

Subject: Equalities & Inclusion Update
Date of Meeting: 12 November 2009
Report of: Director of Strategy & Governance
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Key Decision: No
Wards Affected: All

FOR GENERAL RELEASE**1. SUMMARY AND POLICY CONTEXT:**

- 1.1 The Equalities & Inclusion Policy sets out policy and priorities for the next three years 2008-2011 and actions arising are set out in the Equality Scheme Action Plan. This was approved by Council on 9 October 2008.
- 1.2 At Overview & Scrutiny Commission on 15 July 2008 a six-monthly update was requested. Further, as part of the recommendations agreed from the six month review of the constitution in April 2009 a six monthly report to Cabinet was requested on progress and performance on Equalities and Inclusion issues. This report builds on the update for OSC on 14 July 2009 and sets out the plans for the rest of the year.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 2.1 That Cabinet notes Equalities & Inclusion progress.
- 2.2 That Cabinet notes the establishment of the City Inclusion Partnership.
- 2.3 That Cabinet highlights action required to build on the Peer Challenge and achieve "Excellent" in the Equalities Framework.

3. RELEVANT BACKGROUND INFORMATION/CHRONOLOGY OF KEY EVENTS:**Equalities & Inclusion Progress*****Equalities Standard: Achievement and Areas for Improvement***

- 3.1 The Peer Challenge was undertaken on the 30 and 31 March and it was confirmed that we have achieved Level 3 of the Equalities Standard for Local Government. A copy of the report is attached as Appendix A showing the comments made in relation to areas of strength and areas for improvement. A column has been inserted showing our current activity and our plans to address the shortfalls. The feedback from the Peers was extremely positive and we are well placed to move to the next stage as below.

Equalities Framework: Next steps

- 3.2 The Equalities Standard for Local Government has now been replaced by a new Equalities Framework which has a greater focus on measurable outcomes and a stronger alignment to the Comprehensive Area Assessment. The new Framework has three levels; Developing, Achieving and Excellent. As we have achieved level 3 of the Equalities Standard we automatically are deemed as an Achieving authority. We propose that the authority aim to achieve “Excellent” status by December 2010.
- 3.3 The Council’s Equalities Steering Group has completed an initial gap analysis against the new criteria and will develop an action plan to address shortfalls. This will include any outstanding actions from the Diversity Peer Challenge report.
- 3.4 The main headlines from the gap analysis are:
- All Directorates have struggled to find evidence of clear equalities outcomes despite good equalities work underway
 - Inconsistency in evidencing how the outcomes of Equality Impact Assessments feed into Business Plans and how they influence decision making
 - Lack of evidence that the authority scrutinises and challenges its own and its partnerships’ performance with regard to equality impacts and objectives
 - Lack of evidence that equality is built effectively into procurement processes and produces equality outcomes including customer satisfaction
 - Evidence from the Place Survey indicates some variation in satisfaction from communities of interest and different areas of the city and also indicates that some groups do not feel that they are treated fairly
 - Improvements are required in how the analysis of workforce data translates into management action
- 3.5 The Equalities Framework Action Plan will contain a number of actions to address these gaps and some work is already underway. For example, via the City Inclusion Partnership we are working to ensure that the new Sustainable Community Strategy provides a framework to scrutinise equalities performance.
- 3.6 Leadership will be required from Directorate Management Teams to ensure that we are able to build the ‘golden thread’ between Equality Impact Assessments, Business Plans and equality and inclusion related outcomes. Equality Impact Assessment activity needs to continue in a prioritised way that influences decision making and improved service delivery.

City Inclusion Partnership

- 3.7 The City Inclusion Partnership (CIP) has now held 3 meetings with representation from the council, a good range of other public sector statutory partners and the Stronger Communities Partnership.
- 3.8 The work programme is underway with sub-groups led by the different partners taking responsibility for the various actions and feeding back to the main meeting. This includes a group led by the council which is working towards the development of a partnership Equalities Charter for the city.

- 3.9 The CIP was formally adopted by the LSP on 1 October 2009 and the CIP is working with other partners to ensure that equalities and inclusion issues are addressed within the Sustainable Community Strategy refresh. A formal launch of the CIP and the Equalities Charter are planned for January 2010.

Community of Interest Events

- 3.10 Building on the extremely successful set of events that were run last year to mark 6 key events for communities of interest, plans are in place to run activity again this year. The events are Holocaust Memorial Day, International Women's Day, LGBT History Month, Black History Month, Brighton & Hove People's Day and International Day of Disabled People. Part of the criteria for approval for funding is that the events reach out to all communities and work to improve community cohesion. The funding is administered by the Equalities & Inclusion team and the funding decisions are made by a panel of community & voluntary sector representatives.

Single Equality Scheme

- 3.11 The Equality Scheme Action Plan containing the outstanding actions from our Race Equality, Disability Equality and Gender Equality Schemes with additional actions linked to the new Equality and Inclusion Policy 2008-2011 was reviewed in July 2009 and an update went to Overview & Scrutiny Commission at that time.
- 3.12 A Single Equality Scheme is planned to be developed by December 2009 in order to replace the existing Race, Disability and Gender Equality Schemes which need to be renewed at the end of 2009 or 2010. This gives us the opportunity to build in priority actions against the other equality strands.
- 3.13 Public consultation is now underway in partnership with the PCT and Brighton & Sussex University Hospitals Trust and the consultation materials are available on our website. The draft SES will be produced in November and is scheduled for final agreement early next year. The intention is to produce a focused and clear document containing a set of actions which reflect the key equalities and inclusion priorities for the city. There will be generic actions across the equalities and inclusion strands and targeted activity to address areas of disadvantage. This work will be led by the Equalities & Inclusion Team but will require full Directorate involvement via the Equalities Steering Group representatives.

4. CONSULTATION

- 4.1 The City Inclusion Partnership was introduced following consultation with key stakeholders from the statutory and community/voluntary sectors and a public consultation event on 6 May 2008. As described above, the Single Equality Scheme is currently subject to public consultation.

5. FINANCIAL & OTHER IMPLICATIONS:

Financial Implications:

- 5.1 There are no direct financial implications from the recommendations within the report. The progress discussed within the report has been funded within existing budgets and future activities will be considered as part of budget strategies.

Finance Officer consulted: Anne Silley

Date: 15/10/09

Legal Implications:

- 5.2 Our statutory responsibilities in relation to equalities are directly addressed by the Equalities & Inclusion Policy and the development of the new Single Equality Scheme.

Lawyer consulted: Elizabeth Culbert

Date: 22/10/09

Equalities Implications:

- 5.3 The equalities implications are directly addressed by the work contained within the report.

Sustainability Implications:

- 5.4 None directly in relation to this report

Crime & Disorder Implications:

- 5.5 The Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership and the Partnership Community Safety Team are key contributors to equalities & inclusion work in the city and this is will be reflected in the single Equality Scheme.

Risk and Opportunity Management Implications:

- 5.6 The implications for risk are directly addressed by the actions contained within the report.

Corporate / Citywide Implications:

- 5.7 The actions contained within the report have been developed with input from all council Directorates.

6. EVALUATION OF ANY ALTERNATIVE OPTION(S):

- 6.1 These recommendations address our statutory responsibilities and the Improvement & Development Agency best practice as set out in the Equalities Framework for Local Government.

7. REASONS FOR REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS

- 7.1 To provide Cabinet support for the work to achieve an “Excellent” rating in the Equalities Framework for Local Government.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Appendices:

1. Appendix A: Diversity Peer Challenge Report (October 2009)

Documents in Members' Rooms

None

Background Documents

None

