agreed by Cabinet in September 2016.
10. The Committee is requested to review the progress to date against the equality objectives 2016-2020, and other work to meet the Council's statutory equality duties.

Resource Implications: None for this report.

Legal and Governance Implications: This work complies with the Equality Act 2010 and recent case law relating to due regard.

Safer, Cleaner and Greener Implications: None for this report.

Consultation Undertaken: Not applicable to this report.

Background Papers: Equality Objectives 2016-2020 / Equality Policy 2016

Impact Assessments:

Risk Management None for this report.

Equality This report seeks to ensure the development and coordination of a corporate approach to the Council's statutory equality duties. Actions discussed in this report 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 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 the protected characteristics.