

Information/Discussion Paper

Social and Community Overview and Scrutiny Committee – 1st March 2010

Monitoring of the Corporate Equalities Action Plan

This note contains the information to keep Members informed of matters relating to the work of the Committee, but where no decisions from Members are needed

1. Why has this come to this committee?

- 1.1 The council's Corporate Equality and Diversity Policy and associated action plan were agreed in March 2008. Together they provide a framework for promoting equality issues across the Council to ensure the elimination of discrimination and disadvantage.
- 1.2 A monitoring report will be presented to Cabinet on 16th March, but ahead of that meeting, it will be useful to gain member comment from Social and Community O+S in terms of our external work.

2. Background to the Corporate Equality and Diversity Policy

- 2.1 The Corporate Equality and Diversity Policy (CEDP) sets out the framework for our existing statutory equality schemes; the Disability, Race and Gender Equality Schemes, and also makes provision for the other equality strands like age, sexual orientation and faith. The plan also reflects the requirements set out in a broad range of legislation, both national and international.
- 2.2 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.
- 2.3 Underpinning this aim are four objectives:
 - We will ensure equal and fair employment practices;
 - We will promote equal access to services;
 - We will promote equality and diversity with our partners and suppliers;
 - We will involve communities and consult with others.

3. Monitoring report

- 3.1 The monitoring report attached as **appendix A** shows that overall progress is positive with the majority of actions being implemented. Particular note should be made of the following:

- The work of the Staff and Support Services Committee who review a range of equality indicators;
 - The work of the Human Resources team who have reviewed and updated a range of policies to ensure that they are compliant with equality good practice;
 - The work of our property services team who have implemented a range of access improvements to our buildings; and
 - The work of our Community capacity worker who has instigated a range of activities with local black and minority ethnic groups.
- 3.2** Zareen Ahmed has produced a summary of this work for the committee and this is attached as **appendix B**.
- 3.3** The report does identify some issues which remain a challenge for the council:
- How best to implement monitoring systems to record demographic information from our customers to enable us to identify if there are particular groups who are not using our services;
 - How we embed equalities in our partnership and contractual relationships; and
 - How we ensure elected members are aware of their responsibilities.
- 3.4** Members of the committee may wish to debate how best the council can tackle these issues.
- 3.5** The monitoring report was considered by the council's equality forum on 10th February 2010. The forum recognised that a lot of positive work had been undertaken and good progress has been made. However, the forum has a sense that equalities is still not fully embedded within the culture of the council. Some suggestions from the forum would include re-defining what we mean by equality and diversity and how we can use it as a tool to improve the customer experience. This would include more emphasis on events and activities that will raise staff and members' awareness of the needs of different community groups.
- 3.6** Through making equalities about real people with real issues, the forum hopes to make staff and members view equality and diversity as an opportunity rather than seeing it as a "tick-box" exercise.

4. Next Steps

- 4.1 A summary of views from from Social and Community O+S will be presented to the council's cabinet on Tuesday 16th March 2010.

Background Papers	Corporate Equality and Diversity Policy, Report to Cabinet on 11 th March 2008
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Accountability	Cabinet Member Corporate Services
Scrutiny Function	Social and Community Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Attachments	Appendix A, Monitoring report. Appendix B, Summary of community capacity building work.