

## SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

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**REPORT TO:** Housing Portfolio Holder

19 May 2010

**AUTHOR/S:** Chief Executive / Corporate Manager, Community & Customer Services

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### QUARTERLY EQUALITIES UPDATE

#### Purpose

1. To provide the Housing Portfolio Holder with a quarterly update on equalities from January to March 2010.
2. This is not a key decision because the quarterly update is for information only and was first published in the January 2010 Forward Plan.

#### Recommendations and Reasons

3. The Housing Portfolio Holder is requested to note the contents of this report.

#### Background

4. As an authority we are committed to eliminating discrimination and prejudice, and developing a culture which values difference, both in employment and service delivery, which is reflected in the Council's Comprehensive Equalities Policy 2009 – 2012.
5. Following a positive peer review, Cabinet self-declared on 2 July 2009 that the Council was at Level 2 of the Equality Standard for Local Government (which equates to "Developing" in the new Equality Framework for Local Government).
6. Equality is an important element of our Strategic Aim to deliver first class services accessible to all and our Value of Mutual Respect. In 2009/10 we had a challenging work programme to embed equality and diversity within the Council and to build networks with external communities around equalities issues.
7. In 2010/11, subject to successful attainment of the 'Achieving' level of the Equalities Framework for Local Government, we will focus on equality mapping, which will help us to develop an understanding of our community, including the extent of inequality and disadvantage across the district. We will continue to use Equality Impact Assessments (EQIAs) to review all major corporate and service changes in policy and service delivery.

#### Considerations

8. Comprehensive Equalities Policy (CEP) 2009 - 2012

An essential part of the Equalities Framework for Local Government is for the authority to express its commitment to equality and diversity through the development of a CEP. Cabinet adopted the final draft of the CEP on 16 April 2009, which strengthens the Council's commitment to go for the 'Achieving' level of the new Equalities Framework during 2010/11. The Council will also develop a Single Equality Scheme in 2011/12.

9. Equalities Implementation Action Plan

The action plan was established to address the most important things, which must be delivered in the next 12-18 months, focusing particularly on compliance with statutory requirements. At the end of March 2010, 82% actions were completed within the required timescale set out in the plan.

10. Equality Framework for Local Government

The Council's Corporate Plan has set a commitment to go for the 'Achieving' level of the new Equalities Framework in October 2010. This will involve a peer review and a local action plan has been developed in conjunction with the Equality and Diversity Steering Group to measure progress. The self-assessment process by each service area is still ongoing in preparation for the assessment in the autumn.

11. Equality and Diversity Steering Group

All service areas are now represented on the Equality and Diversity Steering Group. The new terms of reference have ensured that there is more senior representation at meetings and there are now clear reporting links to EMT, the relevant Portfolio Holder and other relevant groups such as the Strategic Officers Group on Traveller Issues and the Customer Service Excellence Project Assurance Group. The Steering Group meets every 6 weeks to consider progress against the work plan and how it can contribute, directly and through the service areas represented, to delivering our vision and objectives.

12. Equality Impact Assessments (EQIAs)

57 EQIAs have been completed across the Council during 2009/10, which is an enormous achievement in such a short space of time. However, the corporate commitment of completing all High and Medium risk EQIAs by March 2010 was not achieved and there are still 13 Medium risk EQIAs left to complete, which will carry over to the new EQIA programme. This is predominantly down to restructuring and changing priorities. Health & Environmental Services and Affordable Homes deserve a particular mention for completing all High, Medium and Low risk EQIAs set out in the programme.

13. Equalities Project Officer

Anette Grindsted took up post on 2 March 2010 for a period of 32 weeks to continue the Council's momentum with EQIAs. Anette joins the Council on secondment from Cambridge City Council.

14. Gender Equality Scheme

In December 2009, The Equality and Human Rights Commission identified three aspects of the Council's compliance with the Gender Equality Duty, which will require improvement to fully comply with the duty. The new (pre-consultation) Gender Equality Scheme draft was endorsed by SMT and Portfolio Holder for consultation and the Council is well on track to meet the deadline set by the Commission to have a compliant scheme in place.

15. Disability and Race Equality Scheme

Work on new Gender Equality Scheme has highlighted the need to review the Council's other equality schemes. However, this will prove extremely beneficial, as the Council will look to develop and adopt a Single Equality Scheme in 2011/12

16. Gypsy and Traveller Community Strategy

The final version of the Strategy was endorsed by the Senior Management Team and presented to the Housing Portfolio Holder on 20 January. At its meeting on 11 February 2010, Cabinet agreed to adopt the final draft of the Gypsy and Traveller Community Strategy.

### Implications

17.	Financial	Within existing budgets. The Council is being supported and sponsored by the joint East of England Regional Assembly and Improvement East project "Meeting the Equality Challenge." The Project consists of a variety of measures including training activities, master class workshops, and in-house support.
	Legal	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	The Equality and Diversity Officer is responsible for mainstreaming equalities into the Council with the support of the Equality and Diversity Steering Group and Equalities Consultative Forum.
	Risk Management	The Council could be successfully challenged over not complying with general equalities legislation or legislation specific to public and local authority bodies, <i>leading to</i> financial compensation payments and penalties, possible Equality and Human Rights Commission inspection, <i>resulting in</i> reduction in reserves available to support balanced MTFs, adverse publicity and effect on reputation.
	Equal Opportunities	The Council's 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.
	Climate Change	None specific.

### Effect on Strategic Aims

18. Equality is an important element of our Strategic Aim to deliver first class services accessible to all and our Value of Mutual Respect.

### Conclusions / Summary

19. In 2009/10, the Council focused on embedding equality and diversity and building networks with external communities around equalities issues. In 2010/11, subject to successful attainment of the 'Achieving' level of the Equalities Framework for Local Government, the Council's focus will shift to equality mapping and we will continue to use Equality Impact Assessments (EQIAs) to review all major corporate and service changes in policy and service delivery. .

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

Comprehensive Equalities Policy 2009 -2012

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