

Select Committee on Regeneration, Culture and Adult Education
– 7th June 2006

Report of the Director of Finance

Directorate of Finance, ICT and Procurement Equality and Diversity Annual Report for 2005/06

Purpose of Report

1. To consider the Directorate of Finance, ICT and Procurement 's equality and diversity annual report for 2005/06.

Background

2. The production of an annual equality and diversity action plan and annual report by each directorate is a requirement of the Council's equality and diversity policy. The former Select Committee on Economic Regeneration considered the Directorate of Finance, ICT and Procurement's action plan, which sets out its equality and diversity targets for 2006/07, at its meeting held on 16th February 2006. Attached is the annual report which details progress on the targets agreed by that select committee in the directorate's action plan for the previous year, 2005/06.
3. This Select Committee has within its terms of reference responsibility for corporate equality and diversity issues, although responsibility for scrutinising individual directorate's action plans and annual reports is divided between the five select committees.

Finance

4. Any costs associated with the annual report will be met from within existing budgets.

Law

5. The Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 replaced Section 71 of the Race Relations Act 1976 with a general duty on public authorities to work towards the elimination of unlawful discrimination and promote equality of opportunity and good relations between persons of different racial groups.
6. The Disability Discrimination Act 1995 makes it unlawful to discriminate against disabled people in connection with employment, the provision of goods, facilities and services and the disposal or management of premises. The Disability Discrimination Act 2005 will extend this Act by introducing a new duty on public authorities to promote disability equality.
7. The Sex Discrimination Act 1975 renders unlawful certain kinds of sex discrimination. In particular, Section 29 makes it unlawful for the Council, in providing facilities or services (such as those arising pursuant to the statutory functions of the Council), to discriminate against any person seeking to obtain or use those facilities or services on the ground of gender. The Equality Act 2006 introduces a new duty on public authorities to promote gender equality.

8. Under Section 111 of the Local Government Act 1972 the Council is empowered to do anything which is calculated to facilitate, or is conducive to, or incidental to the discharge of its functions.

Equality Impact

9. The annual report contains details of progress in implementing the Directorate of Finance, ICT and Procurement's equality and diversity action plan. Performance indicators or outcomes were identified against each target so that progress in achieving the action plan can be monitored and reviewed. The Community Representatives Panel was involved in drawing up the action plan.

Recommendation

10. That Members consider and comment on the Directorate of Finance, ICT and Procurement's equality and diversity annual report for 2005/06.



Director of Finance

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Background papers: Guidance for the preparation of directorates' annual equality and diversity action plans and annual reports

Directorate of Finance, ICT and Procurement

Equality and Diversity Annual Report 2005/06

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 This Annual Report sets out the Finance Directorate's activities throughout 2005/06 in supporting the Council's Equality and Diversity Policy, in relation to both employment and service delivery. The report summarises progress in achieving corporate and directorate objectives. It also provides key facts and background information about the directorate.
- 1.2 In previous years, the Annual Report was combined with the Equality and Diversity Action Plan for the following year. The two elements are now presented separately:
- a) to ensure that targets and actions are in place at the start of the new financial year
 - b) to enable results to be reported for the whole of the previous financial year.

The Action Plan (2006/07) was considered by the Select Committee on Economic Regeneration on 16th February 2006 and subsequently approved by the Cabinet Member for Finance through the Decision Sheet process.

2.0 Background Information and Key Facts about the Finance Directorate

- 2.1 Underpinning the Council's Vision, as outlined in the Council Plan, the Finance Directorate provides the following services:

- Audit
- Benefit
- Financial
- Information Communication Technology
- Purchasing and Payment
- Revenue

The directorate's aim is to secure best value for the Council by:

- Serving its customers
- Promoting good stewardship of public funds
- Supporting the Council's objectives as detailed in the Council Plan
- Providing good staff management
- Promoting equality and diversity, ensuring equal opportunity for all

- 2.2 The Directorate publishes an annual Strategic Plan, to inform staff, internal customers and Council members of its work. The plan, which is available on the Council's Intranet, sets out the Directorate's objectives, priorities and targets for the year, including those for equality and diversity issues. The main plan provides comprehensive links into other key documents including divisional business

plans. Performance in achieving plan targets is measured and managed through regular meetings between senior management and divisional (service) heads, and is formally reviewed by the directorate's management team on a quarterly basis.

- 2.3 Within the directorate, high priority is given to ensuring all services comply with equality and diversity policies and current legislation. A member of the directorate management team is lead officer for equality and diversity, and a principal officer has specific responsibility to link directorate activities to the corporate agenda, enabling policies to be translated into action at directorate and divisional level. This includes liaising with senior management and divisional heads, providing advice and direction, monitoring progress and preparing regular progress reports.

3.0 Employment

- 3.1 As at 31st March 2006, the Finance Directorate employed 610 staff and its workforce profile is set out in Table 1(a). This can be compared to the Council's profile as a whole which is set out in Table 2(b).

Table 1(a) Finance directorate workforce profile 31 March 2006

Finance	Female (%)	Male (%)	BME (%)	Disabled(%)
Scale point 34 and above	42.5	57.5	6.9	1.4
Below scale point 34	66.2	33.8	7.3	1.3
Total	60.5	39.5	7.2	1.3

Table 1(b) Dudley MBC workforce profile 31 March 2006

Dudley MBC	Female (%)	Male (%)	BME* (%)	Disabled(%)
Scale point 34 and above (excluding schools)#	48.0	52.0	8.0	2.0
Below scale point 34 (excluding schools)	69.3	30.7	5.2	1.3
Total (excluding schools)#	66.4	33.6	5.6	1.4
Total (including schools)	74.6	25.4	4.6	0.8

Notes: * BME figures exclude those employees for whom no ethnic origin data is held
 # Grade breakdown excludes schools due to the different grading for teachers

- 3.2 The directorate recruited 54 employees in 2005/06 of which 63% were female, 3.7% were disabled and 5.6% were from a BME background.
- 3.3 Full data about employment across the Council, including that which meets the requirement for employment monitoring by racial group under race relations legislation, will be published in the Annual Review of Equality and Diversity 2006, which will be prepared by the Chief Executive's Directorate for the Select Committee on Regeneration, Culture and Adult Education and the Cabinet in September.

4.0 Service Delivery

- 4.1 The Directorate delivers a wide range of services, both to the general public and other directorates. Through its service aims and performance management arrangements, the directorate ensures its customers receive a high quality, cost effective service, which is consistently exemplified in high customer satisfaction and positive independent review results.

4.2 Benefit Services

Provides an up to date, high quality, caring benefit service at a cost the public and the Council can afford, in a rapidly changing environment. The service administers a live caseload of 30,000 housing benefit / council tax benefit claims, paying out over £70m in benefits each year. As well as dealing with correspondence and personal visitors, the service carries out approx. 6,000 home visits each year, meeting specific client needs. The service includes the Benefits Shop, located in the Churchill Precinct, which advises residents and helps them claim over £1m in additional welfare benefits each year, as well as running campaigns to encourage people to claim Attendance Allowance and Income Support, to which they are entitled.

During the year the service has been developing mobile technology, which allows benefit claims to be made in the customer's home.

Benefit Services renewed its Charter Mark for customer service excellence in 2004. The service has also scored top marks in the government's Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) review in the last four years.

4.3 Revenue Services

Collects the maximum amount of local taxes in a cost effective and caring manner. The service administers the billing, collection and recovery of 130,000 council tax and 10,000 business rates accounts. Customers are offered a range of ways to contact the service and make payment, in line with the electronic government agenda. Council tax discounts and exemptions amounted to £12m in the year.

Revenue Services achieves one of the best council tax collection rates among metropolitan councils, at a low cost. It offers customers a wide range of payment facilities, including electronic and telephone. In March 2006, the Banking Hall service was transferred to Dudley Council Plus, providing customer with easier access to council premises.

- 4.4 Audit Services
Investigates and reviews internal controls and risk, ensuring the Council's resources are used in the best interest.
- 4.5 Financial Services
Provides financial information, training, support and advice to managers and members of the Council. This includes managing the Council's Revenue and Capital budgets and borrowings. It also administers the Council's payroll and pensions and risk management functions. IN 2005 Financial Services achieved Investor in Excellence status (linked to the European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM) model) from Midlands Excellence
- 4.6 Purchasing and Payment Services
Develops arrangements for purchasing goods and services and supports major projects and contracts within the Council. The service has been involved in developing corporate procurement guidelines (see 5.2 below).

Audit, Financial and Purchasing Services were awarded the Charter Mark for the first time in March 2006.

- 4.7 Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Services
Helps the Council deliver best value by exploiting information and communication technology. The service supports the Council's data communication network and provides advice, guidance and training on ICT issues, particularly in the Council's adherence to the electronic government agenda. ICT Services supports the Council's bid for Implementing Electronic Government as well as the Customer Access to Services (CATS) initiative. ICT Services was awarded the Charter Mark for the first time in November 2005.
- 4.8 Consultation
Customer consultation takes place in all service areas. All divisions have key targets relating to customer satisfaction, whether for internal or external customers. In the case of external customers, both Benefit and Revenue Services have conducted surveys.
- 4.9 To fulfil Best Value Performance Indicator (BVPI) 80, Benefit Services conducted a customer satisfaction survey in 2003/04, where the overall satisfaction with the service was 79%. The next such survey is due to be undertaken in 2006/07. Surveys are also conducted of 100 customers a month, including 5% from ethnic minorities and 5% with a disability, asking about their satisfaction with the service, and addressing any concerns. Benefit Services also runs highly successful Customer and Landlord Focus Groups, whose members receive information about the service and can make suggestions as to how it can be improved.
- 4.10 Revenue Services carries out a general and telephone survey of its customers.

5.0 Race Equality Scheme

5.1 During 2005/06, in accordance with the Council timetable and plan, the Directorate updated its reviews of Benefit Services and Financial Services. The outcomes of the reviews are currently being considered by the relevant service management teams services, however the early indications of improvements is given below.

- Continue to provide equality awareness training to staff, particularly where service monitoring has indicated that this may be beneficial.
- Undertake actions developed from the Charter Mark reviews.

5.2 The directorate has also been involved with the Chief Executive's Directorate in drawing up guidelines on promoting equality through procurement as part of Race Equality Scheme requirements. The next stage will be to introduce these, along with training, to council staff involved in procurement.

6.0 Achievement against the Directorate's Equality and Diversity Action Plan for 2005/06

6.1 A schedule detailing the planned outcomes / performance indicators / targets for 2005/06 and progress in achieving these is included in Appendix 1.

Appendix 1 - Achievement of targets set for 2005/06

Progress in achieving the Corporate Targets (C1 – C5) and the Directorate Targets (F1 – F4)

No.	Objective	Planned Outcomes / Performance Indicators	Progress / final outcome
Corporate Targets:			
C1	Review and implement the Council's Race Equality Scheme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete specified service reviews (Benefit Services and Financial Services) by 31/5/05 • Work on Corporate Procurement • Provide directorate input into revised scheme • Implement action plan included in scheme 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reviews undertaken by 31/5/05; outcomes / proposals for action currently being considered • Corporate guidelines for promoting equality through procurement have been drawn up and will be introduced along with training for staff involved in procurement • Supported – revised scheme published 31/5/05 • Ongoing actions include staff training
C2	Progress work on Equality Standard for local government	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Achieve level 2 • Develop action plan for achieving level 3 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Directorate evidence submitted and reviewed – level 2 achieved • Corporate action plan drafted by December 2005 however revised Standard to be launched in June 2006.
C3	Improve access for disabled customers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement actions in Council's Disability Access Strategy (directorate contribution to achievement of the strategy) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Banking hall services transferred to Dudley Council Plus in February 2006. This provides better access for disabled people.

No.	Objective	Planned Outcomes / Performance Indicators	Progress / final outcome
C4	Increase representation from under-represented groups in the workforce	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Achieve BME / disabled employee targets • Complete further audit of employees to enable them to declare whether or not they regard themselves as meeting the statutory definition of disability • Achieve at least 96.5% of employees who have declared ethnic origin 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workforce profile is monitored. As at 31/3/06 7.2% of the workforce was from BME groups • Corporate employee audit to be undertaken in 2006/07 – will include full range of employee information including disability • Achieved
C5	Continuing improvement on Best Value performance indicator (BVPI) 2b (duty to promote race equality)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Achieve improvement on 2004/05 corporate score of 68% 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Corporate data still being collected for 2005/06 score
Directorate Targets:			
F1	Tacking poverty and social exclusion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maximise benefit take-up by priority groups • Maximise take-up of council tax relief 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Benefits shop take-up £1m and 1,027 new Attendance Allowance / Income Support claims. • Total exemptions of £2.4m and discounts of £9.6m
F2	Improve customer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue Charter Mark work 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ICT, Audit, Financial &, Purchasing Services achieved the

No.	Objective	Planned Outcomes / Performance Indicators	Progress / final outcome
	access to services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Measure customer satisfaction from all community groups • Feedback from focus groups leading to service imps. • Improve customer access through technology • Improve physical access to premises • Support CATS – translation and interpretation project • General support to CATS • Use Census information to target 	<p>Charter Mark and are currently working on action plans to further improve services. Revenue Service planning to undergo assessment in 2006/07.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Customer surveys undertaken in Benefit and Revenue Services. Results showed satisfaction with service was over 90%, with no adverse comments from individual groups. • Benefits Customer Focus Group has met each quarter and has contributed to service improvements, impacting on priority groups e.g. access to and information on services. Landlord forum meeting has also taken place and service suggestions noted and taken on board where appropriate. • Benefits mobile computing initiative now allows benefit claims to be carried out from within customers' own homes – of advantage to people with mobility problems. • Banking hall services transferred to Dudley Council Plus in February 2006. This provides better access for disabled people • Participated in corporate group on development of Council Interpretation and Translation Services • Ongoing through transfer of appropriate service lines to Dudley Council Plus and technical support as required

No.	Objective	Planned Outcomes / Performance Indicators	Progress / final outcome
		services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Information being accessed as required to support service take-up and delivery
F3	Leadership and people management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote new council leadership standards Train managers and staff in cultural awareness Consult with staff Brief staff on equality issues 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Standards promoted through recruitment and management development Proposal for managers training to be developed. Currently involved in corporate work on equality competencies, which will support this aim Corporate employee survey undertaken with positive results and no concerns about discrimination. Survey undertaken on satisfaction with the PRD process, with positive results. Ongoing – induction, training, newsletters, race equality scheme reviews etc
F4	Good Stewardship / Use of Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Involvement in development of Phase 2 of PS Enterprise – improved management reporting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Corporate work on phase 2 (Recruitment and Training modules) supported. ICT Services produced range of management reports from the system on HR issues to enable workforce monitoring

Glossary:

BME	Black and minority ethnic
BVPI	Best value performance indicator
CATS	Customer access to services programme
HR	Human Resources