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| Subject: | Response to the recommendations made by the Staff Disabilities Scrutiny Panel | | |
| Date of Meeting: | 23 September 2010 | | |
| Report of: | Acting Director of Strategy & Governance | | |
| Contact Officer: | Name: | Charlotte Thomas | Tel: 29-1290 |
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| Key Decision: | No | | |
| Wards Affected: | All | | |

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

- 1.1 The council has had a long-standing commitment to equality both in its role as an employer and as a service provider. For several years it has been measuring its progress in this area against the Equality Standard for Local Government.
- 1.2 In March 2009, a Diversity Peer Challenge review confirmed that the council had successfully met the criteria for Level 3 of the Equality Standard. The assessors were impressed by the quality of work that was taking place across the council in relation to equalities issues.
- 1.3 The report highlighted a number of areas in which the council was assessed as being particularly strong. However, as with any review of this nature, there were several areas where it was felt there was room for improvement.
- 1.4 The Scrutiny Panel on Staff Disabilities was set up to investigate the assessment's findings in relation to the employment and training of disabled employees. The Panel also looked into the results of the 2009 Staff Survey which appeared to show that disabled employees had a less positive view of the council as an employer compared with non-disabled staff.
- 1.5 In their report, Members recognised and welcomed the progress the council had made in many areas to make the organisation more inclusive for those with disabilities. However, they also made a number of recommendations which they considered would improve matters further.
- 1.6 The purpose of this report is to provide a formal response to the findings and recommendations of the Staff Disabilities Scrutiny Panel. These recommendations have been endorsed by the Overview and Scrutiny Commission at its meeting on 8 June 2010.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 2.1 That Cabinet notes the contents of this report.
- 2.2 That Cabinet notes the important role the Occupational Health Service plays in promoting disability equality.
- 2.3 That Cabinet agrees the formal response to each of the Scrutiny Panel's recommendations and planned actions as set out in Appendix 2.

3. RELEVANT BACKGROUND INFORMATION/CHRONOLOGY OF KEY EVENTS:

- 3.1 As a public body, the council is required by law to promote equality in the areas of disability, gender and race. However, although it does not have a legal requirement to do so, it also strives to promote equality on the grounds of age, sexual orientation and religion or belief.
- 3.2 The council is committed to mainstreaming equalities in both employment and service delivery and it has been working hard over recent years to achieve this.
- 3.3 Progress has been measured against the Equality Standard for Local Government and, in March last year, it was confirmed that the council had met the requisite criteria for Level 3 (of 5) of the Equality Standard.
- 3.4 The assessors were impressed by the quality of work that had, and was taking place, across the council in relation to equalities issues and their report highlighted a number of areas in which the council was considered to be particularly strong.
- 3.5 However, the purpose of the review was also to highlight areas in which it was considered we could do more to promote equality.
- 3.6 The Staff Disability Scrutiny Review was commissioned by the Overview & Scrutiny Commission at its meeting held on 8 September 2009. Its remit was to investigate:
 - the areas relating to employment and training where the Diversity Peer Challenge review considered more work could be done to promote disability equality
 - the issues relating to performance under the Local Area Agreement
 - the action taken by the council to encourage people with disabilities to apply for jobs.
- 3.7 The Scrutiny Panel's report that describes the scrutiny process, summarises the evidence taken and sets out its findings and recommendations is attached at Appendix 1.
- 3.8 The report recognises and celebrates the fact that there has been a significant amount of good work in relation to employment and disabilities.

- 3.9 The Panel's recommendations do not identify any brand new areas of work. Rather, the Panel highlights areas for further development and improvement of existing areas of work.
- 3.10 Although not referred to in the final report, Members are asked to note the important role that the council's Occupational Health Service makes to promoting the recruitment and retention of employees with disabilities.
- 3.11 The Occupational Health Adviser provides invaluable advice on the workplace adjustments that we can make not only to enable new recruits with a disability to join our workforce but also to support existing colleagues who may either become disabled, or whose needs may change, during the course of their employment with us.
- 3.12 A considered, formal response to each of the Panel's recommendations is set out in Appendix 2.

4. CONSULTATION

- 4.1 The Scrutiny Panel held two public meetings during which evidence was heard from representatives of Job Centre Plus, Brighton and Sussex Universities Hospitals NHS Trust, City Council officers and individual staff with disabilities. The Brighton & Hove Federation of Disabled People gave a written submission

5. FINANCIAL & OTHER IMPLICATIONS:

Financial Implications:

- 5.1 There are no direct financial implications associated with this report. It is intended to implement any actions flowing from this review within existing budgets.

Finance Officer Consulted:

Mike Bentley

Date: 08/09/10

Legal Implications:

- 5.2 The council has a statutory obligation to promote disability equality and to ensure that its disabled employees are not disadvantaged within the workplace. This report will help to ensure that the council complies with its legal requirements.

Lawyer Consulted:

Bob Bruce

Date: 08/09/10

Equalities Implications:

- 5.3 These are covered within the report.

Sustainability Implications:

- 5.4 There are no sustainability implications associated with this report.

Crime & Disorder Implications:

- 5.5 None.

Risk & Opportunity Management Implications:

5.6 None.

Corporate / Citywide Implications

5.7 None.

6. EVALUATION OF ANY ALTERNATIVE OPTION(S):

6.1 The alternative would be not to support, in full or in part, the recommendations of the Staff Disabilities Scrutiny Panel. However, adopting the Panel's recommendations in full will enable the council to build on the previous good work to promote disability equality and so make the organisation more inclusive for staff with disabilities.

7. REASONS FOR REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 The recommendations set out in this report are as a result of the work of the Staff Disabilities Scrutiny Panel.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Appendices:

1. Report of the Staff Disabilities Scrutiny Panel & Appendices
2. Formal response to the recommendations made by the Staff Disabilities Scrutiny Panel

Documents In Members' Rooms

1. Report of the Staff Disabilities Scrutiny Panel & Appendices

Background Documents

None