

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Staffing & Communications Portfolio 29 November 2007
Holder meeting
AUTHOR/S: Chief Executive / HR Officer

EQUALITY – EMPLOYMENT ISSUES

Purpose

1. This report provides information to the Staffing and Communications Portfolio Holder on the current work in support of the Equality Standard for Local Government Level 1 and asks for commitment to further work being done.
2. This is a key decision because of the emphasis given to equality issues through the Corporate Governance Inspection and the commitment given by the Council to achieving the Level 1 of the Equality Standard for Local Government by December 2007 and Level 2 by December 2008.

Executive Summary

3. Recognising the work already done and in progress, this report recommends that the Portfolio Holder commits the Council to
 - (a) adopt recruitment procedures, which use non-discriminatory practices for race gender, disability, sexual orientation, religion or belief, age
 - (b) an employment equality assessment of the local labour market, workforce profiling and equal pay review
 - (c) establish a fair employment and equal pay policy
 - (d) set employment objectives and targets incorporating the employment related issues from statutory equality schemes
 - (e) adopt procedures to ensure that publicity for vacancies does not unfairly restrict the range of applicants
 - (f) produce standard application forms and job descriptions that are clear and explicit
 - (g) review the personnel information system for monitoring suitability, including underpinning the council's statutory monitoring duties
 - (h) make procedures consistent with employment Codes of Practice
 - (i) develop a programme of staff training in equality issues.

Background

4. The Council has committed to achieving Level 1 of the Equality Standard by December 2007 and Level 2 by December 2008. The Equality Standard provides a way of working that makes the mainstreaming of equality into service delivery and employment an issue for all aspects of the Council's work.
5. Level 1 of the Standard looks for the following commitments in relation to employment and training
 - Adopt recruitment procedures which use non-discriminatory practices for race gender, disability, sexual orientation, religion or belief, and age

- Commitment to an employment equality assessment of the local labour market, workforce profiling and equal pay review
 - Commitment to establish a fair employment and equal pay policy
 - Commitment to set employment objectives and targets incorporating the employment related issues from statutory equality schemes
 - Commitment to adopt procedures to ensure that publicity for vacancies does not unfairly restrict the range of applicants
 - Commitment to produce a standard range of application forms and job descriptions that are clear and explicit
 - Commitment to review personnel information system for monitoring suitability, including underpinning the council's statutory monitoring duties
 - Commitment to make procedures consistent with employment Codes of Practice
 - Commitment to develop a programme of staff training in equality issues.
6. Councillors, managers, and staff, led by the Equalities & Diversity Officer and HR have a responsibility for delivery on these commitments.

Considerations

7. As part of good practice concerning employee relations and keeping up to date with legislation and case law changes, much of the work outlined by the commitments listed in paragraph 5 is either already done or is included in service plans. A general commitment to this work was given in the Equal and Diversity Policy in 2003 but the commitment to all areas of equality has not been renewed.
8. The following provides examples of work and highlights areas for specific further work.
- (a) Adopt recruitment procedures, which use non-discriminatory practices for race gender, disability, sexual orientation, religion or belief, age
- Evidence of this commitment include a major review of recruitment procedures during 2007, making procedures more accessible and clearer for all managers, updates to all management teams on recruitment issues and revision and updating of training on recruitment and selection for delivery by an external provider, the first session having been held in early November. Regular reviews need to be built in to ensure practices reflect legislative and best practice changes. In addition more specific equality objectives need to be built into the appraisal and performance management systems for 2008.
- (b) Commitment to an employment equality assessment of the local labour market, workforce profiling and equal pay review
- Evidence of this commitment is provided by the limited workforce profiling already carried out, the equal pay audit carried out in 2007 and the decision to carry out a data cleanse exercise during 2007 to improve the quality of data held. HR will work with partners such as the County Council to assess the local labour market to enable a more robust employment equality assessment to be carried out.
- (c) Commitment to establish a fair employment and equal pay policy
- Evidence of this commitment is provided by the new draft Comprehensive Equalities Policy and the development of fair employment and equal pay elements to include all strands of equality of the Corporate Equality Plan (both going to Cabinet in

December). The draft policy and plan will be consulted on during the early part of 2008.

- (d) Commitment to set employment objectives and targets incorporating the employment related issues from statutory equality schemes

The statutory equality schemes relate to race, disability and gender but these may be extended. Evidence of this commitment includes the work highlighted above.

- (e) Commitment to adopt procedures to ensure that publicity for vacancies does not unfairly restrict the range of applicants

Evidence of this commitment is the work being done on recruitment monitoring. However, this is an area where it is recognised that much more could be done to review whether there is any indirect discrimination through publicity such that certain groups are not reached. For example, more advertising is being done through the Internet and websites and this needs to be reviewed to ensure that this does not disadvantage anyone.

- (f) Commitment to produce a standard range of application forms and job descriptions that are clear and explicit

Evidence of this commitment is provided through the new electronic application form produced with Tribal Consulting and the commitment to providing more generic elements of job descriptions following the establishment of management competencies. This will be an area of more work and is included in the HR-Payroll service plan for 2008/ 09.

- (g) Commitment to review personnel information system for monitoring suitability, including underpinning the council's statutory monitoring duties

Evidence of this commitment is the on-going work using ResourceLink, the integrated HR-Payroll system, to produce better monitoring and management information. Monitoring reports are already produced for Performance Indicator purposes and the data cleanse process was instigated to improve the quality of the data held. This is an on-going area of work to improve for example, monitoring of training and to ensure that all areas of equality are adequately monitored. This work will be on-going during 2008.

- (h) Commitment to make procedures consistent with employment Codes of Practice

Evidence of this commitment is the on-going review of employment procedures. More work is needed for example to formalise the informal equality impact assessments done on new and revised employment procedures.

- (i) Commitment to develop a programme of staff training in equality issues

Training on equalities at all levels is being reviewed and extended and there will be a rolling programme of training commencing in early 2008 to provide appropriate training to frontline staff, managers and finally all employees.

Options

9. If there is no evidence of the commitments to the employment and training issues highlighted in Level 1 of the Equality Standard for Local Government, the Council will not meet its declared aim of achieving Level 1 of the Standard.

Implications

10. Financial	Resources may be needed for further development of the application form, training, further development of the integrated HR-Payroll system and for training.
Legal	There is a legal obligation to comply with discrimination legislation and the relevant Codes of Practice
Staffing	The staffing issues are outlined in the report
Risk Management	The risk is considered to be medium
Equal Opportunities	The implications are highlighted in the report

Consultations

11. The Equal Opportunities Steering Group has been consulted about the contents of the report.

Effect on Annual Priorities and Corporate Objectives

12. Affordable Homes	A diverse workforce, which understands the needs of the community, will be more able to deliver the corporate objectives.
Customer Service	
Northstowe and other growth areas	
Quality, Accessible Services	
Village Life	
Sustainability	
Partnership	

Conclusions/Summary

13. Much work has been done in these areas and more work is included in service plans for 2008/ 09.

Recommendations

14. Recognising the work already done and in progress, the Portfolio Holder is recommended to commit the Council to
- (a) adopt recruitment procedures, which use non-discriminatory practices for race gender, disability, sexual orientation, religion or belief, age
 - (b) an employment equality assessment of the local labour market, workforce profiling and equal pay review
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 - (g) review the personnel information system for monitoring suitability, including underpinning the council's statutory monitoring duties

- (h) make procedures consistent with employment Codes of Practice
- (i) develop a programme of staff training in equality issues.

Background Papers: the following background papers were used in the preparation of this report:

The Equality Standard for Local Government – revised October 2007

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