

Select Committee on Environment – 26th June 2007

Report of the Director of finance

Directorate of Finance, ICT and Procurement's Equality and Diversity Annual Report 2006/07

Purpose of Report

1. To consider the Directorate of Finance, ICT and Procurement's equality and diversity annual report for 2006/07.

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 Select Committee on Environment considered the Directorate of Finance, ICT and Procurement's action plan, which sets out its equality and diversity targets for 2007/08, at its meeting held on 8th March 2007. Attached is the annual report which details progress on the targets agreed by the former Select Committee on Economic Regeneration in the directorate's action plan for the previous year, 2006/07.
3. The Select Committee on Regeneration, Culture and Adult Education 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 range of relevant equality legislation includes:
6. The Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 replaces 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.
7. 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 has extended this Act with a duty on public authorities to promote disability equality.

8. 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. A new duty on public authorities to promote gender equality under the Equality Act 2006 came into force on 6th April 2007.
9. 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

10. The annual report contains details of progress in implementing the Directorate of Finance, ICT and Procurement's equality and diversity action plan for 2006/07. Performance indicators or outcomes were identified against each target so that progress in achieving the action plan can be monitored and reviewed.

Recommendation

11. That the Select Committee considers and comments on the Directorate of Finance, ICT and Procurement's equality and diversity annual report for 2006/07.



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for Mike Williams
Director of Finance

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List of Background Papers

Guidance for the preparation of directorates' equality and diversity action plans and annual reports (December 2006)

Directorate of Finance, ICT and Procurement

Equality and Diversity Annual Report 2006/07

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 This Annual Report sets out the Finance Directorate's activities throughout 2006/07 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 (2007/08) was considered by the Select Committee on Environment on 8th March 2007 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 During 2006/07 the Directorate retained its Investor in People standard following reassessment with several key strengths recognised including:

- Leadership values and behaviours forming an integral part of the Performance Review and Development (PRD) process for managers and team leaders
- All employees were offered learning and development opportunities in a way that was accessible to them regardless of working patterns or demands of the job
- Employees are positively encouraged to develop their knowledge and skills e.g. in gaining nationally recognised qualifications
- Induction to the job was seen as valuable and effective, helping new employees integrate with, and therefore contribute to their team at an early stage

- 3.2 As at 31st March 2007, the Finance Directorate employed 630 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 1(b).

Table 1(a) Finance Directorate workforce profile 31 March 2007 (compared with 31 March 2006)

Finance		Female (%)	Male (%)	BME (%)	Disabled (%)
Scale point 34 and above (higher grades)	31/3/07	45.7	54.3	7.3	2.0
	31/3/06	42.5	57.5	6.9	1.4
Below scale point 34 (lower grades)	31/3/07	67.2	32.8	6.9	1.9
	31/3/06	66.2	33.8	7.3	1.3
Total	31/3/07	62.1	37.9	7.0	1.9
	31/3/06	60.5	39.5	7.2	1.3

Table 1(b) Dudley MBC workforce profile 31 March 2007 (compared with 31 March 2006)

Dudley MBC		Female (%)	Male (%)	BME* (%)	Disabled (%)
Scale point 34 and above (higher grades) (excluding schools) #	31/3/07	49.6	50.4	8.9	4.3
	31/3/06	48.0	52.0	8.0	2.0
Below scale point 34 (lower grades) (excluding schools) #	31/3/07	69.7	30.3	5.9	2.2
	31/3/06	69.3	30.7	5.2	1.3
Total (excluding schools)	31/3/07	66.9	33.1	6.4	2.5
	31/3/06	66.4	33.6	5.6	1.4
Total (including schools)	31/3/07	74.8	25.2	5.1	1.7
	31/3/06	74.6	25.4	4.6	0.8

Notes:

Scale point 34 on 31 March 2007 £27,000 approx.

* BME figures exclude those employees for whom no ethnic origin data is held

Grade breakdown excludes schools due to the different grading for teachers

- 3.3 The directorate recruited 28 employees in 2006/07 of which 64% were female, 7% were disabled and 4% were from a BME background.
- 3.4 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 2007, 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. This annual report should therefore be read in conjunction with the Council wide review report.

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 During 2006/07 the directorate achieved its target of a Charter Mark in all six divisions, being the first directorate in Dudley MBC to achieve this. The certificates have subsequently been merged.

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 deals with over 31,000 households, paying out over £80m of housing benefit / council tax benefit claims each year. As well as dealing with correspondence, telephone calls and personal visitors, last year the service carried out approx. 16,800 home visits. The service includes the Benefits Shop, located in the Churchill Precinct, which advises residents and last year helped them claim over £2.5 m in

additional welfare benefits, as well as running campaigns to encourage people to claim Attendance Allowance and Income Support, to which they are entitled. Benefit Services was successfully reviewed by the Benefits Fraud Inspectorate in June 2006 and maintained the top score of 4 in the Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) review.

4.3 Revenue Services

Collects the maximum amount of local taxes and other debts 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 facilities.

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. Financial Services is recognised as an Investor in Excellence organisation (linked to the European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM) model) by 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).

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 Customer Access to Services (CATS) initiative.

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 2006/07, where the overall satisfaction with the service was 79%. 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 Consultation 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 as well as a monthly customer satisfaction survey.

5.0 Race Equality Scheme Reviews

- 5.1 During 2006/07, in accordance with the Council timetable and plan, the Directorate updated its review of ICT 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 In addition to the above a Race Equality Scheme review of Corporate Procurement Services was carried out in conjunction with Chief Executive's Directorate with the following recommendations:

- Promote awareness of equality and diversity issues among our employees and the contractors / suppliers we use
- Encourage contractors and suppliers to promote equality

- 5.3 The reviews of Benefit and Financial Services undertaken in May 2006 were reported on in the 2005/06 Annual Report.

6.0 Achievement against the Directorate's Equality and Diversity Action Plan for 2006/07

- 6.1 A schedule detailing the progress in achieving the Action Plan for Corporate and Directorate targets is included in Appendix 1.

Appendix 1 - Achievement of targets set for 2006/07

Progress in achieving the Corporate Targets (C) and the Directorate Targets (F)

No.	Objective and Target Date	Council Plan Priority	Planned Outcomes / Performance Indicators	Progress / final outcome
C1	Equality Scheme	Quality Service Matters		
a	Complete impact assessments listed in the revised Race Equality Scheme (RES) (31 May 2006)		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assessment completed by deadline Impact outcomes assessed Improvement / actions identified 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> RES of Benefit and Financial Services updated May 2006 (reported on in the 2005/06 Annual report) and ICT Services March 2007. Review of Corporate Procurement done jointly with Chief Exec's. (Review of Revenue Services postponed for full Equality Impact Assessment in 2007/08)
b	Assess implications of the Equality Bill – build requirements for gender (April 2007), religion or belief and sexual orientation into the Equality Scheme (2009)		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Scheme published by deadline 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supported corporate work in achieving publication of Equality Scheme (Gender) by April 2007
c	Launch equality impact assessment guidance (April 2006) and develop programme of assessments (October 2006)		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Guidance launched Programme agreed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supported launch of corporate guidance Directorate services screened for relevance and programme agreed (Revenue and Benefit Services to be assessed in 2007/08)
d	Maintain / increase score against BVPI 2b on race equality (March 2007)		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Score at least maintained 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Achieved (Corporate results)
e	Publish combined equality scheme (4/12/06); establish consultation process with employees, community and other stakeholders		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consultation plan implemented Scheme published by deadline 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supported corporate work in achieving this objective

No.	Objective and Target Date	Council Plan Priority	Planned Outcomes / Performance Indicators	Progress / final outcome
C2	Equality Standard for Local Government – implement the action plan to achieve level 3 of the Standard by March 2007	Quality Service matters		Revised Standard awaited from the IDeA so unclear at this stage what requirements for Level 3 will be.
C3	People Management Strategy	Quality Service matters		Supported Corporate activity in completing, establishing and promoting the strategy
a	Implement equality and diversity elements of the strategy by target dates as set out in the strategy		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Target dates as set out in the strategy achieved 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Generally promoted and shared good practice through training and other activities Monitored directorate performance in employment and recruitment
b	Produce and implement age and employment policy and procedure to comply with new legislation (mid 2006)		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fair employment policies and procedures in relation to age 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promoted policy and good practice once published
c	Establish full framework of flexible working policies (mid 2006)		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No. of employees taking up options 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promoted new Occasional Working at Home policy and revised flexi-time and voluntary alteration of hours policies. 27.3% of all Finance Directorate employees work part time including 39.1% of women at SCP point 34 and above
d	Achieve increase in the no. of disabled people working for the Council – establish baseline through audit, review and action (Dec 2006)		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> More accurate baseline 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Employee audit carried out. Data currently being input and analysed. Early indications that the % of disabled people in the workforce has increased from 1.3% to 1.9% (see Table 1(a))
C4	Disability Access Strategy	Quality Service matters		Supported corporate activity in this area
a	Implement actions in Council's Disability Access Strategy, linking with development of Equality Scheme (March 2007)		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Coordinated strategies and action plans 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Customer access is under continuous review and issues raised, e.g. by customer consultation group, are addressed
b	Achieve improvement in BVPI 156 on access to buildings (March 2007)		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved access to services Increase in BVPI score 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All Finance premises with external customer access meet the standard

No.	Objective and Target Date	Council Plan Priority	Planned Outcomes / Performance Indicators	Progress / final outcome
F1	Contribute to reducing poverty and social exclusion in the borough (all targets March 2007)	Quality Service Matters / Caring Matters		
a	Maximise Benefit take-up (e.g. Welfare Benefits, Attendance Allowance (AA) and Income Support (IS)) by priority groups through campaign work		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase in benefit take-up 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Benefits Shop achieved £2.5m in additional benefit take-up • New successful AA / IS claims totalled 951 (however sickness levels meant that this was below target)
b	Maximise take-up of council tax relief through customer information and consultation opportunities		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Level of take-up of reliefs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Over £12.3m granted in discounts / exemptions to individuals and organisations
F2	Improve customer access to services (all targets March 2007)	Quality Service Matters / Caring Matters		
a	Measure customer satisfaction from all community groups		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Surveys undertaken, results evaluated and action taken 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BV80 Customer survey undertaken with overall satisfaction rate of 79% and no significant differences between racial groups. High service satisfaction rates for other Benefits and Revenues surveys
b	Consult with customers on access issues through focus groups		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meetings held 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quarterly meetings held with Benefits Customer Consultation Group where service access issues are regularly raised
c	Consult with landlords on service issues		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meetings held 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Twice yearly landlord meetings provide an opportunity to raise equality issues
d	Undertake improvement actions following Charter Mark inspections		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confirmation that the standard is still being met 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Successful review of Benefit and ICT Services and directorate certificates subsequently merged.
e	Improve customer access through technology		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access channels provided 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mobile computing now established enabling claims to be checked in customers' own homes • Video link established with Dudley Council Plus
f	Support Dudley Council Plus in delivering customer services		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Successful transfer and running of services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Revenues cash desk transferred in February 2005 – services running smoothly

No.	Objective and Target Date	Council Plan Priority	Planned Outcomes / Performance Indicators	Progress / final outcome
g	Use the information in the 2001 Census to evaluate the targeting of services		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Information used for service and business planning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Services e.g. Benefits Shop are aware of priority groups and areas of service need. A Benefits Take-up strategy has been developed
h	Make links with the Older People Strategy		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Directorate statements in Older People Strategy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Directorate action plan re. older people is reflected in the Older People Strategy
F3	Manage staffing resources effectively – fairly and equally (all targets March 2007)	Quality Service matters	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Employee satisfaction with work processes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> High satisfaction rate with Finance PRD Low employee turnover and favourable scores from leavers re. their job experience Finance PRD includes section on leadership values. Managers encouraged to improve skills through Management Competency training
a	Promote the use of council leadership standards through the use of the PRD process, highlighting Inclusion and Fairness			
b	Continue to train managers and front line staff in equality and cultural awareness			
c	Consult with staff using satisfaction surveys and focus groups to measure staff and job related issues			
d	Regularly communicate with / brief staff about equality issues			
e	Support the diverse recruitment panels initiative in DUE		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support provided 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Two volunteers identified however scheme has not yet commenced – awaiting decision by DUE

No.	Objective and Target Date	Council Plan Priority	Planned Outcomes / Performance Indicators	Progress / final outcome
F4	Continue to make effective use of ICT resources (all targets March 2007)	Quality Service matters		
a	Support the development of Phase 2 of PSE (corporate HR system)		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved recording of employee data 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ICT project manager supported the system under corporate lead – training and recruitment modules developed and currently being rolled out ICT support to production of reports
b	Support the accessibility of the Intranet within recognised accessibility standards		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved access to the Intranet 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ongoing work on a new content management system (similar to that used on dudley.gov.uk) as part of the Council's ICT Strategy
c	Provide equipment at the ICT training centre at Abberley St to meet customer training needs		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved customer access 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Software / equipment is available to help accessibility of training for individuals