

Meeting of the Cabinet – 14th March 2012

Report of the Director of Corporate Resources

Equality scheme 2012-15

Purpose of report

1. To consider the draft equality scheme 2012-15.

Background

2. Previous reports to the Cabinet have highlighted changes to equality legislation introduced by the Equality Act 2010, in particular the general public sector equality duty implemented from April 2011 and the specific equality duties to publish equality information and equality objectives by 31 January and 5th April 2012 respectively.
3. The preparation of race, disability and gender equality schemes are no longer explicit legal requirements, but the Cabinet has supported the development of a new, overall scheme to help to ensure that there is a focused, planned approach to equality work and to meeting the statutory duties, progress against which can be assessed and reported on. The scheme will contribute to meeting the new duties on the publishing of equality information and will set out the equality objectives which the council must publish by April.
4. The scheme includes:
 - a summary of the relevant legislation
 - information about protected groups in the borough
 - the roles and responsibilities of officers, members and groups in relation to equality
 - planning and reporting processes
 - important equality issues and challenges
 - the equality objectives
 - an updated equality policy statement for the council.

5. The Cabinet will continue to receive an annual review of equality which will report on progress with implementing the scheme.
6. In response to the new duty to publish equality information, the equality pages on the council's website at <http://www.dudley.gov.uk/community-and-living/equality-diversity/> have been substantially redesigned and now contain or signpost much more information demonstrating compliance across the council with the general public sector equality duty.

Finance

7. Costs involved in implementing the scheme will be met from within existing budgets.

Law

8. The Equality Act 2010 replaced the previous anti-discrimination laws with a single Act. The first duties of the Act came into force on 1st October 2010.
9. The general public sector equality duty under the Act came into force on 5th April 2011 requiring public authorities to pay due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations covering the protected characteristics of age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.
10. The Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties) Regulations 2011 require public authorities to publish equality information by 31 January 2012 and equality objectives by 5th April 2012.

Equality impact

11. The equality scheme sets out in detail the council's arrangements for meeting the equality duties, including the general public sector equality duty, covering all protected characteristics. Having the arrangements in place will help to ensure that the impact of the council's policies and decisions on protected groups is properly assessed. Age is covered by the parts of the Equality Act already brought into force only in terms of employment and training, although the Government intends to bring into force the provisions banning age discrimination in the provision of services in due course. These will not though cover children and young people under the age of 18.

Recommendation

12. It is recommended that Members approve the Equality Scheme 2012-15, including the statutory equality objectives and a revised equality policy statement for the council.



.....
Philip Tart
Director of Corporate Resources

Contact Officer: Simon Manson
Telephone: 01384 814713
Email: simon.manson@dudley.gov.uk

List of Background Papers

Corporate equality and diversity leadership group minutes and papers