

Report to: Governance Select Committee

Date of meeting: 14 March 2018



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

Subject: Equality Objectives 2016-2020 – 6 monthly reporting and compliance with the public sector equality duty.

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Recommendations/Decisions Required:

That the Select Committee review performance in relation to the key Council's Equality Objectives (2016-2020) up until March 2018, and other work to meet its statutory 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. 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 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 beginning of March 2018 and other work to ensure compliance with the council's equality duty.

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. In October 2017 the Select Committee was advised that the current set of equality objectives was reviewed by the Equality Working Group (EWG) that met in July 2017. The Group felt that the current set focusses very much inwards on EFDC operations and recognised a need to update and replace these objectives. We could continue with the existing Equality Objectives Plan however we would be missing the opportunity to enhance the content and adapt the best approach to Equality, particularly in light of the adoption of the new Corporate Plan 2018-2023. The new set of equality objectives and actions to deliver them has been proposed to the Cabinet for adoption in April 2018.
2. 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 2016 the Council adopted four equality objectives for the four years until March 2020 to advance equality for service users and employees.
3. The objectives are supported by an Action Plan with actions designed to secure the achievement of each of the objectives. 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.
4. A schedule detailing progress against individual actions is attached as Appendix 1 to this report. The actions to deliver the objectives are largely achieved. All remaining actions were communicated to all responsible officers, will be covered in business as usual and their progress will be continued to be monitored and reported in the Equality Information Report 2018. 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

Equality analysis

5. 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. A new Equality Impact Assessment Form has been produced to ensure 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. A user guide to aid completion has been created.

Equality Information Publication

6. Equality Information must be published annually and it is a requirement of the legislation. Equality Information Report will be produced in summer 2018 showing an overview of our work over the last year and giving evidence that we are complying with our statutory duties

Equality Objectives 2018-2022

7. The new set of equality objectives and actions to deliver them has been recommended to the Cabinet for adoption in April 2018. CEWG has been engaged in the development of a new set of objectives to take the Council forward until March 2022.

8. The Select Committee is requested to review current progress against the equality objectives for 2016-2020 to meet the Council's statutory equality duty.

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: None for this report

Consultation Undertaken:

Current progress against the equality objectives for 2016-2020 and other equality work has been reviewed by the Corporate Equality Working Group and within Directorates via representative to the working group.

Background Papers:

Equality Objectives 2016-2020

Impact Assessments:

Risk Management:

None for this report

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.