

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Staffing Portfolio Holder

12 March 2009

AUTHOR/S: Chief Executive / Equality and Diversity Officer

COMPREHENSIVE EQUALITIES POLICY 2009 – 2012

Purpose

1. To request that the Staffing Portfolio Holder comment on and endorse the draft Comprehensive Equalities Policy 2009 –2012 and recommend that Cabinet adopt the new policy in April 2009.
2. This is a key decision because
 - it is likely to be significant in terms of its effects on communities living or working in all wards of the District.
 - it raises new issues of policy, or is made in the course of developing proposals to amend the policy framework, or is a decision taken under powers delegated by the Council to amend an aspect of the policy framework.
 - it is of such significance to a locality, the Council or the services which it provides that the decision-taker is of the opinion that it should be treated as a key decision.

and it was first published in the March 2009 Forward Plan.

Background

3. The Council has identified equalities as a priority area in which it must make progress because of the findings of the CGI inspection; the need to achieve compliance with statutory requirements; and deliver relevant Council Aims and Actions. The Improvement Board has also identified this as a key area for the Council. The Council also needs to be more in step with its partners in the LSP and LAA. Equality and diversity will be an area of focus for the CAA.
4. Progress has been held back over the last year because of the illness of the former Equality and Diversity Officer and the need to address other improvement priorities.
5. However, a new Equality and Diversity Officer, Paul Williams, has now come into post and approval has been given to the appointment of a one-year post, Equalities Project Officer, to support Equality Impact Assessments (EQIAs). Further capacity is being provided through the services of a consultant to support the development and revision of the policy framework.
6. An essential part of the Equalities Standard for Local Government is for the authority to express its commitment to equality and diversity through the development of a Comprehensive Equalities Policy.

Consultations

7. Cabinet approved an earlier draft at its meeting in December 2007.

8. The earlier draft was then used for consultation purposes at stakeholder meetings in April 2008. Following those meetings, the policy has been further revised and has been sent to a range of stakeholders and partners for their views.
9. The current draft of the policy has since been endorsed by the Equality and Diversity Steering Group and the Executive Management Team in February 2009.

Conclusions/Summary

10. Much of the text of the previous draft has been retained, but the new version provides more detail in the Introduction, in the Statutory Obligations, and in the section about How we will deliver Change. The core of the document (The Council's commitment and the Objectives) remain largely as they were.
11. The major change is that the new draft strengthens the Council's commitment to go for Level 3 of the Equalities Standard. The previous version envisaged that the Council would decide whether to go for Level 3 after the achievement of Level 2. The new version commits to the achievement of Level 3 within the period of the policy (2009 – 2012). The revised Comprehensive Equalities Policy also includes an appendix setting out the Council's programme for EQIAs.
12. An Equalities Implementation Work Programme has been developed to meet the commitments outlined in the Comprehensive Equalities Policy. It addresses the most important things, which must be delivered, focusing particularly on compliance with statutory requirements. Key milestones include:
 - (a) Cabinet adopt a new Race Equality Scheme in September 2009
 - (b) Cabinet adopt a new Gender Equality Scheme in September 2009
 - (c) Cabinet adopt a new Gypsy and Traveller Strategy in September 2009
 - (d) Cabinet adopt a new Disability Equality Scheme in January 2010

Recommendations

13. The Staffing Portfolio Holder is invited to comment on and endorse the draft Comprehensive Equalities Policy 2009 –2012 and recommend that Cabinet adopt the new policy in April 2009.

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

Previous draft of Comprehensive Equalities Policy

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