



COMPREHENSIVE EQUALITIES POLICY

2009 – 2012

(UPDATED JULY 2010)

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Foreword by Chief Executive

South Cambridgeshire District Council welcomes and supports the positive duty laid upon it by the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000, the Disability Discrimination Act 2005 and the Sex Discrimination Act as amended by the Equality Act 2006 to:

- Eliminate discrimination
- Promote equal opportunities
- Promote good relations

We recognise that the potential for isolation, discrimination and unfair treatment can be far higher in communities such as South Cambridgeshire where there are relatively few people from black and minority ethnic backgrounds and where the rural nature of our community adds to the potential for disadvantage to people. This means that we have a greater challenge in ensuring that their voice is heard in the community. I am pleased that staff and external stakeholders attended consultation events to assist us in the formulation of this policy document and their views and concerns have shaped our action plan for change over the next three years.

We are pleased to publish our updated version of the Comprehensive Equalities Policy, which sets out our arrangements for meeting the general and specific duties placed upon us for the period 2009 –2012 and our commitment to other areas of potential discrimination including age, sexual orientation and religion or belief.

Throughout this policy, we have highlighted a number of key commitments that we delivered in the first year and what else we will deliver over the next two years, which includes reaching the 'Achieving' level of the new Equality Framework for Local Government (EFLG) within the period of this policy.

The Policy will be a working document linked to other performance management systems and will be reviewed annually.

I am convinced that this policy will empower the Council and its employees to make a real difference.

Greg Harlock
Chief Executive

Introduction

What is this Policy?

This policy sets out our overall vision for equality and diversity. It says what kinds of things you will see us doing to address inequalities in our society.

Importantly, it is also the ‘umbrella’ for a number of different schemes and policies we need to have in place. This policy sets the general direction. The other schemes and policies set out the detail of how we will get there. These are listed at the end of this policy.

This Policy includes:

- **Our Commitment to Equality and Diversity** – which sets out our high level commitment to achieving equality and diversity.
- **Our Equalities Schemes** – which sets out the principles and aims which will guide the way that we deliver on our commitment
- **Our Implementation Programme** – which set out in more detail the actions we will undertake in the next 2-3 years to live up to the commitment we have made.
- **Our Monitoring** – how we will ensure that we are making sufficient progress.

What are equality and diversity?

‘Equality’ is about providing everyone with equal access to council services, no matter where they live, whatever their background (sex, age, faith, race, sexual preferences or how able they are).

‘Diversity’ is about providing services which respect, value and cater for the differences in the way people would like /need to have them delivered.

Why is a Comprehensive Equalities Policy important?

As individuals, we all have different needs, backgrounds, expectations and opportunities. We expect these to be catered for by everyone with whom we come into contact – local authorities, other public services, education providers, shops and offices etc. But so often these needs are not met, because they are not thought about or possibly because they are simply ignored. This means that we do not all receive the same services or opportunities, which creates disharmony in our society.

Who is this Policy for?

This policy is designed for everyone, regardless of their background and how they are covered by legislation, which sets out what they have a right to expect, from society and from us as a service provider and employer. We need to understand, respect and cater for their differing needs. The equality groups covered by legislation are:

Different genders:	Men, women and transgender people
Different ages:	Younger and older people, working age people, children
Disabled people:	Physically or mentally impaired people, people with a long term limiting illness and carers for these people

Different religions:

This can also include different faiths/value systems as well as formal religions.

Different sexual orientations:

Heterosexual, bisexual and gay/lesbian people

Different races:

People from different ethnic, cultural and geographical backgrounds

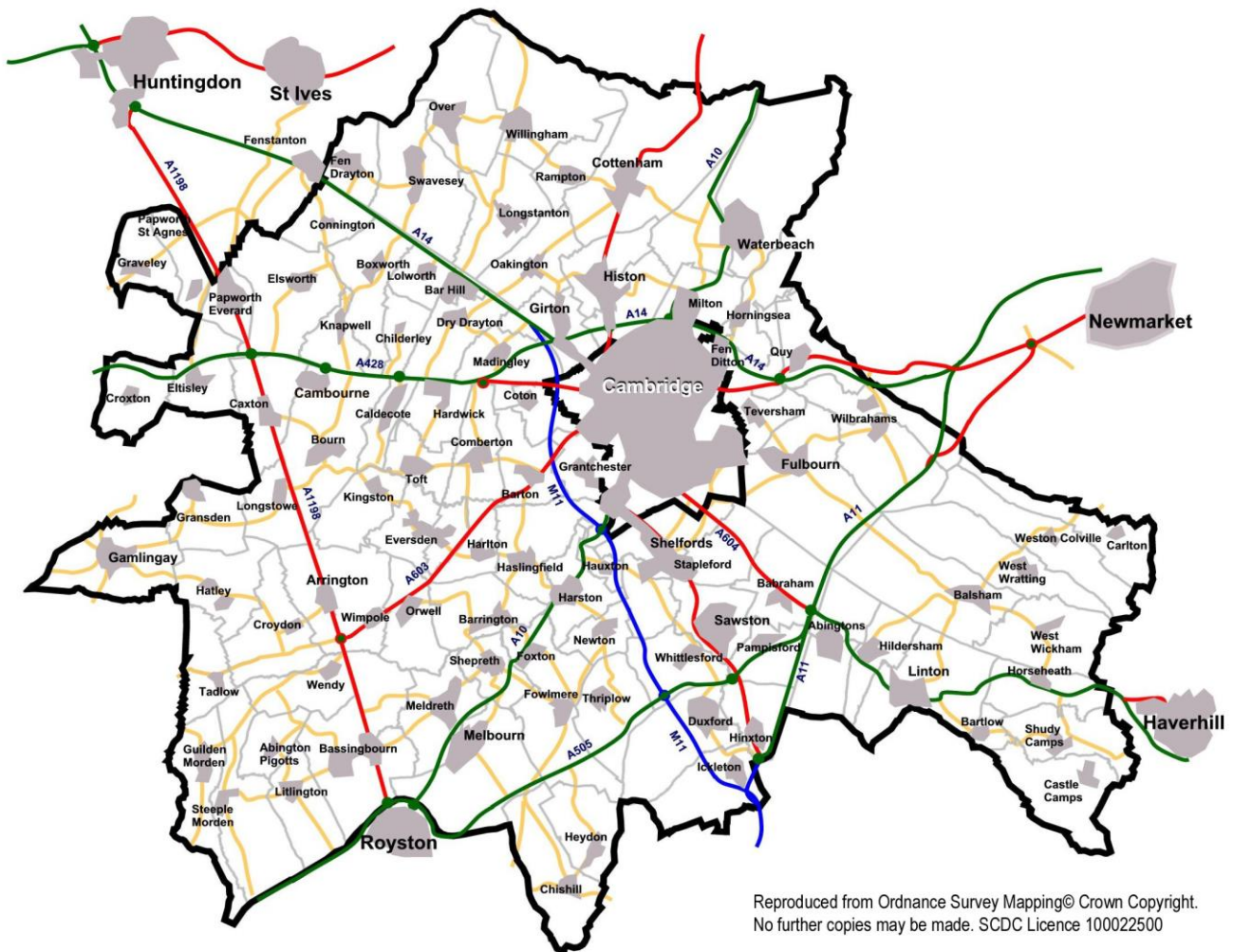
The Context for our Comprehensive Equalities Policy

A Profile of South Cambridgeshire

South Cambridgeshire is the second largest district in Cambridgeshire covering approximately 350 square miles of countryside. It is also the second most populated district after Huntingdonshire and the district completely surrounds Cambridge City. It shares its boundaries with Huntingdonshire, Fenland and East Cambridgeshire on the northern part of its boundaries. In the south the district has boundaries with North Hertfordshire, Central Bedfordshire, Uttlesford and St. Edmundsbury. It is relatively rural with all the population living in villages or rural areas – there are no towns in South Cambridgeshire. Sawston is the largest village with approximately 7,200 people. (Annual demographic and socio-economic information report (February 2010) produced by Research Group, Cambridgeshire County Council).

South Cambridgeshire is a vibrant district at the heart of the rapidly growing East of England region. We are a diverse community, with some of the oldest villages in England now neighbouring some of the newest and most exciting modern communities in the country

South Cambridgeshire is a rural district with a population of around 139,300 residents and this population is expected to increase faster than the national average over the next ten years. (ONS mid-year population estimates 2008)



South Cambridgeshire has an ageing population. In 2001 around 51% of the population was younger than 40, in 2021 that proportion is expected to drop to 44.3%. The highest growth is expected to occur in the 65+ age group, from 14.8% in 2001 to nearly 23.9% in 2021. The biggest decline is expected to occur in the 25-39 age group, from 21.5% in 2001 to approximately 16.9% in 2021. The proportion of under-20s is also expected to decline, from 25% of the population in 2001 to 23.2% in 2021. (Annual demographic and socio-economic information report (February 2010) produced by Research Group, Cambridgeshire County Council). The aging of the population has implications for the number of our residents affected by disabilities.

Age (years)	South Cambs	South Cambs (%)	England & Wales (%)
Under 5	8,800	6.3	5.9
Age 5 – 14	17,200	12.3	13
Age 15 – 24	15,300	11	12.1
Age 25 – 44	38,000	27.3	28.1
Age 45 – 59	28,800	20.7	19.1
Age 60 – 74	20,500	14.7	14
Age 75+	10,700	7.7	7.8
Total	139,300	-	-

Age Profile. Source: ONS, 2007 Mid-Year Estimates. Totals may not add due to rounding.

A growing elderly population, greater mobility, immigration and other social trends are making changes to the population we serve. These changes will accelerate as a result of the population growth facing the district in the next ten years or so, leading to a far more diverse society than previously. At the same time issues of equality, diversity and community cohesion are now high on the national agenda.

The 2001 Census data shows that in South Cambridgeshire 93.2% of the population were White British, and a further 3.7% were White Irish and White Other, with 3,800 people identified as from minority ethnic groups. The largest identified minority ethnic groups were Indian, Chinese, and Other Ethnic group which overall do not represent more than 1% of the population.

Gypsies and Travellers were not identified separately in the 2001 Census although they are an ethnic group. The Cambridge Area Travellers Needs Assessment 2005 estimated that South Cambridgeshire's Gypsy and Traveller population was 1,330 in 2005, which equates to 1% of the 2005 district population and makes them the largest ethnic minority group.

Commitment: We will review our Gypsy and Travellers Strategy. Cabinet adopted the Council's new Gypsy and Traveller Community Strategy in February 2010.

Equalities and the Council

As a local authority we have statutory responsibilities to eliminate discrimination and promote good community relations. This is something we can address in our role as an employer; as a provider of services; and through our influence with partners and the community. The context in which we fulfil these obligations has been and will continue to change as a result of the legislative context, but the principles embodied in this policy will remain the same.

We want equalities to be at the core of our values and the way we provide services. We want to be sensitive to and meet the needs of all members of the community.

We achieved Level 1 of the Equality Standard for Local Government (ESLG) at the end of 2007 and we achieved Level 2 in June 2009. We will organise a diversity peer review for the 'Achieving' level of the Equality Framework for Local Government (EFLG) during 2010/2011.

This Comprehensive Equalities Policy forms the basis of our commitment to equality in service provision, employment and community leadership. It sets out how the Council will embrace equality of opportunity and diversity in the services it provides and promote community cohesion within the district. It provides a focus on achieving consistent improvement against the requirements of the Equality Framework for Local Government.

In drawing up the policy we have consulted stakeholders (both within the Council and externally) who have contributed substantially to this document and we would like to thank all of those who have taken part and contributed to this policy formulation. Their comments have influenced this document.

Our Corporate Aims and Values

Five aims have been set for 2010/11, namely:

- Aim A - We Are Committed To Being A Listening Council, Providing First Class Services Accessible To All
- Aim B - We Are Committed to Ensuring that South Cambridgeshire Continues to be a Safe And Healthy Place for You and Your Family
- Aim C - We are Committed to Making South Cambridgeshire a Place in which Residents can Feel Proud to Live
- Aim D - We are Committed to Assisting Provision of Local Jobs for You and Your Family
- Aim E - We are Committed to Providing a Voice for Rural Life

The Council has also adopted a set of Values, which will be embedded in the service in 2010/11 through behaviours agreed across the Council:

- Customer service;
- Mutual Respect;
- Trust;
- Commitment to Improving Services

The Local Strategic Partnership for South Cambridgeshire (LSP)

The South Cambridgeshire Local Strategic Partnership provides a framework for partnership working in the district. The Local Strategic Partnership is distinctive due to its wide focus. Anything that affects the social, economic or environmental well being of people in South Cambridgeshire can be covered.

The Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS) is based on the vision people in South Cambridgeshire have for their district, and sets out how partner agencies aim to make things happen. The Council is currently reviewing its SCS with a view to agreeing a revised strategy from April 2011.

The long-term vision is for a place where the needs of existing and future generations are met and where communities are:

- Active, inclusive and safe;
- Well-run;
- Environmentally sensitive;
- Well-designed and built;
- Well connected;
- Thriving;
- Well-served; and
- Fair for everyone.

The partnership has four objectives for 2008-2011:

1. Active, healthy and inclusive communities;
2. Safe and clean communities;
3. Building successful new communities;
4. A sustainable infrastructure and environment.

Cambridgeshire Local Area Agreement (LAA)

The Local Area Agreement (LAA) is a way for local authorities and partner agencies to work together to improve services in the area. The LAA is a three-year agreement between Central Government – represented by the regional Government Office – and a local area – represented by local authorities, Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs) and other key partners. The primary objective of an LAA is to set out the key principles for the area and deliver better outcomes for local people.

The Partnership of key stakeholder agencies delivering on LAA priorities in Cambridgeshire is called *Cambridgeshire Together*. A reference group of officers supports the Board. These groups emphasise the importance of joint multi-agency working in implementing the LAA's actions and improving service delivery. The LAA also brings together targets from key plans and strategies. Cambridgeshire's LAA has a total of 55 targets

Objectives, performance indicators and targets are grouped under the following priority themes:

- Managing Growth
- Economic Prosperity

- Environmental Sustainability
- Equality and Inclusion
- Safer and Stronger Communities
- Educational Attainment (Economic Prosperity & Equality and Inclusion)

Our Equalities Schemes

The Council currently have the following Equalities Schemes:

- Race Equality Scheme
- Disability Equality Scheme
- Gender Equality Scheme

These are statutory requirements for the Council and are covered in more detail later on in this policy document.

Aims

- To work towards the elimination of discrimination (either direct or indirect) and harassment
- To ensure that members and officers work towards mainstreaming equality of opportunity across all policies and functions
- To ensure equality, equity and consistency in working practices and conditions
- To ensure that the workforce represents the wider community of the District

Our Statutory Obligations

A legislative framework to outlaw discrimination and promote equality in the UK has been taking shape for many years. The pace of change has been influenced by factors such as membership of the European Union and by the degree of recognition given to the needs of different groups in society. European and International Law also provide a framework for rights and remedies against discrimination. These frameworks and the forms of legal protection offer an important basis for promoting equality of opportunity. As an employer the authority must have regard to:

- Sex Discrimination Act 1975
- Race Relations Act 1976
- Equal Pay Act 1970
- Disability Discrimination Act 1995
- Human Rights Act 1998
- EU Employment regulations, covering:
 - Sexual Orientation December 2003
 - Religion or Belief December 2003
 - Age October 2006

In addition further pieces of equalities legislation relate specifically to public bodies in their dealings with employees and service users and elected members. As a listed public body, South Cambridgeshire District Council must comply with the statutory duties enshrined in the:

- Race Relations Amendment Act (2000)

- Disability Discrimination Act (2005)
- The Equality Act (2006)

The Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 outlaws racial discrimination by any public body and places upon them an anticipatory duty to:

- Eliminate unlawful racial discrimination
- Promote equality of opportunity
- Promote good race relations between people of different racial groups

The Disability Discrimination Act 2005 places a further statutory duty upon public bodies to:

- Promote disability equality
- Promote positive attitudes towards disabled people
- Tackle all forms of harassment and bullying towards people with disabilities
- Promote participation in public life by people with disabilities
- Protect disabled councillors against discrimination

The Equality Act 2006 introduces a new positive duty for public authorities to promote gender equality. Under the new duty, public authorities are required to have due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate unlawful sex discrimination
- Eliminate harassment
- Promote equality of opportunity between men and women

Race Equality

Following the murder of Stephen Lawrence in 1993, the Home Secretary set up an inquiry, the inquiry findings stressed that if racism is to be eliminated from society, there must be a co-ordinated effort to prevent growth. It also stated that it is incumbent upon every institution to examine the way it carries out its functions and policies to ensure that it does not disadvantage any sector of our community. The Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 came into force in April 2001 and is the statutory response to the recommendations of the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry report.

The General Duty

The Act, which strengthened the Race Relations Act 1976, places a general duty on most public authorities to promote race equality, and to eliminate institutional racism by eliminating unlawful racial discrimination and promoting good relations between people of different racial groups through all its services and activities.

The general duty is supported by specific duties, to which the authority must comply, and which will assist the authority to meet the general duty.

The specific duties

a) Publish a Race Equality Scheme (RES)

This shall state:

- Those of its functions and policies, or proposed policies, which that person has assessed as relevant to its performance of the duty imposed by section 71(1) of the Race Relations Act, and
- That person's arrangements for:

- i. Assessing and consulting on the likely impact of its proposed policies on the promotion of race equality
 - ii. Monitoring its policies for any adverse impact on the promotion of race equality
 - iii. Publishing the results of such assessments and consultations as are mentioned in (i) above
 - iv. Ensuring public access to information and services it provides, and
 - v. Training staff on the duties identified in the RES
 - vi. Reviewing the assessment at 3 yearly intervals
- b) Monitor annually, by reference to the racial group to which they belong:
- The number of staff in post
 - Applicants for employment, training and promotion
 - And where there are more than 150 employees, the number who
 - i. receive training
 - ii. benefit or suffer detriment as a result of its performance
 - iii. assessment procedures
 - iv. are involved in grievance procedures
 - v. are the subject of disciplinary procedures
 - vi. cease employment with the authority, and
 - Publish annually the results of this monitoring

Commitment: We will review our Race Equality Scheme. The Council's new Race Equality Scheme was adopted by Cabinet in September 2009.

Disability Equality

The Disability Discrimination Act 2005 widens the Disability Discrimination Act 1995, and acknowledges that if society is to improve the life chances of disabled people the public sector must take a lead. The Council must promote equality for people with disabilities, those with physical, visual or hearing impairments, those with learning difficulties, with long term medical conditions which adversely affect their day to day living, and those with mental illness. In promoting opportunities for these traditionally overlooked groups it must 'have due regard' to eliminate unlawful discrimination and promote equal opportunities.

The Council must also consider the elimination of the harassment of disabled people, the promotion of positive attitudes and the need to encourage the participation of disabled people in public life. These duties relate to the provision of services, the employment of staff and in the buying of services. There is also a duty to publish a Disability Equality Scheme.

The Disability Equality Scheme, must:

- Involve disabled people in producing the scheme and developing the action plan
- Identify how the council will gather and analyse evidence to inform their actions and track progress
- Set out how they will assess the impact of their existing and proposed activities on disabled people
- Produce an action plan for the next three years
- Report on progress every year and review and make appropriate revisions to the scheme at least every three years

Commitment: We will review our Disability Equality Scheme during 2010.

Gender Equality

In Britain today women now make up almost half the work force, and this percentage is set to grow. Despite this, women make up just 11 per cent of directors at FTSE 100 companies, 20 per cent of MPs and 16 per cent of local authority leaders. Gender stereotyping in occupational areas such as construction, engineering, health and social care and childcare is rife. Thirty years after the Equal Pay Act came into force, women are still paid an average of 80 per cent of a man's wage or salary for comparable work.

The gender equality duty requires public authorities to pay due regard to promoting gender equality and eliminating sex discrimination. This means that service providers and public sector employers, will have to design employment and services with the different needs of women and men in mind

In support of the general duty there are a number of specific duties. These are to:

- Publish a Gender Equality Scheme
- Consult stakeholders in determining the objectives
- Consider the need to include objectives to address the causes of any gender pay gap
- Assess the impact of current and proposed policies and practices on gender equality
- Implement action points of the scheme and report against progress annually
- Review the entire scheme every three years

Commitment: We will adopt a Gender Equality Scheme.

The Council's new Gender Equality Scheme was adopted by Cabinet in September 2009 and a further updated version was adopted in May 2010.

Age Equality

The implementation of the European Employment directive in October 2006 makes it illegal for employers to force retirement before age 65, and age discrimination in recruitment, promotion and training will be banned. Employers will also have to consider requests from their employees to work after the age of 65. The Council is committed to ensuring that no employee is discriminated against in terms of age, and will include the implications of the new directive into all impact assessments, consultations, monitoring and positive action strategies.

Sexual Orientation and Religion or Belief Equality

The Employment Equality (Sexual Orientation) regulations and the Employment Equality (Religion or Belief) regulations came into force on 1st December 2003. These regulations make it unlawful to discriminate in employment or training on grounds of sexual orientation or religion or belief.

These new laws provide protection against unfair treatment at work for lesbians, gay men and bi-sexuals, people of faith and those of no faith, which is similar to those already provided for women, disabled and Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic staff. The Council's commitment to fair treatment, its policies and procedures include the implications of these regulations.

The Council is a member of the Stonewall Diversity Champions Programme, which is Britain's good practice forum in which employers can work with Stonewall, and each other on sexual orientation issues. The Workplace Equality Index will be utilised on an annual basis to benchmark the Council against other employers in the public and private sector.

Commitment: The Council will make a submission to the Stonewall Workplace Equality Index by September 2010 (results published early 2011).

Equality Act 2010

The Equality Act received Royal Assent in April 2010. The majority of the legislation is expected to come in to force in 2011. The Equality Act has two main purposes – to harmonise discrimination law, and to strengthen the law to support progress on equality.

The Act creates a new Single Equality Duty on public duties to tackle discrimination, promote equality of opportunity and encourage good community relations. The new duty covers race, disability, gender, age, sexual orientation, gender reassignment and religion or belief, replacing the three existing, separate duties with a single, more effective framework. This will bring together the existing public sector equality duties of tackling discrimination and promoting equality for race, gender and disability so that the requirements do not vary between groups.

There are many more elements to this new Act, which will have an impact on communities and employers in South Cambridgeshire, particular elements will impact South Cambridgeshire District Council directly.

Commitment: We will develop a Single Equality Scheme in accordance with the requirements of the Equalities Act 2010.

Consultation: How we will Respond and Implement Equalities

Two involvement and engagement workshops were held in April 2008 in connection with the development of our Comprehensive Equalities Policy.

The voluntary sector and other external stakeholders attended one workshop. Staff members attended the other workshop. A summary of key discussions and recommendations are highlighted in Appendix 1.

The input from staff, the voluntary sector and other external stakeholders have helped us develop our Equalities Implementation Action Plan, which is available on request. A summary of how we will deliver change is covered later in this policy.

Our Commitment

Our Commitment to Equality and Diversity

As an authority we are committed to eliminating discrimination and prejudice, and developing a culture which values difference, both in employment and service delivery, to a level at least as good as the national average. We will work in partnership with our staff, local communities and public bodies to achieve this

We will work to ensure that equalities and diversity becomes a central and essential element of our service planning and delivery, both as an employer and provider of services.

We will use our position as democratically elected community leader to promote equality and diversity to our partner agencies and to the community as a whole.

We recognise that people may experience discrimination and disadvantage for many reasons, including but not limited to:

- Race, ethnic or national origin (including the gypsy and traveller community)
- Religion or belief
- Disability (physical, sensory and cognitive)
- Age
- Gender
- Sexual orientation
- Gender reassignment (new 'protected characteristic' - Equality Act 2010)
- Pregnancy and maternity (new 'protected characteristic' - Equality Act 2010)
- Rurality

We will initially address all these causes of discrimination, which are statutory duties, but we will not neglect other sources of discrimination and social exclusion where they impact significantly upon residents of South Cambridgeshire or to reflect changes in national guidance or legislation.

Commitment: We are committed to achieving Level 2 of the Equality Standard for Local Government (ESLG) by June 2009.

The Council achieved Level 2 of the EFLG in June 2009 and we will organise a diversity peer review for the 'Achieving' level of the new EFLG during 2010/2011.

Our Equality and Diversity Strategic Objectives

Our Comprehensive Equalities Policy sets out specific principles and aims that we will follow in order to achieve our Commitment to Equality and the equality dimension of our Corporate Objectives and Values.

The Council has already adopted race, disability and gender equality schemes. We have a number of relevant Human Resource policies, a strategy for our work with the Gypsy and Traveller community and are developing further policies that are specific to other equality target groups.

Our approach to the delivery of our Commitment to Equality will reflect the following strategic objectives:

- Fairness and equity, while recognising that many people fall under more than one or our equality priorities.
- Being non-discriminatory in all areas and activities, including service delivery, staff recruitment and development and the purchasing of goods and services.
- Ensuring that the most disadvantaged and vulnerable sections of our community have equal access to all of our services, particularly those associated with our key equality themes
- Ensuring that elected members and staff at all levels are clear about their responsibility to challenge discrimination, promote diversity and social inclusion, and work towards equality for all members of the community.
- Encouraging 'real' participation in local democracy by people who may normally feel excluded from decision-making processes. In doing this, we will ensure that we seek the views of groups who are particularly vulnerable or at risk of social exclusion or have found it difficult to access our services or receive favourable outcomes from them.
- Promotion of community cohesion & good community relations.
- Working with partners in the statutory, voluntary, and private sectors to promote 'best practice' equality approaches throughout the community strategy, while ensuring the best outcomes from the strategy for all the people of South Cambridgeshire.
- Working towards a workforce which reflects the working-age population of the district and the county and conforms with 'best value' guidelines on staff diversity

How we will deliver Change

We will deliver excellent equality and diversity practice by doing the following main things over the life of this policy in relation to the five key themes of the Equality Framework for Local Government (EFLG):

- Knowing your community and equality mapping
- Place shaping, leadership, partnership and organisational commitment
- Community engagement and satisfaction
- Responsive services and customer care
- Modern and diverse workforce

Knowing your community and equality mapping

We need to understand who our residents are and what their needs are. It is vital that we identify, understand and eliminate all barriers that prevent access to services, information and employment opportunities.

This means:

- Using local and national data as well as our work with community or voluntary organisations to increase our understanding of local need and set equality objectives.
- Where appropriate, monitor services and evaluate the available evidence about our customers.
- Identify and address unmet needs and key equality gaps in services.
- Identify and address the stigma and discrimination experiences by excluded or hard to reach groups.

Place shaping, leadership, partnership and organisational commitment

Having a working structure

We need to make sure that our organisation is geared up to delivering equality and diversity. We need to have specific people who lead and deliver change. We need everyone to be involved.

This means:

- There is active commitment to discussing and tackling equality issues across the organisation
- Discussion and action at all management levels, from service teams through Executive Management Team meetings, Senior Management Team and our top level Steering Group and Cabinet.
- A network of equality and diversity champions, who actively promote, advise on and investigate the issues and keep themselves up to date with equality issues
- A corporate equality Champion sits on our Senior Management Team and an Equality and Diversity Manager provides the focus and direction for our efforts
- There is a Member Champion for equality and diversity
- Having clear lines of responsibility and accountability, including at member level

Scrutiny and audit

Our investment of effort needs to be matched by assurance that the outcomes are worthwhile and working. We need to review, scrutinise and audit what we have done, and continuously learn lessons from it.

This means:

- Corporate Managers evaluate and quality assure impact assessments or service work/proposals for change
- There is corporate quality assurance of equality work and impact assessments.

Community Engagement and Accountability

Consulting effectively

To get the right outcomes, we must know what equality groups and the community think about where and what we need to change. We need to be open to this and respond.

This means:

- Maintaining up to date information on relevant voluntary groups and partnerships
- Consulting according to our Compact standard of 12 weeks.
- Using a wide variety of consultation and involvement approaches, times, venues, languages and formats, interpretation and translation services, designed thoughtfully to engage as many people as possible
- Having a consultation forward plan, so we coordinate our approaches and minimise consultation fatigue
- Sharing our results and action plans with the people we consulted.

Managing our partnerships

Our partnerships bring together the rest of the public sector, the private sector and voluntary organisations. All of these have skills and knowledge we can use to deliver better equality and diversity. However, the partnerships can be used to discuss and spread good practice.

This means:

- Building relevant equality visions and objectives into partnership terms of reference
- Having shared equality and diversity targets, which are performance managed
- Partnership should remove barriers to different equality groups who want to or need to contribute
- Proposals to or by a partnership on new projects and key decisions should be supported by equality impact assessments
- Training for our representatives on partnerships as required to enhance their skills and knowledge (and therefore contribution to equality and diversity)

Going public

Doing well with equality and diversity is only any good if people know about it. We need to tell people what's happening, and how they can contribute. This is not the same as consultation.

This means:

- Communicating effectively with the media about what we are doing, when and how well
- Having a website which champions equality and diversity, and where this information is easy to find
- Publishing our equality impact assessments and action plans in ways that are accessible to all
- Inviting comments and involvement in new events, projects and so on
- Visibly celebrating key equality and diversity events and calendar dates, with our community
- Building community cohesion and integration, taking action against harassment and victimisation

Responsive services and customer care

Assessing and reducing our impacts

As a council, the way we deliver our services, the buildings we deliver them from, the opening times we have and the way we recruit can put up barriers. These are only a few of the areas where our way of doing things can exclude people. We need to think more widely about how we do things, what we do and whom it might affect adversely.

This means:

- A corporate training programme for equality and diversity, so people across the whole council understand their responsibilities and change the way they think and do business
- Having a rolling programme of formal Equality Impact Assessments (EQIAs) across all of our services (Our Equality Impact Assessments programme can be found at Appendix 2)
- Ensuring that outside this programme, all major changes, new policies, projects and key decisions are supported by an Equality Impact Assessment
- Looking critically at what we do and who this affects, and consulting on the issues
- Delivering action plans for change in the different service areas
- Identify common issues and impacts across the whole council which we can address corporately
- Setting our plans for making our organisation more attractive and accessible to other equality groups

Improving our data

We need to know where to improve, if our people, time and money are to be well used.

This means:

- Improving our systems, collection processes and data analysis, so that services collect data which can be analysed by equality group
- Compare who is using the services with who we think should be and use this to make changes
- Setting equality objectives and targets (in our service and corporate plans) with action plans that support them
- Share the results of what we know and what we are doing with the community

Procuring goods and services

We don't deliver everything ourselves. Many of our services use contracts with other companies to deliver some of their work. Our spending gives us significant power to influence others and improve their approaches to equality and diversity. We need to make sure that the companies we 'employ' also sign up to the same standards.

This means:

- Involving different equality groups and perspectives in the specification and design of our contracts (staff and external)
- Tendering processes, which do not place adverse barriers on employers and groups who want to bid
- A clear policy on what we expect from prospective companies and how we will assess and monitor that while tendering and afterwards
- Contract management, which reviews and enforces equality targets in the contract

Modern and diverse workforce

Allocating resources

Having people willing to do the job is not enough. We need time and money to deliver better practices.

This means:

- Setting aside staff and time to delivering equality – primarily through our working structure, but also by setting up special projects and project teams as necessary,
- Setting out budgets for equality work, such as special projects, training needs, conferences, our own local equality events and so on,
- Harnessing the capacity and skills of the voluntary groups to help us deliver our duties and meet their needs,
- Delivering equality through our existing partnerships

Developing our Equalities Capacities

Equality and diversity will not become part of what we do overnight. People will need supporting to become confident and competent with this way of thinking.

This means:

- Employing an Equality and Diversity Officer with the skills to help and support staff in the transition
- Advice and support on specific projects or issues in a range of more informal ways, such as one to one meetings, workshops etc
- Advice about new government or regulatory body initiatives and legislation, snapshots of external studies and their implications, and advice on legal cases pending or determined
- Sharing information as an organisation
- Having a good quality intranet resources page for equality and diversity
- Having an equal pay policy for our employees for work of equal value, which is evidenced to be fair and irrespective of background
- Reviewing and revising all our employment practices, to make us an excellent example of equality and diversity, and an exemplar employer.

Monitoring Implementation

The Equality and Diversity Steering Group

South Cambridgeshire District Council has an established Equality and Diversity Steering Group whose aim is to support the development and implementation of policies and practices to enable the Council to meet its statutory obligations and achieve its commitment to equality and diversity given in the Comprehensive Equality Policy.

The terms of reference for the Steering Group can be found at Appendix 3.

The Equality Framework for Local Government (EFLG)

In June 2009, the Council achieved level 2 of the Equality Standard for Local Government. The standard has subsequently been replaced by the Equality Framework For Local Government, which has three tiers of accreditation: Developing, Achieving & Excellent.

South Cambridgeshire District Council has now migrated to the Developing tier of accreditation and the Council is committed to securing Achieving accreditation during 2010/2011.

The Equality Framework assesses five performance areas:

- Knowing your community and equality mapping
- Place shaping, leadership, partnership and organisational commitment
- Community engagement and satisfaction
- Responsive services and customer care
- A modern and diverse workforce

The Framework is designed to help local authorities comply with their statutory duties but, at the same time to go beyond a merely “legislative” approach, by ensuring that all sections of the community have a genuine voice in shaping equality improvement plans.

Commitment: We will organise a diversity peer review for the ‘Achieving’ level of the new EFLG during 2010/2011.

External Scrutiny

There are several bodies that check and regulate what we do on equality and diversity, as well as us. They are:

- Commission for Equality and Human Rights (CEHR)
- The Audit Commission
- Benefit Fraud Inspectorate
- Housing Inspectorate

All of these look at equality and diversity in the way we deliver services. Our performance ratings (how well we serve our community) can be affected by how well we approach equality and diversity.

Looking to the Future

The Council recognises the proposed changes to equality legislation and enhanced role for us in promoting community cohesion. This policy will be updated to reflect any new duties on an ongoing basis.

More Information

If you would like more information or to comment about our Comprehensive Equalities Policy or if you would like a copy of this document in an alternative format or language, please contact:

Phone: 01954 713465

Email: equality.schemes@scambs.gov.uk

Website: www.scambs.gov.uk

Or write to us at:

Equality and Diversity Officer
South Cambridgeshire District Council
South Cambridgeshire Hall
Cambourne Business Park
Cambourne, Cambridge
Cambridgeshire
CB23 6EA

Consultation: A summary of key discussions and recommendations

The information below is a detailed summary of the points raised during workshops held to develop this Strategy. It is not an action plan in itself; however, the points below have helped us develop our Equalities Implementation Action Plan, which is available on request.

Stakeholder Workshop (Voluntary & Community sector) Comments

Theme 1: Leadership and Corporate Commitment	Actions to be taken
<p><i>a) What role should leaders (members, senior management) be playing in promoting & communicating equality?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure wide consultation of individuals as well as groups when developing policy (remembering literacy and language needs). • Work harder to communicate with transitory communities. • Connect with communities and promote integration via service provision. • Promote cohesion yet celebrate diversity. • Officially recognise and pay tribute to the voluntary sector – ideally with resources that reflect the extent to which the organisation is supporting council responsibilities. • Members/Senior Officers could represent SCDC on the boards of appropriate groups. • Remember that groups do not organise themselves geographically – • There is a need for cross-boundary partnership working. • Lead and champion on diversity strands. • Dispel myths and promote positive and truthful information. • Challenge Racism. • Encourage and support groups in organising events within the SCDC area. 	<p>We need to make sure that we have a working structure, which is geared up to delivering equality and diversity. This will be achieved by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Championing equality issues at all levels of the organisation. • Developing links with new & emerging communities. • Identifying clear and distinct roles for equality strands and wider issues at Member/Senior Management levels. • Developing active myth busting and awareness raising. • Developing collaborative and partnership events and activities with various groups in the SCDC area.
<p><i>b) Outcomes of a 'good' Equality & Diversity policy?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wider experience base: some Equality and Diversity experts. • Greater participation and service take-up. • Greater harmony with community and workforce. • Council and partners achieve more together than separately. • People feel happier (quality of life) • Able to challenge inequality and be taken seriously/supported 	<p>Our investment and efforts need to be matched by the assurance that the outcomes are worthwhile and actually working. Through scrutiny and audit we will ensure that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clear, measurable and achievable targets are developed. • Communication barriers are dealt with as and when they arise. • Equality Impact Assessments (EQIAs) are evaluated and quality assured.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Well informed about rights and services • Recognition of the difficulty of measuring outcomes, but ensuring that some key measurables are identified and monitored • Recognising the challenge presented by equalities and diversity, and taking small steps in the right direction, tackling each pillar in turn. • Address challenges associated with access, to ensure that all groups are aware of how to contact the Council or access information. • Overcome the difficulties presented by language or technology barriers. • Ensure that everyone is aware of their entitlements and how to claim them. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Web page accessibility is extended to all web-based documents.
<p>Theme 2: Community Engagement and Accountability <i>How can the Council work effectively with community groups to achieve equality?</i></p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Better understanding about communities and the work required around myth busting and awareness raising of different groups and communities. • Voluntary and Community groups – more influencing and involvement in the Council process. • Work more effectively with community and Ormiston Travellers Group for them to provide a mediation role between the Council and Gypsy/Traveller groups. • Accessibility issues for communities gaining access to their district council. 	<p>To get the right outcomes, we must know the views of what equality groups and the community think about where we need to change. By consulting effectively we will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use a variety of consultation and involvement approaches and formats. • Maintain up to date information on relevant voluntary groups and partnerships. • Share our results and action plans with the people we consulted.
<p>Theme 3: Service Delivery and Customer Care <i>a) What are your experiences as service users or deliverers?</i></p>	<p>Actions to be taken</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of data on current performance. • A lot of myths around e.g. travellers believe they don't get allocated a house because they are a traveller and non-travellers believe that they don't get houses because they are all going to travellers. • Poor service delivery around planning and generally real issues around planning. • Slow response to planning permission e.g. date given and then meeting not held and no explanation provided as to why date has been changed. • Important to introduce feedback mechanisms to find out if all people can access services. • Need to find out peoples future needs. As we have an aging population we need to 	<p>As a local authority, we need to assess the way that we deliver our services. By assessing and reducing our impacts, we will ensure that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is a formal programme of Equality Impact Assessments (EQIAs) across all of our service areas. • An Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA) supports all major changes, new policies, projects and key decisions.

<p>send out information on different services as people age. Need to target people, as they get older with different services.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Those with poor or no literacy skills need to be considered. An assumption is made that everybody is literate. Different mediums need to be considered to meet their needs. • Improve communication channels particularly for the Traveller community. • Faith Communities – Council have not been good at taking on board faith communities e.g. Northstowe and future developments there. The impact on different communities needs to be identified. • Silo Mentality – the Council needs to start working with groups across departments and not just regard a problem as belonging to one department. 	
<p><i>b) Barriers to delivering on policies</i></p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of leadership – all levels of the organisation need to be supportive of any policy to make it work. • Lack of data – how do you know what needs to be addressed if you have no data. • Capacity – lack of staff to fulfil policy aims. • Equalities are seen, as an add-on as it is hard to measure success, as there is no immediate reward. • People tend to have the smallest voice and as a result their opinions are not listened to. • Geography – South Cambridgeshire is so spread out and some areas are very small and remote that it is hard to reach everyone. • Leadership issue – traditional demographics of predominantly white middle class in South Cambridgeshire influences decision making and voting in main groups. There needs to be some acknowledgement that a certain amount of demystifying is required. • Communications – it is vital to have regular reinforcement of the equalities message and not just one big push and then nothing. • Equality needs embedding in every policy and procedure so it becomes second nature. • Procedures must be in place to back up any policy. • Initiative fatigue – staff are tired of new policies being introduced and just see it as 	<p>We need to know where to improve. By improving our data, we will ensure that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Our systems, collection processes and Equality and Diversity Steering Group can use data analysis to effectively monitor our service provision. • There is an open and transparent process in place. • Set equality objectives and targets in our service plans with action plans that support them.

<p>management latest 'fad'.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resistance to cultural change – staff have been here so long and many are just waiting for retirement. • Historical issues of distrust of officials (police, social workers, council officer etc) for Gypsy/Traveller community. • Lack of community development activities to understand what the issues are for the various groups. • Lack of transparency in decision-making process. 	
<p><i>c) Procurement</i> <i>How will diversity link into this important area?</i></p>	<p>Actions to be taken</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commissioning services should provide opportunities for smaller, local, voluntary & community groups working in all areas of equality 	<p>Many of our services use contracts with other companies to deliver some of the work. By procuring goods and services, we will</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct an Equality Impact Assessment on existing procurement policies and procedures (particularly in terms of commissioning). • Have a clear policy in place on what we expect from prospective companies and ensure that the tendering process does not place adverse barriers on employers and groups who want to bid.
<p>Theme 4: Employment and Training <i>Do you have any comments about the draft community leadership/employment/customer service policy?</i></p>	<p>Actions to be taken</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The policy is too long and needs separating into policy and strategy. • Provide staff training e.g. emptied bins strewn across pavements, are a hazard for some elderly or disabled people. • Stop using 'Disabled' signs on toilets – say 'Easy Access' instead. • Set up Member and Officer Champions for Equality and Diversity. 	<p>We need to ensure that our employment practices deliver our equalities commitments. By allocating resources effectively, we will ensure that there is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Structured and tailored training to make sure the equality and diversity message is disseminated across the organisation. • There is a Member Champion for Diversity and Officer/Champions roles will be developed.

Staff Workshop Comments

<p>Theme 1. Leadership and Corporate Commitment <i>a) Ideal outcome of a good, Equality & Diversity Policy?</i></p>	<p>Actions to be taken</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diverse workforce • Officers to 'represent' diverse groups (e.g. Traveller liaison officer) • A culture of mutual respect • EQIAs embedded across organisation • Action plan with timescales. Clear performance management of equalities • Councillors engaged with whole community 	<p>We need to have specific people who will lead and deliver change. This will be achieved by establishing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A network of equality and diversity champions, who actively promote, advise on and investigate the issues and keep themselves up to date with equality issues. • A Corporate Equalities Champion and a

<p>and different groups in their area. Clear roles for themselves and senior officers.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accessible Council meetings. 	<p>Member Equalities Portfolio Holder.</p>
<p><i>b) What role should leaders (elected members, senior management) be playing in promoting and communicating equality? How should they do that?</i></p>	<p>Actions to be taken</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They must be seen as Diversity Champions in their areas • They must show compliance with corporate policy and ensure that council documents refer consistently to equalities • All members must receive awareness training • Officers need awareness training • Members and Officers need Impact Assessment Training – need to understand what it is about • Needs to be included in induction for new officers – and followed up with updates • Equality needs to be included in the Member Undertaking. Can this be mandatory? • Members and senior management must be prepared to challenge their peers on words used and other behaviours. This should be done more transparently. • Best practice should be rewarded – openly/publicly praised. • Managers at all levels need to communicate equalities. • Members need to take the view that they represent all the community - not just those who voted for them. • Need to have a day when senior managers can experience impairments (sight, hearing etc) to enhance awareness. • Need better joined up leadership between departments • Equality and Diversity should permeate all policy making. 	<p>Our investment and efforts need to be matched by the assurance that the outcomes are worthwhile and actually working. We will identify clear and distinct roles for equalities at Member and senior management level to include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A commitment for training for all Members and staff. • Equalities implications on reports, policies and other documentation. • The Equality and Diversity Steering Group will have a role in publishing and disseminating equalities good practice.
<p>Theme 2 Community Engagement and Accountability <i>How can we work effectively with voluntary and community groups to achieve equality and diversity?</i></p>	<p>Actions to be taken</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We must recognise the importance of voluntary and community groups, e.g. through funding and other support to maximise their impact – e.g. • Age Concern – improve arrangements to work with them. • Need to improve our capacity, e.g. Community Services has been weakened 	<p>Doing things well with equality and diversity is only good if we tell people what's happening and how they can contribute. This will be achieved by going public to ensure that we:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communicate effectively with the media. • Have a website, which champions equality and diversity. • Visibly celebrate key equality and diversity

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More effective consultation, i.e. include them at the earliest possible stage • Improve our communications/access/support with/for Parish Councils • ASK THEM HOW WE CAN HELP THEM! • They have limited funding – direct them to Equality and Diversity issues • Identify and reward/praise best practice e.g. South Cambridgeshire Magazine • Some good examples of working with Travellers community, e.g. production of CDs/cassettes for consultation in view of low literacy rates. • Working with Ormiston Trust. The training of travellers to carry out consultation in connection with Housing Needs survey. • Travellers Forum. • Planning documents often too long for effective consultation – need more face to face consultation (but resource issue) 	<p>events with our stakeholders and community.</p>
<p>Theme 3 Service Delivery and Customer Care <i>a) What are your experiences in service delivery and/or employment</i></p>	<p>Actions to be taken</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We tend to stereotype or pigeon hole groups and treat them all the same. • Need to carry out a diversity audit. • Need more stakeholder analysis • Customers who shout loudest are listened to and undermine staff – managers should back staff. • The public often misunderstand Council policies and procedures, e.g. allocations. • Need training to enable staff to assert themselves. • Will need robust procedures to deliver the strategy. • Flexible working can work against equalities, e.g. carers. • The growing emphasis on technology can work against some service users. • Need to establish clear provision and policy towards translation and interpretation. • Need more consistent approach towards flexible working and car users. 	<p>As a local authority, we need to assess the way that we deliver our services. By assessing and reducing our impacts, we will ensure that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is a formal programme of Equality Impact Assessments (EQIAs) across all of our service areas. • An Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA) supports all major changes, new policies, projects and key decisions. • A commitment to develop an equalities evidence base. • A commitment to train all officers in equalities and related skills • A clear policy on translation and interpretation. • A clear policy and officer training on web accessibility
<p><i>b) Barriers to implementing policy</i></p>	<p>Actions to be taken</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need equality impact assessments to identify issues • Policy needs to be embedded • Lack of understanding about the barriers people experience. • Tend to respond to those who shout loudest – need better evidence. 	<p>If our people, time and money are to be well used, we need to know where to improve. By improving our data, we will ensure that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Our systems, collection processes and Equality and Diversity Steering Group can use data analysis to effectively monitor our service provision.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Educational backgrounds. Narrow range of reference – usually need University degree for jobs. • Culture of organisation – fear of change. • Managers not knowing how to tackle problems. • Succession planning – need to train younger staff and encourage career development. • HR capacity - lack of data about workforce. Lack of consistent HR procedures • Inaccessibility of Cambourne. Overall geography of South Cambridgeshire - going into Cambridge and out again. • Possibly need more face-to-face contact – satellite offices, focus groups etc. • Contact centre – implications for equality of access • Different approaches to consultation - need more engagement and work with voluntary sector. • Sometimes lack of clarity about word, e.g. bidding in context of Choice Based Letting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is an open and transparent process in place. • There is a commitment to link equalities with our values and with customer service.
<p><i>c) Procurement</i> <i>How will diversity link into this important area?</i></p>	<p>Actions to be taken</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Suppliers should be encouraged to develop equalities practices in line with those of the Council. • Departments should consider the equalities profile of local suppliers, particularly in relationship to small value contracts. 	<p>Many of our services use contracts with other companies to deliver some of the work. By procuring goods and services, we will</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct an Equality Impact Assessment on existing procurement policies and procedures (particularly in terms of commissioning). • Have a clear policy in place on what we expect from prospective companies and ensure that the tendering process does not place adverse barriers on employers and groups who want to bid. • Involve different equality groups and perspectives in the specification and design of our contracts.
<p>Theme 4: Employment and Training <i>Do you have any comments about the draft community leadership/employment/customer service policy?</i></p>	<p>Actions to be taken</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vision statement missing – ½ a page which everybody can lift and use in reports etc • Need action plan with timescales • Everyone will need to understand the requirements of the policy • Not everybody will read it • Need to use different methods to communicate its key messages • Maybe bring this same group of people back together in 3/6/9 months to monitor 	<p>Equality and diversity will not become part of what we do overnight. People will need the support to develop their confidence and competence. This will be achieved by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appointing an Equality and Diversity Officer with the skills to help and support staff. • A programme of ongoing training for staff. • Having a good quality intranet resource.

success in embedding policy	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• However, diversity messages must be cascaded to everybody	

Equality Impact Assessments (EQIAs) Programme

The Council will carry out the following Equality Impact Assessments (EQIAs):

Service Area	Identified Impact Assessment	Date of EqIA Initial Meeting	EqIA Draft in Process	Full EqIA Done	QA Panel Review	EqIA Published
Health & Environmental Services	Medium Priority - Health Improvement / Inequalities	08/01/2010	✓		✓	
	Low Priority - Health and Safety	13/01/2010	✓			
	Low Priority - HMO / Housing Regulation	02/02/2010	✓			
	Low Priority - Environmental Control Complaints	08/02/2010	✓			
	Low Priority - Out of Hours Service	13/01/2010	✓			
	Part 2A Cost Recovery Policy for Class B Owner Occupiers of Residential Dwellings					
	Enforcement Policy					
	Pest Control					
	Street Cleansing and Fly Tipping					
	Emergency Planning					
	Awarded Watercourses					
Planning & New Communities	High Priority - Sports Development	06/10/2009				
	High Priority - Economic Development	29/10/2009				
	High Priority - Climate Change Action Plan					
	Medium Priority - Sustainability					
	Medium Priority - Community Grants					
	Low Priority - Play Facilities					

	Low Priority - Open Space					
	Young People's Plan	05/02/2010	✓		✓	
	Low Priority - Building Control					
	Low Priority - Enforcement					
	Low Priority - Conservation					
	LDF - Gypsy and Traveller Development Plan Document					
	Foodstore Provision in NW Cambridge		✓			
	Papworth Everard W Central Supplementary Planning Document		✓			
	Orchard Park Supplementary Planning Document		✓			
Affordable Homes	High Priority - Housing Advice & Options	30/06/2009	✓		✓	✓
	Medium Priority - Housing Strategy / Development	May-09	✓			
	Medium Priority - Resident Involvement	09/02/2010	✓		✓	
	Medium Priority - Housing Management Policies & Procedures	31/03/2010	✓			
	Response Repairs	31/03/2010	✓			
Corporate Services						
*Finance	Medium Priority - Web & Intranet					
	Medium Priority - Rate Relief Policy					
	Medium Priority - Concessionary Fares					
	Low Priority - Anti Theft Fraud Prevention		✓			
	Low Priority - Accountancy / MTFS / Capital & Revenue Estimates					
	Low Priority - Audit					
	Low Priority - ICT					
	Benefit Fraud and Prosecution Policy					
* Human Resources	Medium Priority - Grievance Procedure					
	Medium Priority - Disciplinary Procedure					
	Medium Priority - Homeworking Policy					
	Medium Priority - Learning and Development					

	Low Priority - Redundancy and Reorganisation Procedure					
	Low Priority - Capability Policy					
	Workforce Plan					
* Legal	Medium Priority - Democratic Services	03/03/2010	✓			
	Low Priority - Legal Services					
	Low Priority - Land Charges					
	Low Priority - Whistle Blowing Policy					
Community & Customer Services	Medium Priority - Community Safety					
	Medium Priority - Partnership Framework					
	Medium Priority - Communications					
	Medium Priority - Reception Service					
	Low Priority - Elections and Electoral Registration					
	Low Priority - Performance Management					
Organisation Wide Policies						

Please note that the EQIA programme is subject to change throughout the reporting period.

Equality and Diversity Steering Group

Terms of Reference

Aim: To support the development and implementation of policies and practices to enable the Council to meet its statutory obligations and achieve its commitment to equality and diversity given in the Comprehensive Equality Policy.

How will the aim be achieved? The Steering Group will achieve its aim by -

- (a) Advising and commenting on relevant draft policies, strategies, equality schemes, practices and action plans
- (b) Co-ordinating, sustaining, monitoring and reviewing the Council's performance and progress in complying with equalities legislative requirements and good practice.
- (c) Monitoring the completion of EQIAs to assess whether the programme of planned assessments is on target; new policies and plans are appropriately assessed; and whether assessments are carried out to appropriate standards and their recommendations implemented.
- (d) Assisting with the communication and mainstreaming of equalities into Council policy and practice.
- (e) Advising on training needs and programmes to meet them.
- (f) Identifying and co-ordinating the development of initiatives aimed at promoting continuous improvement in service delivery and employment in relation to equality issues.
- (g) Advising other relevant working groups, such as Service First and the Travellers Strategic Officer Group, on equalities issues.

Membership

Core Membership:

- SMT Equalities Champion (Chair)
- Corporate Manager, Community and Customer Services (Vice Chair)
- Corporate Manager or representative from each of the other 5 corporate areas
- Equality and Diversity Officer
- HR representative
- Legal representative
- Representative/s of the two major unions recognised by the Council

Core members are expected to prioritise attending meetings of the Steering Group.

Circulatory Membership:

- Equalities Portfolio Holder
- EMT members not members of the steering group
- Policy and Performance Manager
- Communications team representative
- Chairs or representatives of Service First, Travellers SOG and other relevant working parties
- Any other officer on request

Circulatory members will receive copies of the agenda and minutes and may attend any meeting after prior notification to the Equality and Diversity Officer

Quorum

One member at no less than Corporate Manager level or above, plus at least three other core members.

Meetings

The Equality and Diversity Steering Group will meet every six weeks, but may vary this frequency depending on circumstances.

Accountability

The Steering Group will report to the Equalities Portfolio Holder and to EMT at least quarterly on progress with work plans and identifying areas for action and improvement. There will be a standard item on each agenda on reports to be made to the Portfolio Holder and EMT.