

Meeting of the Cabinet – 21st March 2007

Report of the Director of Law and Property

Draft Equality Scheme

Purpose of Report

1. To consider the draft Equality Scheme (a full copy of which is available in the Members' Room and electronically on the Council's committee management information system).

Background

2. The Equality Act 2006 introduces from 6th April 2007 a new positive duty on public authorities to promote gender equality, requiring the Council, when exercising its functions, to have due regard to the need:
 - to eliminate discrimination and harassment that is unlawful under the Sex Discrimination Act 1975 and discrimination that is unlawful under the Equal Pay Act 1970
 - to promote equality of opportunity between men and women.
3. Specific duties under the Act require the publication of a Gender Equality Scheme, showing how the Council intends to fulfil its duties and setting out its gender equality objectives, by 30th April 2007.
4. As previously agreed by the Cabinet, it is the intention to combine the new Gender Equality Scheme with the recently published Disability Equality Scheme and a revised Race Equality Scheme into an overall Equality Scheme for the Council. This will promote a coordinated approach to the Council's equality and diversity work although the document will retain specific sections relating to race, disability and gender equality to ensure that there is appropriate focus on these important areas of equality.
5. The Cabinet considered the draft Disability Equality Scheme at its meeting on 1st November 2006 and authorised the Director of Law and Property, in consultation with Councillor Shakespeare, to approve the final version for publication by 4th December 2006, in order to comply with the specific duties under the Disability Discrimination Act 2005.
6. The Council's Race Equality Scheme was first published in May 2002 and revised in May 2005.
7. The draft Equality Scheme contains a commitment to incorporate fully the other equality strands of age, religion or belief, and sexual orientation within the Scheme by March 2009. These areas have been covered by the Council's Equality and

Diversity Policy for many years and a range of action taken, not least to ensure that the Council meets its statutory obligations relating to these.

Finance

8. The draft scheme identifies a range of actions that can be met from within existing budgets. Any further financial implications which might arise from implementing the scheme will need to be identified and reported in due course.

Law

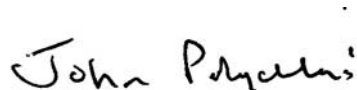
9. The Disability Discrimination (Public Authorities) (Statutory Duties) Regulations 2005 require public authorities to produce and publish a Disability Equality Scheme by 4th December 2006.
10. The Race Relations Act 1976 (Statutory Duties) Order 2001 placed specific duties on public authorities to prepare and publish a Race Equality Scheme by 31st May 2002.
11. The Sex Discrimination Act 1975 (Public Authorities) (Statutory Duties) Order 2006 requires the preparation and publication of a Gender Equality Scheme by 30th April 2007.

Equality Impact

12. The Equality Scheme will set out the Council's approach to promoting equality and diversity which will incorporate the approach to assessing the equality impact of its functions and policies, including those relating to children and young people.

Recommendation

13. It is recommended that the Cabinet considers the draft Equality Scheme (a full copy of which is available in the Members' Room and electronically on the Council's committee management information system) and authorises the Director of Law and Property, in consultation with Councillor Shakespeare, to approve the final version for publication by 30th April 2007.



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List of Background papers

Equality and Diversity Advisory Group reports 2006/07