

EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY

LEAD OFFICER: Martin Jepson

REPORT AUTHOR: Martin Jepson

Summary and Recommendation:	That the report be noted and that further update reports be made to the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee and where particular issues are raised of relevance to other Overview and Scrutiny Committees, then to those Committees.
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1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The standard by which the committees are assessed in relation to progress made in Equality and Diversity is The Equality Standard For Local Government. There are 5 levels within the equal standard, 5 being the highest. In March 2006 this Council self-assessed itself at level 1. This Council is currently working towards achieving level 2 by next year.
- 1.2 Latest figures show that approximately 90% of local authorities are at either level 1 or level 2. Within Cumbria, Cumbria County Council are at level 2. Carlisle, Eden, South Lakes, Barrow and Copeland are at level 1, and Eden are looking to achieving level 1 shortly.

2. PROGRESS MADE AND TO BE MADE

- 2.1 Broadly speaking level 1 required this Council to commit itself to improving its Equality and Diversity procedures. In order to heighten awareness of Equality and Diversity issues, computer based training has been provided for those officers who have ready access to computers and for Members. Face to face training has been provided to those officers who do not have ready access to computers.
- 2.2 Face to Face training sessions have been provided for Members and various face to face training sessions have been arranged for officers.
- 2.3 The Council has also approved an Equalities Policy which includes with it the statutorily required, Race, Gender and Disability Schemes. These can be found on our Intranet and Website. The Policy includes some Action Plans which are currently being worked through.
- 2.4 The requirements for level 2 are set out in appendix A to this report and will be seen that the principle requirement for level 2 are to carry out assessments and community engagement.
- 2.5 In order to progress work on assessments your officers have visited other authorities and taken advice from consultants. Having done so we have produced an Equality Impact Assessment Toolkit which has been tested out prior to its implementation. Following an assessment session with Corporate Team a prioritised list of the 21 Services Units of the council has been produced and a regular programme for carrying out equality impact assessments has been devised. Yours officers began work with Cultural Services in June and Human Resources in July. We anticipate that the process will speed up as we progress through the service units. We believe that the Assessment Toolkit will provide a very effective means of assessing gaps in the services the Council provides to its customers.
- 2.6 Allied to the work on Equality Impact Assessments the Council also needs to carry out a detailed programme of community engagement. A small sub-group of officers is currently working on

planning for community engagement. Ideas are likely to include the setting up of specific focus groups and the entering into of service level agreements with special interest groups, such as the Copeland Disability Forum.

3. JOINT WORKING

- 3.1 We have recently begun, through the ACE (Achieving Cumbria Excellence) having meeting with the other District Councils together with Cumbria County Council and the Lake District National Park Authority with a view to mutually making further progress on Equality and Diversity. Ideas for making progress include further training sessions and joint Service Level Agreement's county-wide together with mutual self-assessment programmes.
- 3.2 Details of our current progress is shown at Appendix B.
- 3.3 The work of the Equality and Diversity Officers Group is beginning to reach a fruitful purpose in its development. It is envisaged that the OSC's could very usefully become involved in the process in 2 ways. Firstly in the course of developing Action Plans, it would be very helpful to have feedback from the relevant OSC. Secondly, once Action Plans have reached their final stage after consultation it would be helpful for the relevant OSC to have an overview in monitoring progress.

4. CONCLUSION

The Equality and Diversity Programme ties in with a number of other aspects of council work - including improving customer focus, and ensuring Equality of Opportunity amongst our residents. Our work on Equality and Diversity is reaching a critical stage and the OSC Management committee is asked to note the progress so far and undertake to provide advice and guidance in respect of the council's future work on this topic.

List of Appendices

Appendix A – Requirements of Level 2 of the Equality Standard
Appendix B – Progress made against level 2

List of Background Documents: Papers on Equality and Diversity Working Group File

List of Consultees: Chief Executive, Head of Finance & Business Development,
Equality and Diversity Group.

APPENDIX A

Level 2
Assessment and Community Engagement
<p>To achieve Level 2 of the Standard an authority will need to demonstrate:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • That it has developed systems for self-assessment, scrutiny and audit as the basis for continuous improvement • That it has engaged in equality impact assessment • That it has undertaken self-assessment across the authority • That it has involved designated community, staff and stakeholder groups in service planning • That it has engaged in the development of information and monitoring systems • That it has engaged in an equality action planning process for employment, pay and service delivery
<p>These general activities and developments translate into action in the four substantive areas of the Standard:</p>
Leadership and Corporate Commitment
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Publish draft Corporate Equality Scheme to deliver the authority's Comprehensive Equality Policy and statutory equality schemes • Produce a risk assessment of local authority services, activities and procedures and develop a prioritised programme of equality impact assessment • Publish an action plan for the extension of equality impact assessment to sexual orientation, religion or belief and age by March 2008 • Demonstrate corporate engagement in the equality impact assessment process • Develop a corporate mechanism for assessing the development of service level equality objectives and targets • Create a corporate structure for overseeing development of information and monitoring systems • Develop a corporate framework for equality consultation and guidance on consultation methods to be adopted within the authority
Community Engagement and Accountability
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that draft Corporate Equality Scheme has been circulated to designated community, staff and stakeholder groups with consultation timetable and is published in an appropriate range of languages and formats • Review equality content of all community strategies (LAAs etc) • Involve designated community, staff and stakeholder groups and the wider community on corporate policy • Involve members, employee representatives, department and service managers on impact assessments and all aspects of the Corporate Equality Scheme • Each department and service area to involve designated community, staff and stakeholder groups on its equality impact assessments and its service delivery • Each department and service area to engage community stakeholders through

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<p>scrutiny of service delivery</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seek to ensure that the corporate equality policy and objectives are incorporated in partnership and contractual arrangements engaged in by the authority
<p>Service Delivery and Customer Care</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete prioritised department and service area impact assessments as a basis for the development of equality objectives and targets • Begin development of department and service area equality objectives and targets • Review of services should include the procurement function and all contracted services and partnership arrangements • Each department and service area to establish planning groups for monitoring and information systems • Each department and service area to engage with equality self-assessment and scrutiny on its service delivery
<p>Employment and Training</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop and adopt fair employment and equal pay policy • Engage in employment equality assessment of the local labour market • Engage in an equal pay review • Adopt a Local Government Workforce Strategy • Adopt procedures to ensure that publicity for vacancies does not unfairly restrict the range of applicants • Produce a standard range of application forms and job descriptions that are clear and explicit • Review personnel information system for monitoring suitability including supporting the council's statutory monitoring duties • Develop a programme of equality training to support the Corporate Equality Scheme and departmental service objectives • Ensure that the training programme is consistent with the training arrangements in the council's statutory equality schemes • Make all employment procedures consistent with current legislation and employment Codes of Practice

Explanatory notes:

In order to develop a clear set of equality objectives it will be important to undertake equality impact assessments of policies, service delivery and employment. Baseline population and employee profiles will need to be researched, against which to provide regularly updated sets of data with regard to gender, ethnicity, disability, sexual orientation, religion/ belief and age. Managers will need to be trained and a corporate equality impact assessment plan developed.

Impact assessment

To conduct impact assessments, local authorities will need to put data collection systems in place. Level 3 cannot be achieved until this basic information is accessible to all service departments. These data collection systems should form part of the process for subsequent monitoring of progress towards equality targets.

The equality impact assessment process should involve the systematic participation of community, staff and stakeholder groups, which will play an important part in identifying unmet need and adverse impact. The outcomes from the assessments should be widely publicised and included in the local authority's Corporate/Business Plans.

The authority should develop a mechanism for consulting on, and scrutinising the Corporate Equality Scheme. Work should have already been undertaken on pay review to be in compliance with the NJC agreement between local government employers and the trades unions. Using the framework established under the Corporate Equality Scheme, departments and service areas should begin preparation of equality objectives and targets.

Self-Assessment

Self-assessment is a process all authorities are now familiar with. *Guidance 1: Audit and self-assessment* gives full and systematic information about how self-assessment should be carried out and the methodologies that should be employed.

[The Equality Standard for local government, guidance 1: Audit and self-assessment](#)

Examples of evidence

- Report on equality impact assessment training
- Corporate equality impact assessment plan, including arrangements to comply with the consultation and publication of predictive equality impact assessments as required by current legislation.

<u>www.eoc.org.uk</u>	The Equal Opportunities Commission
<u>www.cre.gov.uk</u>	The Commission for Racial Equality
<u>www.drc.org.uk</u>	The Disability Rights Commission

- Reports on all equality impact assessments
- Documentation describing objective setting and planning framework
- Corporate Equality Scheme published
- Participation and scrutiny plans developed
- Self- assessment documentation and methodology

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LEVEL 2 PROGRESS NOTES

Date:

Leadership and Corporate Commitment

	REQUIREMENT	PROGRESS AND EVIDENCE LOG
1	Publish draft Corporate Equality Scheme (formerly Plan) has Scheme to deliver the authority's Comprehensive Equality Policy and statutory equality schemes.	A draft Scheme (formerly Plan) has been produced. This will be updated as ELA's progress.
2	Produce a risk assessment of local authority services, activities and procedures and develop a prioritised programme of equality impact assessment.	A half day session with the Council's Corporate Team in March 2007 produced a prioritisation matrix. ELA's are being carried out in priority order in accordance with that matrix.
3	Publish an action plan for an extension equality impact assessment to sexual orientation, religion or belief and age by March 2008.	This still remains to be done but an action plan can be developed as part of the ELA process.
4	Demonstrate corporate engagement in the equality assessment process.	There is a corporate engagement. See report to Council on Jan 2006 and Training for members; face-to-face and computer based Training. See also involvement of Corporate Team.
5	Develop a corporate mechanism for assessing the development of service level objectives and targets.	The Corporate Management Board Transformation of the steering group for the project. The Equality and Diversity Officers group oversee the day to day operation of the Equality and Diversity project.
6	Create a corporate structure for overseeing development of information and monitoring systems.	See above.
7	Develop a corporate framework for equality consultation methods to be adopted within the authority.	SLA's to be entered into as described above. Focus Group for Copeland to be formed. Formal guidance not yet completed.

Community Engagement and Accountability

	REQUIREMENT	PROGRESS AND EVIDENCE LOG
1	Ensure that draft Corporate Equality Scheme has been circulated to designated community, staff and stakeholder groups with consultation timetable and is published in an appropriate range of languages and formats.	Provided to AWAZ, Cumbria Disability Network and Disability Forum. Could be more widely distributed. Further work needs to be carried out.
2	Review equality content of all community strategies (LAA's etc).	To be carried out separately by WCSP staff.
3	Involve designated community, staff and stakeholder groups and the wider community on corporate policy.	Still to be done.
4	Involve members, employee representatives, departments and service managers on impact assessments and all aspects of the Corporate Equality Scheme.	See previous references to reports to OSC Training and development of process.
5	Each department and service area to involve designated community, staff and stakeholder groups on its equality impact assessments and its service delivery.	A communications strategy for Equalities needs to be finalised.
6	Each department and service area to engage community stakeholders through scrutiny of service delivery.	As above.
7	Seek to ensure that the corporate equality policy and objectives are incorporated in 'partnership' and contractual arrangements engaged in by the authority.	An ongoing process, the details of which still need to be settled.

Service Delivery and Customer Care

	REQUIREMENT	PROGRESS AND EVIDENCE LOG
1	Complete prioritised department and service area impact assessments on a basis for the development of equality objectives and targets.	Process has been started.
2	Begin development of department and service area equality and targets.	As Above.
3	Review of services should include the procurement function and all contracted services and partnerships arrangements.	Business Development Manager aware of need for review of procurement function. Contracted services and partnership arrangements are likely to constitute a stand alone EIA assessment.
4	Each department and service area to establish planning groups for monitoring and information systems.	Not yet done.
5	Each department and service area to engage with equality self-assessment and scrutiny on its service delivery.	Not yet done.

Employment and Training

	REQUIREMENT	PROGRESS AND EVIDENCE LOG
1	Develop and adopt fair employment and equal pay policy.	Built into existing policies. Awaiting outcomes from IE group.
2	Engage in employment equality assessment of the local labour market.	Gathering data.
3	Engage in an equal pay review.	Not yet done.
4	Adopt a Local Government Workforce Strategy	Pay and grading review.
5	Adopt procedures to ensure that publicity for vacancies does not unfairly restrict the range of applicants.	Advertisements comply with disability logo.
6	Produce a standard range of application forms and job descriptions that are clear and explicit.	Reviewed October 2006 and ongoing as posts become vacant.
7	Review personnel information system for monitoring suitability including supporting the Council's statutory monitoring duties.	Purchased Recruitment and Training modules. Full implementation 31/3/08.
8	Develop a programme of equality training to support the Corporate Equality Scheme and departmental service objectives.	Equality training currently underway. ELA training has been completed.
9	Ensure that the training programme is consistent with the training arrangements in the Council's Statutory Equality Scheme.	We believe this has been done.
10	Make all employment procedures consistent with current legislation and Employment Codes of Practice.	We believe this has already been done.