

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Housing Portfolio Holder

21 July 2010

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

COMPREHENSIVE EQUALITIES POLICY 2009 - 2012 (VERSION 2)

Purpose

1. To request that the Housing Portfolio Holder comment on, endorse and adopt the updated version of the Comprehensive Equalities Policy 2009 – 2012 on behalf of the Council.
2. This is not a key decision as it provides an update to a previously agreed corporate policy.

Recommendations and Reasons

3. That the Housing Portfolio Holder comment on, endorse and adopt the updated version of the Comprehensive Equalities Policy 2009 – 2012 on behalf of the Council. Cabinet adopted the original version of the Comprehensive Equalities Policy in April 2009 and the majority of the text of the previous version has been retained, but the new version provides some changes, which are detailed in paragraphs 13 and 14 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 of our Value of Mutual Respect. In 2009/10 we carried out 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. 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 Comprehensive Equalities Policy.

Options

9. The Comprehensive Equalities Policy 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.

Implications

10. Financial	Within existing budgets. The Council is being supported and sponsored by the joint East of England Local Government Association and Improvement East project "Achieving on the Equality Journey." 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.

Consultations

11. The Comprehensive Equalities Policy was subject to extensive consultation from December 2007 to April 2008.

Effect on Strategic Aims

12. 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

13. Much of the text of the previous version has been retained, but the new version incorporates the following changes:
- More detail in the Profile of South Cambridgeshire section to take account of up-to-date statistical information on the local population;
 - Reference to the Equality Act 2010 in the Statutory Obligations section;
 - Terminology referring to the Equality Standard for Local Government has been replaced by the Equality Framework for Local Government (EFLG) and the section on how the Council will deliver change reflects the five key themes of the EFLG;

- The Council's new programme of Equality Impact Assessments (EQIAs) for 2010/2011 has been included at Appendix 2
14. The new version also highlights the key commitments that were achieved during 2009/2010 and the future commitments to be achieved during the period of the policy.

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

None.

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