

**Cheltenham Borough Council**  
**Cabinet - 11th March 2008**  
**Corporate Equality and Diversity Policy**  
**Report of the Corporate Policy Manager**

**1. Executive Summary and recommendation**

**1.1 The issue**

**1.1.1** The Corporate Equality and Diversity Policy (CEDP) is the overarching equalities and diversity strategy for Cheltenham Borough Council and is intended to be the focus for promoting equality issues across the council to ensure the elimination of discrimination and disadvantage.

**1.1.2** The policy sets out the framework for our existing statutory equality schemes; the Disability, Race and Gender Equality Schemes, and also makes provision for the three other equality strands; age, sexual orientation and faith. The plan also reflects the requirements set out in a broad range of legislation, both national and international.

**1.2 I therefore recommend that:**

**1.2.1 Cabinet agree the Corporate Equality and Diversity Policy attached as appendix A to this report.**

**1.2.2 Cabinet agree to carry out consultation on the six draft equality and diversity statements attached as appendix B to this report.**

**1.3 Summary of implications**

**1.3.1 Financial**

The equality action plan has been prepared on the basis that will not be any additional funding for its implementation. Instead it is about using existing funding commitments to ensure that we promote equality.

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### 1.3.2 Legal

In addition to the need to comply with equalities legislation, the Council has legal duties to actively promote equality and become a pro-active agent of change through producing equality schemes covering the three areas of:

- Race equality
- Disability equality
- Gender equality

The council also has specific responsibilities set out in recent equal opportunities regulations in the areas of:

- Lesbians, gay men and bisexuals
- Age discrimination
- Religious or other beliefs

Discrimination in the workplace may give rise to a claim through the employment tribunal. In general, failure to comply with the statutory duties may give rise to a claim in the county court for compensation for injury to feelings and costs may be awarded on such a claim if it is successful.

Employers will usually be held responsible for the acts or omissions of their employees.

The production and effective implementation of an up to date equality and diversity policy will demonstrate intention and process for compliance with the statutory duties and so should help significantly in reducing the risk of any challenge or successful claim.

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### 1.3.3 Human Resources

The Corporate Equality and Diversity Policy identifies a number of actions that will have workload implications for the Human Resources team and these will need to be prioritised and built into its service plan. These actions include

- Promoting fair recruitment and selection procedures
- Implementing single status
- Monitoring our workforce
- Providing equality and diversity training
- Helping employees achieve a better work life balance

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## 1.4 Implications on corporate and community plan priorities

**1.4.1** In the current business plan we have set ourselves a longer term ambition to achieve

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level 3 of the equality standard by 2010. The actions set out in the Corporate Equality and Diversity Policy are designed to help us achieve this ambition.

## 1.5 Statement on Risk

The council has identified that failing to respond to the needs of those settling in Cheltenham from the European Union is a corporate risk. The proposed solution is to ensure that equality impact assessments take into account these emerging communities and their needs. This is scored at 8 out of 24. The Policy and Performance division has identified that sustaining momentum for implementing equal opportunity initiatives, and monitoring compliance with legislation with reduced staffing in the division is a divisional risk. This is scored at 9 out of 24. See appendix C.

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## 2. Introduction

**2.1** The Corporate Equality and Diversity Policy (CEDP) is the overarching equalities and diversity strategy for Cheltenham Borough Council and is intended to be the focus for promoting equality issues across the Council to ensure the elimination of discrimination and disadvantage.

**2.2** The policy sets out the framework for our existing statutory equality schemes; the Disability, Race and Gender Equality Schemes, and also makes provision for the three other equality strands; age, sexual orientation and faith. The plan also reflects the requirements set out in a broad range of legislation, both national and international.

**2.3** The aim of the Corporate Equality and Diversity Policy (CEDP) is to act as a framework whereby:

*Cheltenham Borough Council is an organisation where:*

- *Our customers who access our services, job seekers and employees are treated fairly and without discrimination.*
- *Individuals are respected and their contributions are valued.*

*Cheltenham is a place where:*

- *People are proud to live, work and visit; and*
- *Cultural diversity is welcomed.*

**2.4** Underpinning this aim are four objectives:

### 2.4.1 Equal and fair employment practices

We will ensure fair and equal opportunity in all areas of employment, including recruitment and selection, competency framework, appraisals, learning and development and career development of all its employees.

### 2.4.2 Equal access to services

We will ensure that customers, service users and the wider community of Cheltenham have equal access to its services and are not discriminated against in any aspect of its service delivery.

### **2.4.3 Promoting equality and diversity across the borough and with our partners and suppliers**

We will apply the same high standards to services that are delivered in partnership or by a third party as it does to the services that are delivered directly by the Council – including with regard to equality. We will seek to use our role as a community leader to promote equality and respect diversity.

### **2.4.4 Involving communities and consulting with others**

We will develop a community engagement strategy that will provide a framework for the consultation and the involvement of communities in the planning of services and decision-making.

### **2.5 Actions that will support delivery of these four objectives are set out in the action plan.**

## **3. Strategic Context**

**3.1** The Corporate Equality and Diversity Policy sets out the moral, legal and business cases for promoting equality and diversity. In terms of the strategic context, the council has a longer term ambition to develop our equalities and community cohesion work to ensure that our communities are attractive to people of different ethnic and social backgrounds. The outcome from this work will be to have achieved level 3 of the equality standard by 2010 which is a target for all Gloucestershire local authorities in the local area agreement.

**3.2** To achieve Level 3 of the Standard we will have to demonstrate:

- That we have implemented a strategy for participation of designated community, staff and stakeholder groups in setting employment and service delivery objectives;
- That we have set equality objectives across the authority for race, gender and disability for employment, pay and service delivery based on impact assessments and consultation;
- By March 2009 we have set equality objectives across the authority for sexual orientation, age, religion or belief for employment, pay and service delivery based on impact assessment and consultation;
- That equality objectives have been translated into action plans with specific targets;
- That we are developing information and monitoring systems that allow it to assess progress in achieving targets;
- That action on achieving targets has started; and
- Progress has been verified through self-assessment and scrutiny and has been validated externally through an accredited assessor.

**3.3** The policy also refers to the diverse backgrounds and circumstances of people who live, work, study in or visit Cheltenham. The policy states that these diverse communities are a great asset to Cheltenham. However, some communities experience disadvantage and discrimination that has a negative effect on their quality of life. Although, this can affect all communities, most often it affects women, Black and minority ethnic communities, disabled people, young and old people, lesbians,

gay men, bisexual and transgender people which are the groups in society recognised in current equalities legislation.

#### **4. Consultation**

**4.1** The council has prepared draft equality and diversity statements covering the six equality strands:

- Race
- Disability
- Gender
- Lesbians, gay men and bisexuals
- Age
- Religious or other beliefs

**4.2** The council is proposing work with Cheltenham VCA and the council's Black and Other Minority Ethnic worker to consult with representative groups over the next few months to ensure that each of the statements addresses specific needs within those groups.

**4.3** Following consultation, the revised statements and accompanying action plans will be brought back to cabinet for approval.

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#### **Background Papers**

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**Accountability**

Cabinet Member Corporate Services

**Scrutiny Function**

Economy and Business Improvement Overview and Scrutiny Committee.