



Report To: Housing Portfolio Holder and Portfolio
Holder with responsibility for Equality and
Diversity

15 October 2014

Lead Officer: Equality and Diversity Officer

Equality Scheme 2012 – 2015 (2014 – 2015 Update)

Purpose

1. To request that the Portfolio Holder with responsibility for Equality and Diversity comment on, endorse and adopt the 2014 – 2015 update of the Council's Equality Scheme 2012 – 2015 on behalf of the Council.
2. There are no key decisions arising directly from this report.

Recommendations

3. That the Portfolio Holder agrees the 2014 – 2015 update of the Council's Equality Scheme 2012 – 2015 on behalf of the Council. This is to ensure that the Council is fully compliant with the statutory duty set out in Equality Act 2010.

Reasons for Recommendations

4. Previously, the Portfolio Holder endorsed an earlier version of the Equality Scheme 2012 – 2015 for the Council - this was previously known as the Single Equality Scheme. An updated version of the Equality Scheme has been developed for 2014 – 2015 in response to changes to the Council's corporate Aims and Objectives and new data on the community profile of South Cambridgeshire.

Executive Summary

5. The Equality Act 2010 came into effect on 01 October 2010 and brings together, harmonises and extends current equality law. The existing anti-discrimination laws have been consolidated into a single Act, which has been introduced to strengthen the laws preventing discrimination and the inequalities that still exist in society today.
6. The Equality Act has also created changes to earlier legislation and includes discrimination previously unrecognised in legislation. In essence, it creates a new 'Equality Duty' on public bodies to tackle discrimination, promote equality of opportunity and encourage good community relations.
7. The term *protected characteristics* has replaced *equality strands* for describing the protected traits held by groups or individuals under anti-discrimination and equality legislation. The earlier separate duties for disability, gender and race have been replaced with a single, more effective framework and the new 'Equality Duty' covers:
 - Age
 - Disability

- Gender Reassignment
- Marriage and Civil Partnership
- Pregnancy and Maternity
- Race
- Religion or Belief
- Sex
- Sexual Orientation

8. On 05 April 2011, further parts of the Equality Act were implemented under the General Duty, which requires local authorities exercising public functions to have due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimization;
- Advance equality of opportunity between those who share a protected characteristic and those who don't;
- Foster good relations between those who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who don't.

Considerations

9. The specific duties support and aid compliance with the General Duty and require local authorities to:

- *Publish information annually to demonstrate how we meet the General Duty starting no later than 31 January 2012.* This requirement was met and continues to be met on an annual basis.
- *Prepare and publish one or more objectives to meet any of the aims of the General Duty at least every four years starting no later than 06 April 2012.* The Council's Equality Objectives that it will be focussing on are detailed in chapter 6 of the Equality Scheme. The Equality Objectives have been aligned with the Corporate Plan as agreed by Full Council in February 2014.

Options

10. The Portfolio Holder may agree, amend or reject the Single Equality Scheme as presented, bearing in mind that the Council has a legal obligation to publish one or more equality objectives.

Implications

11. In the writing of this report, taking into account financial, legal, staffing, risk management, equality and diversity, climate change, community safety and any other key issues the following implications have been considered:

Financial

12. All current equalities work is being taken forward from existing budgets.

Legal

13. The Council has a public responsibility to ensure that it adheres to legislative requirements in relation to equalities, which ensure that our services are open to, and, accessible by all our residents and reflect the diversity of our rural district.

Staffing

14. The Equality and Diversity Officer is responsible for mainstreaming equalities into the Council with the support of the Executive Management Team, Equality and Diversity Steering Group and Equalities Consultative Forum.

Risk Management

15. The Council could be successfully challenged over not complying with general equalities legislation or legislation specific to public and local authority bodies, *leading to* financial compensation payments and penalties, possible Equality and Human Rights Commission inspection, *resulting in* reduction in reserves available to support balanced MTFS, adverse publicity and effect on reputation.

Equality and Diversity

16. The Council is committed to eliminating discrimination and prejudice, and developing a culture which values difference, both in employment and service delivery. Our commitment to equalities is based on the idea of equal life chances. This helps local authorities to develop an equal society for the community, which it serves. An Equality Scheme sets out our plans for making equality happen for people living in South Cambridgeshire.

Consultation responses (including from the Youth Council)

17. The Portfolio Holder commented on and endorsed the original draft (Single) Equality Scheme on 19 January 2011.
18. The (Single) Equality Scheme has been subject to widespread consultation with Council staff, Councillors, local residents, community groups, partner organisations, parish councils and other associations between 1 April 2011 and 24 June 2011. This helped us gather a wide range of views on whether the draft Scheme represented an effective approach to delivering Equality over the next 3 years. Comments received were used to finalise the Scheme for the Council to adopt in 2012.
19. Consultation on the 2014 – 2015 update of the Equality Scheme took place with the Equalities consultative Forum and the Council's Disability Forum.

Effect on Strategic Aims

20. The updated Equality Scheme and its associated Equality Objectives have been aligned with Strategic Aims as set out in the Council's Corporate Plan.

Background Papers: none.

Contact Officer: Paul Williams – Equality and Diversity Officer
Telephone: (01954) 713465
E-mail: paul.Williams@scambs.gov.uk