

PERFORMANCE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
18TH May 2010

Report of the Director of Leisure and Environment

ITEM 6 Equality Standard for Local Government

Purpose of Report

This report provides an update on actions currently being undertaken with regard to the Equality Standard across the Council.

Action Requested

The Committee considers the content of the report.

Policy Context

As a public authority, Charnwood Borough Council has a legal requirement to promote equality in relation to disability, gender and race. The new Single Equality Act (effective October 2010) extends existing equality duties to cover all the equality strands, including age, religion or belief, gender reassignment and sexual orientation.

The Equality Standard that the Council was previously working towards has now been replaced by a new Equality Framework for Local Government with 3 levels Developing, Achieving and Excellent as compared to the original 5 levels of the standard. Charnwood are currently at level 2 of the Standard which corresponds to Developing level of the new Equality Framework.

Update

Over the last few months a number of key activities have been taking place since the new Equality Framework for Local Government was introduced.

Engagement

A session was run in December with Directors and Heads of Service to raise awareness of equality and diversity and provide an interactive and informative way of discussing issues. The session covered a number of topics and highlighted key areas the Council could explore further.

During January and February sessions have been held with all Heads of Service to highlight the new Equality Impact Assessment process (see below), legislative changes due to the new Single Equality Act, the Equality Framework for Local Government and to understand the areas in which Heads of Service feel they need more training and support. Additionally all services have been asked to complete a brief questionnaire on various aspects of equality and diversity, which will form part of our initial assessment against the equality framework and identify key areas for the Council to focus on in progressing towards meeting the framework.

Equality Impact Assessments (EqIA)

All local authorities must complete an Equality Impact Assessment for new policies and procedures to assess the impact of the changes on all our customer groups and ensure that none are being adversely affected. Feedback from across the Council indicated that the current process was too complex and took too long to complete. A new Equality Impact Assessment process has been created and all heads of service and managers will be attending training during May to learn about the process, to provide input on refining it and to discuss the demographics of the Borough and the needs of our key customer groups.

Training

The induction training module has been revised to provide more focus on what this means for individuals on a day to day basis. A training programme is being developed that include Equality Impact Assessments, new legislation, a refresher for those who haven't done the induction or feel they need it and sessions exploring some of the specific equality strands e.g. race, religion and disability. This will also include further training for members on key aspects of the equality and diversity. The first training sessions for managers will focus on Equality Impact Assessment training and some of the key equality strands. These are scheduled for 21st May, 26th May and 11th June.

Equality Schemes

Charnwood currently has equality schemes for race, disability and gender. These must be updated by the end of this year and the work to review progress against the schemes has started. Further work will be undertaken to set new objectives for the schemes for the next 3 years and to produce a Single Equality Scheme that brings the various equality strands together.

Workforce

Work is also underway to analysis the workforce profile of the Council and look at areas where we believe we are underrepresented when compared against the community profile or where they may be an imbalance between senior levels and more junior roles.

Initial analysis has shown that there are significantly more women in lower paid jobs than there are in the top 5% of the workforce. A survey is currently being developed to understand why this may be the case.

Once this work has been completed more in-depth analysis will be done on BME groups as initial analysis has shown there are differences between these groups at various levels across the organisation.

Financial and Legal Implications

There are none arising from this report.

Risk Management

The risks associated with the options available and proposed actions to mitigate those risks are set out in the table below.

Risk Identified	Likelihood	Impact	Risk Management Actions Planned
The Council may not meet the standards of the Equality Framework	L	M	Training and work programme in place that has corporate wide commitment

Background Papers: None

Officer(s) to contact:

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