



Leicester
City Council

WARDS AFFECTED
All Wards (Corporate initiative)

FORWARD TIMETABLE OF CONSULTATION AND MEETINGS:

Cabinet

22 April 2003

Corporate Equality Strategy and Action Plan

Joint Report of the Service Director (Human Resources and Equalities) **And the Assistant Chief Executive**

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 This report informs Members about the new Corporate Equality Strategy and Action Plan, which aims to provide a strategic focus for the authority to support the mainstreaming of equalities across all levels of service delivery, customer care and policy development. It also discusses proposals for a new strategic approach, underpinned by the Corporate Equality Strategy and Action Plan, which supports and drives the mainstreaming equalities agenda.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 It is recommended that the Cabinet:

- Agree the Equality Strategy and Action Plan
- Agree the Equal Opportunities Statement and Commitments as set out in Section Two of the document
- Agree the points discussed in section 4 and proposals set out in section 6 of this report
- Agree to an annual equality action plan over the three year period of the strategy to inform the prioritisation of resources against agreed targets.

3. Financial Implications

- 3.1 The costs associated with the production and distribution of the Equality Strategy and Action Plan have been met from existing budgets from within the Chief Executive's Office. The costs for implementing the Equality Standard for Local Government have been met from the Chief Executive's Office.

4. Background

- 4.1 The development of a comprehensive equality strategy is timely. Legislative and other changes have meant that local authorities now have increased

responsibilities for ensuring equal opportunities in all aspects of service delivery and policy development. This document replaces our current statement of Equal Opportunities in Service Delivery and Employment, and Statement on Race Equality.

- 4.2 The final draft Corporate Equality Strategy and Action Plan (CESAP) , attached, takes into account the views of consultee's taken during the development of the plan.
- 4.3 These included that the equality strategy should have the following elements:
- Set out our intentions in a separate policy statement
 - Be short, sharp and deliverable
 - Embrace broader equality concepts (there was a perception that issues other than race were not getting the same consideration or attention)
 - Be user friendly
- 4.4 In addition views were expressed, that the council should seek to work towards implementing a detailed strategy which clearly related to service issues and initiatives.
- 4.5 However, there has already been an endorsement of the principles in the original draft document and views were expressed that a comprehensive equality strategy is timely and much needed. A further short consultation process has been undertaken recently, including a Cabinet sub group meeting, and the attached document re-drafted to reflect these and earlier views. The Cabinet sub group views have lead to the following changes to the document:
- Restructuring, including the merging and realignment of sections on the strategic context (pages 8 – 10);
 - Reference to Cabinet members responsibility for reviewing and evaluating equalities (page 8);
 - Clarification of action planning process (page 11);
 - Use of outcomes in the action plan (pages 12 – 23) and;
 - The general tidying up of the language and text.

5. A New Strategic Approach

- 5.1 The Council's Equality Strategy and Action Plan, takes account of the changing, local, National and European developments on equality. These include:
- Changes to the Race Relations Act and the pending changes to other UK laws brought about the implementation of Article 13 of the Amsterdam Treaty, which extends the rights of individuals in employment and other areas, on the grounds of age, gender, disability, sexuality and race

- The introduction of the Equality Standard for Local government as a best value performance indicator, signalling a drive for mainstreaming equalities at all levels of the organisations planning and management processes
- The drive for integrating and strengthening anti-discrimination measures across a much broader range of issues through the proposals for a single Equality Commission
- Changing local communities and public expectations

5.2 It is proposed that the strategy should provide the organisational focus to target available resources and energy into supporting a much more rigorous approach to mainstreaming equalities. The strategy acknowledges the need for strong leadership and direction, with clear priorities, and aims to present a framework for effectively managing equalities and supporting continuous improvement in equality standards throughout the council's core activities.

5.3 The strategy incorporates the Equality Standard for Local Government as a key driver for assessing and establishing targets in all areas – service delivery, employment and corporate leadership and commitment as set out in the Equality Standard's framework.

5.4 It is proposed that the annual action plan will be agreed to provide a focus for priorities, resourcing and targets over the three year period of the strategy.

6. Role of the Corporate Equality and Strategy Group

6.1 In order to drive the strategy, it is recognised that there is a need for the new Corporate Equality and Strategy Group to take a leading role. This group will be chaired by a member of the Corporate Directors Board and leading representatives from all departments, Trade Union Representatives and representatives from established Employee Groups.

6.2 The aim is to create linkages with service departments, share responsibility amongst the Directorate for leading on equalities and to bring a mix of corporate and service aspects to the forum.

6.3 The group will take a lead role in evaluating progress and ensuring delivery of agreed action plan.

7. Performance Management

7.1 It is proposed that work is undertaken to differentiate between systems and attitudinal barriers to effective performance management, setting performance targets and business planning. It is further proposed that this should lead to a re-appraisal of current training and development which can help to address any barriers that exist. The lead for this should rest with the Service Director for Human Resources and Equalities.

- 7.2 The strategy acknowledges the role of equality officers and performance officers as critical to the success of effective performance management, and the impact of equalities on service outcomes.
- 7.3 The strategy proposes that business plans be assessed annually as part of the best value process. A report on the progress of the Equality Standards audit should include an appraisal of effectively mainstreaming equalities into business planning and monitoring the outcomes.

8. Other implications

Other implications	Yes/no	Section references within supporting information
Equal Opportunities	Yes	All
Policy	Yes	All
Sustainable and Environmental	No	
Legal	Yes	3.1, 4.1
Crime and Disorder	No	
Human Rights	No	
Elderly People on low income	No	

9. Consultation

Corporate Race Equality Group 10 October 2002
 Directors Board 12 November 2002
 Leaders Briefing 3 February 2003
 Cabinet Sub Group 6 March 2003

10. Author/Officer to Contact:

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DECISION STATUS

Key Decision	No
Reason	N/A
Appeared in Forward Plan	No
Executive or Council Decision	Executive (Cabinet)