



Report To: Housing Portfolio Holder
Lead Officer: Equality and Diversity Officer

21 October 2015

Equality Scheme 2015-2020 (2015-2017 version)

Purpose

1. To request that the Housing Portfolio Holder comment on and endorse the final (post-consultation) draft of the Equality Scheme for 2015 – 2020 (2015 – 2017 version) and adopts the Equality Scheme on behalf of the Council.
2. There are no key decisions arising directly from this report.

Recommendations

3. That the Housing Portfolio Holder comment on and endorse the final (post-consultation) draft of the Council's Equality Scheme 2015 – 2020 (2015 – 2017 version) attached at **Appendix A** and adopts the Equality Scheme 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. The Housing Portfolio Holder commented on and endorsed an earlier version of the Equality Scheme on 18 March 2015. The Equality Scheme 2015 – 2020 has been developed to provide closer alignment with the Corporate Plan for the same period and to reflect the latest data on the community profile of South Cambridgeshire.
5. In addition, it is necessary to agree priorities at this stage in order to enable effective planning and resourcing and to demonstrate that the Council is compliant with the second specific duty of the Public Sector Equality Duty as detailed in paragraph 7 of this report.

Background

6. 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.
7. The Council's statutory Public Sector Duty requires us to:
 - Publish information annually to demonstrate how we meet the General Duty. This requirement is met on an annual basis. The Annual Equality Report 2014 also enhances the Council's compliance with this specific duty.
 - Prepare and publish one or more objectives to meet any of the aims of the General Duty at least every four years. The Council's equality objectives that it will be focusing on are detailed in Chapter 6 of the Equality Scheme. These objectives are aligned with the Corporate Plan, agreed by Council in February 2015.

8. A growing elderly population, greater mobility, immigration and other social trends are making changes to the population we serve. At the same time issues of equality, diversity and community cohesion are high on the national agenda, which could impact at a local level. An Equality Scheme helps to address inequalities and promote equal life changes for the people living in South Cambridgeshire.

Considerations

9. The Council's Equality Scheme 2015 – 2020 has been developed for a five-year period to provide closer alignment with the Corporate Plan. Annual reviews will continue to take place to ensure that the equality objectives remain fit for purpose and that the community profile information is up to date.
10. The three equality objectives outlined in the Equality Scheme are as follows:
- Improve service design, delivery and access by improving the way we engage with communities, use customers' feedback and develop our knowledge and understanding of our communities.
 - This supports Council Aim 1: Engagement.
 - Identify, prioritise and deliver actions, which will narrow the gap in outcomes between disadvantaged groups and the wider community.
 - This supports Council Aim 2: Partnerships.
 - Foster good relations by promoting greater awareness and understanding between our communities.
 - This supports Council Aim 3: Wellbeing.
11. In addition, three equality commitments have been identified to help promote and raise awareness of equality issues during the course of 2015 to 2017:
- The Council will explore the issues affecting people with dementia and their carers in terms of access to services. In addition, the Council will aim to be a dementia-friendly organisation by supporting the Dementia Friends initiative and holding awareness sessions for staff and partners to learn more about dementia and the effects it has on sufferers and carers.
 - The Council will work with partners to help address the issue of 'new town blues' in our new communities. In addition, the Council will train staff in Mental Health First Aid to identify, understand and help a person who may be developing or experiencing mental health difficulties.
 - The Council will improve access to services and the responsiveness of services and ensure that Gypsy and Traveller rights and needs are integrated into existing policies and services. In addition, the Council will recruit two new Officers to support the Gypsy and Traveller community in the district.

Options

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

Implications

13. 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

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

Legal

15. 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

16. The Equality and Diversity Officer is responsible for mainstreaming equalities into the Council with the support of the EMT and Equalities Consultative Forum.

Risk Management

17. Non-compliance with equalities legislation is a strategic risk for the Council. Adoption of this scheme will contribute towards mitigating this risk. The precise wording is as follows:

‘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

18. 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)

19. The Equality Scheme was subject to six weeks public consultation from 17 July to 28 August 2015. In addition the Tenants Participation Group (TPG) and Youth Council were consulted at their meetings on 03 August and 16 August 2015 respectively.
20. A total of 24 individual responses were received in relation to the Equality Scheme consultation. 87.5% of respondents agreed or agreed strongly with the Council's equality objectives and 66.67% of respondents agreed or agreed strongly with the equality commitments.
21. A full analysis of consultation responses is available on request.

Effect on Strategic Aims

22. 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: Analysis of Equality Objectives and Commitments Consultation 17
July to 28 August 2015.

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