

CABINET

20 MARCH 2012

Title: Single Equality Scheme 2012 - 2016	
Report of the Cabinet Member for Crime, Justice and Communities	
Open report	For Decision
Wards Affected: None	Key Decision: No
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Accountable Divisional Director: Karen Ahmed, Divisional Director Adult Commissioning	
Accountable Director: Anne Bristow, Corporate Director of Adult and Community Services	
Summary: This paper summarises the approach taken to develop the Single Equality Scheme 2010-13, and outlines the need to revise the scheme and the consultation undertaken in 2011. The Council is required to adopt Equality Objectives from March 2012; following this decision, and once the savings proposals have been agreed, the Council will develop a new Action Plan to meet the Objectives with the available resources.	
Recommendation(s) The Cabinet is recommended to: (i) Formally adopt the revised Single Equality Scheme Objectives as the Council's method of meeting the specific duty in regards to Equality Objectives; and (ii) Authorise the Corporate Director, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Crime, Justice and Communities, to agree a four year action plan to commence from April 2012 following the approval of the Equality Objectives.	
Reason(s) It is necessary for the Council to formally adopt the revised Single Equality Scheme to meet the requirements of the Public Sector Equality Duty 2011 in regards to Equality Objectives.	

1. Introduction and Background

- 1.1 At its meeting on 28 September 2010, Cabinet authorised the Council's first Single Equality Scheme (SES). The SES brought together the three existing equality schemes (Race, Gender and Disability) and extended them to cover a range of other equality issues which reflected 'protected characteristics' identified in the new Equality Act 2010.
- 1.2 The Scheme was developed through a process of internal consultation and with relevant equalities groups in the borough.
- 1.3 The Single Equality Scheme was designed to enable the Council to continue to meet its legal duties relating to equality and diversity, and to continue to deliver further real improvements in equality for people living and working in the borough and in so doing help the authority to maintain level 5 of the Equality Standard for Local Government (and its equivalent under the new revised Equalities Framework).
- 1.4 However following the publication of the additional Public Sector Equality Duty 2011, the Council's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Board requested officers to prepare a refreshed Single Equality Scheme for 2012 -2016 to enable LBB to meet the requirements of the Duty. This was based on the requirement within the Duty for public sector bodies including local authorities to:

"Prepare and publish equality objectives by 6 April 2012, and at least every four years after that. They must be specific and measurable, and they should set out how progress towards the objectives will be measured. Listed bodies must publish details of their engagement in developing the equality objectives, also every four years. They will need to have considered equality information they have published, and undertaken engagement, before preparing and publishing these objectives. Objectives must be published in a reasonably accessible format, either as an individual document or as part of another report."

Process

- 1.5 The Council launched a consultation on current Scheme on 1st June 2011. Officers met with the borough's five Equality Fora early in the process to ensure that any new developments captured any areas of community concerns and were addressed in the action plan. Meetings were held with Council officers to clarify what equality data was available.
- 1.6 As a result the main text of the scheme remained the same and the action plan was changed to reflect the work that is planned within the key strategic area of the scheme.
- 1.7 A meeting with the chairs of the Equality Fora took place on 16th June 2011 seeking the views and asking key questions relating to the scheme
- 1.8 Along with the refreshed document, the following questions were also placed on the Consultation Portal from 30th August - 7th November 2011:
 - Have we captured the main areas of concern – do you think that we have missed any area of importance?
 - Are the actions that we are taking appropriate - do you think there is anything else we could do?

- How would you like to be kept informed about this scheme?
- Are there any further comments that you would like to make?

Results

1.9 At the close of the consultation period only one response to the refresh of the Single Equality Scheme was received. No responses were logged on the Consultation Portal. No changes were recommended to the Equality Objectives.

Stephen Lawrence Enquiry

1.10 Cabinet will be aware of the recent conviction of two men of the 1993 murder of Stephen Lawrence. The Macpherson Report, published in 1999, followed an inquiry into the Metropolitan police's investigation of the murder. The Council set up its own Lawrence Inquiry Officers Working Party, which provided a set of recommendations for the Council which were prepared in consultation with EMPA, the Race Equality Council and the Council's Black Workers Group. The Council adopted the Working Party recommendations on 26 March 2002.

1.11 There have been a number of developments in the Council's approach to equalities since 2002. These have resulted in the proposal for a revised Single Equalities Scheme. Whilst the Council is now required to address each of the equality categories, the areas of work related to ethnicity identified by the Macpherson Report, and agreed by the Council, each remains a part of the Council's work to promote equalities. A brief summary of the Council's ongoing work in response to Macpherson is provided below.

1.12 The Report described the Council's progress in some detail. Whilst many of the areas of work now involve different partners, or have become part of work that also supports other equality categories, all of the areas identified are currently being progressed by LBBB in some way.

1.13 Rather than producing a list of recommendations, the Report recommended a practical framework to support Barking and Dagenham's Race Equality Scheme and provide a three-year action. The action plan was completed, and Race Equality Scheme has now been subsumed into the Single Equalities Scheme.

There were three areas for actions:

1. Human Resource Management and Development

1.13 The Council agreed to ensure that the right people are working within the organisation and that they are properly equipped to meet the needs of all the local communities. This was to be done firstly through addressing the lack of cultural diversity in the workforce, particularly in management posts, and secondly through targeted training and development to equip staff and contractors to engage with the community and forge meaningful partnerships that result in improved services for all.

1.14 Currently, the Council reviews the staff profile quarterly. Whilst management posts are more representative of men and women, the number of senior posts held by staff from ethnic minorities is not yet representative of the demographic profile of the borough.

1.15 The Council does now have a comprehensive programme of equality training for staff, which includes training for all staff during induction, equalities training for managers, and various departmental training.

2. Community Involvement

1.16 The Council undertook to take a new creative approach to consulting the community, focusing on meeting people where they are and on their terms.

1.17 The Council subsequently led on, signed and promoted the Barking and Dagenham Anti-Discrimination Charter. Council services now routinely engage with residents in a range of ways, including through the five equalities fora, to gain an understanding of the particular needs of different communities of residents. In particular, the Council now commissions the Refugee and Migrant Forum of East London to facilitate the borough's Black, Asian and Ethnic Minority and Refugee Forum (BAMER), who work with 190 BAMER organisations in the borough to engage in consultations, policy development, and advocate to local statutory organisations.

3. Service Delivery

1.18 People who face discrimination in their daily lives deserve public services which champion their fight to play a full part in society through ensuring all meet the needs of all the local communities.

1.19 The Council now carries out Equality Impact Assessments of services through a rolling programme, and also carries out EIAs on new strategies and policies to enable members to take account of the impact of decisions on all communities in the borough. A recent example was the Cumulative Impact Assessment which members considered on the overall effect of the savings proposals for the 2012/13 budget.

1.20 The Council has recently commissioned the Barking and Dagenham Council for Voluntary Services to provide the borough's capacity building support for third sector organisations; the CVS are currently supporting a wide range of BME led organisations.

2. Proposals

2.1 Despite there being only minor changes requested to the original scheme, which was published in 2010, it is necessary for the Council to formally adopt the revised Single Equality Scheme as the Council's method of meeting the specific duty in regards to Equality Objectives.

2.2 The Single Equality Scheme has four main objectives. Two of these relate to how the Council delivers its services (externally facing) and two relate to the Council as an organisation (internally facing).

i) Externally Facing

Objective 1: To ensure that best practice in equality is rooted in all aspects of the Council's functions and is supported by a strong evidence base

Objective 2: To ensure that the work of the Council is informed by effective and inclusive consultation, engagement and communication with users

ii) Internally Facing

Objective 3: To ensure that the promotion of equality and human rights and elimination of discrimination and harassment are embedded in all LBBB practices through leadership and organisational commitment

Objective 4: To ensure the development of an effective and diverse workforce that is representative of the communities served by the Council.

Action Plan

2.3 Whilst the Objectives are unchanged, the actions and context given in the SES will need to be updated by officers regularly. In particular, the current Action Plan ends in March 2012. Once Cabinet has made a decision regarding the Objectives, a new action plan will be prepared and agreed by EDI, to enable the Council to progress work to achieve the Objectives with the resources currently available to the Council. It is anticipated that the Council will continue with the approach of supporting all services to meet their Equality duties through core budgets, and as a part of normal business. The current Action Plan is provided for reference as an Appendix.

3. Consultation

3.1 A consultation was carried out which informed Cabinet's decision to adopt the SES in September 2010, and a further consultation has been carried out in 2011, using the Equalities Fora, the Council's consultation portal, and through meetings with officers and representatives of equality groups. The consultation did not identify any suggested changes to the Equality Objectives.

4. Financial Implications

Implications completed by: Ruth Hodson, Finance Group Manager

4.1 There is no financial impact due to the adoption of the Single Equality Scheme. If there are any additional incidental costs these will have to be managed within the council's budgets.

5. Legal Implications

Implications completed by: Chris Pickering, Senior Employment Solicitor

5.1 This report appropriately sets out the positive obligations on the Council pursuant to the Equalities Act 2010 and subsequent Regulations in terms of the adoption of a Single Equality Scheme. Not only are these obligations required by law, but they are useful in showing the Council's commitment to equalities in individual employment cases which allege a failure to support equalities.

5.2 The process for implementation including consultation is appropriate and exceeds minimum requirements. Ongoing monitoring of outcomes against stated objectives will be required as identified in this report but it appears that no extra resources will be required for this beyond the previous scheme.

5.3 Following updating Regulations to the 2010 Act, we are required to update our SES and this report sets out an appropriate way of doing so.

6. Other Implications

6.1 **Risk Management** - The Corporate Risk Number 30 provides an action plan to mitigate the risk of “Failure to meet the Council’s legal duties results in expensive litigation, intervention by the Equalities and Human Rights Commission and harm to the Council’s reputation, through failure to understand and meet the needs of customers from the equality groups.”

The actions agreed to mitigate this risk include the Council revising the current SES by March 2012, and the Action Plan being reviewed by the EDI Board annually.

6.2 **Contractual Issues** - None, apart from those addressed within the body of the report.

6.3 Customer Impact

The SES summarises the Council’s approach to meeting its Equality duties.

Background Papers Used in the Preparation of the Report:

Single Equality Scheme 2010 – 13

‘Beyond Lawrence’, responding to the recommendations of the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry and requirements of the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000; March 2002

List of appendices:

Appendix 1 - Single Equality Scheme Action Plan Performance Report