

## SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

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**REPORT TO:** Housing Portfolio Holder

15 September 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 April to June 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 and the Council's new Equality Impact Assessment Programme for 2010/2011 (attached).

#### 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 updated version of 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 Housing Portfolio Holder endorsed an updated version of the CEP at his meeting on 21 July 2010 to take account of changes in terminology, up-to-date statistical information, reference to the new Equality Act 2010 and new commitments for the CEP, including the development of 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 diversity peer challenge and a local action plan has been developed in conjunction with the Equality and Diversity Steering Group to measure progress. The Council's diversity peer challenge will take place on 13 and 14 October 2010.

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 Travellers SOG and Service First. 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 were 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 were still 13 Medium risk EQIAs left to complete. These outstanding EQIAs have been carried over to the new EQIA programme for 2010/2011 (attached), which was endorsed by EMT on 28 July 2010.

13. ***Equalities Project Officer***

Anette Grindsted will be leaving the Council on 30 July 2010 to take up a new post with Cambridge City Council. It is hoped that a short-term replacement will be recruited in the lead up to the Council's diversity peer challenge in October 2010.

14. ***Gender Equality Scheme***

Cabinet endorsed the Council's new Gender Equality Scheme (GES) in May 2010. At the end of June, the Council's GES was highlighted as a model of good practice at a regional conference on domestic violence.

15. ***Disability Equality Scheme***

The Housing Portfolio Holder endorsed an updated draft of the Disability Equality Scheme (DES) for a 12-week consultation period with internal and external stakeholders at his meeting on 21 July 2010. Consultation on the DES will close on 24 October 2010

16. ***Race Equality Scheme***

Work on reviewing the Council's Race Equality Scheme will take place in conjunction with the development of a Single Equality Scheme in 2011/12.

17. **Stonewall Equality Index 2011**

The Council will be entering the Stonewall Workplace Equality Index for the second time later this year with the aim of improving on its placing from last year. The deadline for submission is 10 September 2010.

**Implications**

18. Financial	Within existing budgets. The Council is being supported and sponsored by the joint East of England Regional Assembly 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.

**Effect on Strategic Aims**

19. 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**

20. 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 (Version 2)

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