

RACE EQUALITY SCHEME and CORPORATE EQUALITY PLAN

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to submit an update on the Race Equality Scheme action plan and to recommend that in the future this action forms part of the wider Equalities Standard action plan (to be known as the Corporate Equality Plan).

2. Introduction

- 2.1 As with all public authorities the Council is required to comply with legislation on race and equalities as they affect employment and access to services. The relevant acts are:

- Sex Discrimination Act 1974
- Race Relations Act 1976
- Disability Discrimination Act 1995
- Race Relations Act 2000

- 2.2 In the next 3 years additional duties will arise:

- 2003 provisions on sex discrimination in employment will be widened to include sexuality.
- 2003 will also see provisions on race discrimination in employment widened to include religion and belief.
- 2004 all providers of goods, services and facilities will have to remove or overcome physical barriers preventing access by people with disabilities.
- 2006 provisions on employment are likely to be extended to prohibit discrimination on grounds of age.

- 2.3 The government has indicated that at a later date it wishes to extend these provisions in relation to sexuality, religion, belief and age. It has sought comments on extending the regulations relating to employment, to the provision of goods, facilities and services as exists at present in the Disabilities Discrimination Act.

- 2.4 The Council has already undertaken many activities in line with these duties. These include a programme of diversity training for managers and employees, a review of accessible parking for people with disabilities, the disability open day on 13 September 2003, review of priority services etc. Some of these have been subject to separate reports to members. All these and other activities will be appropriate for the Corporate Equalities Plan

3. Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000

- 3.1 This act requires all public authorities to adopt a Race Equality Scheme by 31 May 2002. The scheme was required to indicate the action the Council would take over a 3 year period to eliminate discrimination and promote equal opportunities.

3.2 The Council published its scheme on 8 July 2002. The progress made since is shown in Appendix 1.

3.3 Although the scheme does show the activities of the Council as far as black and ethnic minority residents are concerned it does not show the work undertaken on other equality issues.

4. The Equality Standard

4.1 The Equality Standard had been developed as a tool for Local Government. It integrates all equality issues into council policies and practices at all levels. It introduces a systematic approach to ensure any discrimination barriers that prevent access to services and employment are identified and removed. This common approach for dealing with all equalities including race, gender, disability or other is important as they all will be treated equally although each category may have its own specific barriers to be resolved.

4.2 The Equality Standard will, if achieved, meet the requirements of the Race Equality Scheme and future statutory requirements for gender and disability. The government is assessing the standard now as part of the Best Value Performance Indicators and it forms part of the Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) framework.

4.3 There are 5 levels to the Equality Standard:

- Level 1 – commitment to a Comprehensive Equality Policy (CEP).
- Level 2 – assessment and consultation.
- Level 3 – setting equality objectives and monitoring against targets.
- Level 4 – information systems and monitoring against targets.
- Level 5 – achieving and reviewing outcomes.

The Council is committed to achieving, at least, Level 1 during 2003/04.

4.4 Appendix 2 is an action plan showing the actions necessary to achieve Level 1. Although ambitious it is felt to be achievable. It will require the continued commitment of members and senior managers and the integration of equality issues into the Best Value and Service Plans processes.

5. Financial Implications

5.1 A commitment to dedicating resources to achieve the equality standard has been made by the redesigning of a post. The Corporate Complaints and Equalities Officer will spend part of their time co-ordinating the action required, as well as provide advice and support to officers and developing best practice in equality issues.

5.2 It is likely that the activities such as training, consultation and alternative service delivery will incur costs for individual service units. It is not possible to quantify these however the actions should be integrated in Best Value Improvement Plans or Service Plans to further the aim of continuous improvement for their stakeholders.

6. Conclusions

- 6.1 The Council has a duty to comply with legislation as it affects equal access to employment and services.
- 6.2 The Equality Standard should provide a constructive way of achieving these duties.

7. Environmental Implications

- 7.1 The adoption of the Equality Standard in itself will not create any implications. However a number of the actions taken as a result should improve the quality of life of the residents of the district.

8. Portfolio Holder's Comments

- 8.1 The Portfolio holder for Policy and Strategy has been consulted and says:

“I am committed to New Forest District Council providing equal opportunities and services to all our residents and staff members, irrespective of race, colour, creed, gender or disability and expect this to be self evident in the way in which we provide services.”

9. Recommendations

- 9.1 That the Council be recommended to approve the adoption of the Equality Standard and of the integration of the Race Equality Scheme in the Equality Standard Action Plan (to be known as Corporate Equality Plan) and
- 9.2 That the Council be recommended to approve the action plan shown in Appendix 2 as the means of achieving at least Level 1 of the Equality Standard.

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Background Papers

Published works.

EQUALITY SCHEME ACTION PLAN

DUTY	PROPOSED ACTION	ACTION COMPLETED
General duty 1. To eliminate unlawful race discrimination	Promote Race and Equality policies. Train employees and elected members. Complete activities of action plan.	As per comments below.
General duty 2. To promote equal opportunity between different racial groups	As a district where less than 1% of the population comes from minority groups this is a challenge and therefore future action may need to be targeted at specific racial groups such as gypsies which are believed at present to be the District's largest racial group. To include as part of Best Value system To include Recreation & Leisure work - Forest Arts Centre - Playgroup training	The targets of the Equality Standards are being incorporated into the Service Planning guidance. The result of this will be to place equalities at the heart of service provisions
Specific duty – policy and service delivery (1) Identify all relevant functions and policies and test these for relevance to the duty to promote race equality – i.e. could the function or policy affect racial groups differently? Could it cause discrimination? Prioritise these.	Each service needs to apply the test of relevance to their policies and processes in a challenging and open way. Develop a pro-forma with criteria to measure services against the Race Relations Act and the general Equality standard. Services which directly interface with the public are likely to be the highest priority – e.g. Housing, Environmental Health. Other services will be reviewed in line with the best value timetable (Appendix 2)	A proforma has been prepared and circulated to Heads of Service.

<p>Specific duty - policy and service delivery</p> <p>(2) Make arrangements for assessing and consulting on, the likely impact of proposed policies</p>	<p>Needs to be considered as part of future policy development. Include Environmental, Social and Economic implications as a paragraph in all reports to members</p> <p>Form race focus groups through contacts in New Forest area or Southampton.</p> <p>Check Citizens Panel is representative of ethnic population.</p>	<p>Initial meetings have taken place to discuss the formation of an equalities group and to develop the Citizen's Panel to represent the local population.</p> <p>The ethnic origins of members of the Citizens' Panel are now recorded and efforts are made to ensure correct representation of the district.</p>
<p>Specific duty – policy and service delivery</p> <p>(3) Make arrangements for monitoring policies for adverse impact</p>	<p>Include as part of service planning and best value timetable (appendix 2)</p> <p>Use focus groups to review a sample of policies working with partners towards joint consultation and dissemination of data.</p> <p>Monitor use of services by ethnicity where appropriate.</p>	<p>See 2 above</p> <p>See 4 above</p> <p>Monitoring of take up of services by Black and Ethnic minorities still to be completed. Will be part of identified priority service work.</p>
<p>Specific duty - policy and service delivery</p> <p>(4) Make arrangements for publishing monitoring reports</p>	<p>Report to members annually on progress against this action plan and publish in Forest News.</p> <p>Consider developing local PI's based on the Equality Standard (New government performance indicator for equality issues).</p>	<p>Annual report for Cabinet August 2003. Report to be published on web. This report suggests integration of Equality Standard into Service Planning to achieve monitoring.</p>

<p>Specific duty - policy and service delivery (5) Arrangements for the public to have access to information and services</p>	<p>To introduce welcome cards at Information Offices to identify alternative language or accessibility needs of customers Publicity Employee training Access to translation service Use of website Information offices with local communities</p>	<p>Text for posters, face-to-face cards and for leaflets and publications is currently being produced. This information will be published and available on the web.</p>
<p>Specific duty - policy and service delivery (6) Arrangements for training staff</p>	<p>General awareness training of all employees during 2002-2004 with specific emphasis on race. Training co-ordinators to undertake.</p> <p>Heads of Service Seminar (25 June 2002, suggested). To include general awareness training, priority setting, consultation on draft Race Equality Scheme and associated exercises.</p> <p>Similar training for members and Local Strategic Partners by December 2002.</p> <p>Specific training for IO's, VIC's and selected front line staff, contractors and partners during 2002/03.</p>	<p>A program of training for employees in Equalities and diversity started in 2003.</p> <p>In December 2002 Heads of Service attended a training session on the Race Relations Amendment Act and Equality Scheme where they considered the implication of widening the Race Equality scheme to the Equality Standard and prioritized council services.</p> <p>Training for members was postponed due to the election.</p> <p>The Local Strategic Partnership have been updated on the issues concerning Race Equalities and Equality Standard.</p> <p>A program specifically for front line employees will be produced for 2003/04.</p>

<p>Specific duty – race equality scheme</p> <p>(7) Publish the race equality scheme by 31 May 2002</p>	<p>Draft scheme by mid May 02 To CMT by 25 May 02 To Corporate and Finance Review Panel on 20 June 02 To Cabinet on 8 July 02 To Council on 22 July 02 Publish in next edition of Forest News</p>	<p>Scheme published 8 July 2002</p>
<p>Specific duty – employment</p> <p>(8) Monitor ethnicity of applicants and employees, including training and promotion opportunities</p>	<p>To monitor the ethnicity of applicants and employees, including training and promotion opportunities.</p> <p>Additional monitoring may also be considered including discipline and grievance incidents bonus payments; promotion opportunities.</p>	<p>Currently are monitoring the Recruitment process and Equal opportunities information and reported on. Presently looking at monitoring Disciplinary, Grievances, Promotions and Training. The report will be available in 2003/04</p>

THE EQUALITY STANDARD FRAMEWORK (CORPORATE EQUALITY PLAN, INCORPORATING THE RACE RELATIONS EQUALITY SCHEME)

This Council will seek to ensure that all the people in the New Forest District Council, irrespective of their age, disability, ethnic, cultural or religious background, gender, marital status or sexual orientation, have equal access to and quality of employment and services of a consistently high standard.

LEVEL 1: COMMITMENT TO A COMPREHENSIVE EQUALITY POLICY

To achieve Level 1 of the Standard an authority must have adopted a Comprehensive Equality Policy that commits it to achieving equality in race, gender and disability. This Council's strategy to achieve this will be to implement, at least, the actions detailed within this Plan in 2003/04.

1. LEADERSHIP AND CORPORATE COMMITMENT

Duties/Objectives	Actions To Date	Proposed Action & Timescale
Formulate and adopt a comprehensive equality policy for the authority covering race, gender and disability.	As stated above. This is one of the Council's aims in the corporate plan - Heart of the Forest.	Completed.
Ensure that the written policies are in line with current legislation (Race Relations Act and Race Relations (Amendment) Act, Sex Discrimination Act, Equal Pay Act, Disability Discrimination Act) and Codes of Practice issued by the three equality Commissions.	A brief review has been undertaken at corporate level.	<p>Ensure corporate policy which is included in all procurement contracts.</p> <p>Members to be mindful that in all decisions they have a duty to promote race equality and equality of opportunity.</p> <p>Officers to include social and economic implications in all reports to Members, perhaps as a separate paragraph.</p> <p>Services to consider own policies as part of their action planning.</p> <p>Ensure all agreements with partners underwrite this objective.</p>

LEADERSHIP AND CORPORATE COMMITMENT (Cont./...)

Duties/Objectives	Actions To Date	Proposed Action & Timescale
<p>Make a corporate commitment to developing a Corporate Equality Plan (CEP) indicating how equality policy will be implemented. The CEP should incorporate or be consistent with the authority's statutory Race Equality Scheme.</p>	<p>Race Equalities Action Plan approved by Cabinet July 2002. Approval of CEP sought from Cabinet August 2003.</p>	<p>To be considered by Cabinet annually.</p>
<p>Make a corporate commitment to carrying out a process of equality impact and needs/requirements assessment including those assessments of organisational and individual requirements required for compliance with the DDA.</p>	<p>Heads of Service prioritising services needing to undertake assessments Dec 2002.</p> <p>Corporate Disability Group recommends actions to comply with DDA e.g. car parking, improvements to buildings</p>	<p>Future needs assessments to be part of Service /Best Value planning.</p>
<p>Make a corporate commitment to a fair employment and equal pay policy.</p>	<p>This has been in place for some time. Personnel currently monitor the recruitment process and equal opportunities information is reported on.</p>	<p>Personnel are presently looking at monitoring disciplinary, grievance, promotion and training. This will be available 2003/4.</p>
<p>Make a corporate commitment to earmark specific resources for improving equality practice.</p>	<p>An existent vacant post has been redesignated as Corporate Complaints and Equalities Officer. This Officer will give an overview to services as a whole and assist with advice and specific information.</p> <p>Year of Disabled Persons – disability week/ September 2003 and Open Day.</p> <p>A programme of training for employees in Equalities and Diversity started in 2003.</p>	<p>Additional text phones (minicom) to Lymington and New Milton offices (September 2003).</p> <p>Equality updates three times a year to employees.</p>

2. CONSULTATION AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AND SCRUTINY

Duties/Objectives	Actions To Date	Proposed Action & Timescale
Corporate commitment to consult with designated community, staff and stakeholder groups on all aspects of equality policy.	The Local Strategic Partnership have been updated on the issues concerning Race and Equality Standards. The Citizens' Panel has been profile for equalities has been assessed.	Publish ESF Action Plan on Web, in Forest News and on Network. The Citizens' panel will reflect the community profile for equalities. An Equalities Forum will be set up.
Each department and service area to make a commitment to contribute to the consultation and scrutiny section of the CEP.		Each service needs to apply the test of relevance to their policies and processes in a challenging and open way. A proforma with criteria to measure services against the Race Relations Act and the general Equality Standard is being prepared and will be circulated to Heads of Service.
Make a corporate commitment to equality self-assessment, scrutiny and audit.		Annual reports to Cabinet.
Each department and service area to commit to engage in consultation with designated community, staff and stakeholder groups on its service delivery.	Corporate Disability Group has undertaken consultation in production of "yellow book" of information on council services for residents with disabilities, car parking and access to buildings. We have included consultation in the Best Value regime.	To include a clause in all new and reviewed contracts regarding partnership, contractual and tendering arrangements to include equalities and duty to promote race equality measures. To be included in service planning.
Make a corporate commitment to consult departments and service areas on equality objectives.	CDG has and will continue to liaise with other corporate groups and employees.	Equalities Unit to liaise with corporate groups and employees.

CONSULTATION AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AND SCRUTINY (Cont./...)

Duties/Objectives	Actions To Date	Proposed Action & Timescale
Each department and service area to commit to processes of equality self-assessment, scrutiny and audit on its service delivery.		As part of Service Planning make arrangements for publishing monitoring reports. Report to Members annually on progress against this Action Plan and publish in Forest News.
Incorporate equality policy as a key theme within the Community Strategy drawn up by the local authority and its partners.	Completed	Continue to include in all activities.
Make a commitment to establish mechanisms for responding to discrimination and harassment on the grounds of race, disability and gender.	This has been included in the Council's Complaints Procedure.	

3. SERVICE DELIVERY AND CUSTOMER CARE

Duties/Objectives	Actions To Date	Proposed Action & Timescale
Departmental and service area commitment to a comprehensive equality policy appropriate to its service delivery.		To be included in service plans.
Department and service area commitment to implementing the equality impact “needs/ requirements” assessment for its service delivery including those assessments of organisational and individual required for compliance with the DDA.	Heads of Service have undertaken the prioritising of services.	To be included in service plans.
Department and service area commitment to developing equal access service plan element of CEP, and to set targets within each department and service area as part of their business plans.		The targets of the Equality Standards are being incorporated into the Service Planning guidance. The result of this will be to place equalities at the heart of service provisions.
Department and service area commitment to equality action planning and equality target setting within all departments and service areas.		<p>Service plans need statement of commitment to equalities and timescales.</p> <p>The priority services to consider their policies as per general duty (RRAA). Identify B&EM (and other) customers in relation to the profile.</p>
Department and service area commitment to allocate specific resources for improving equality practice.	<p>Corporate activities to support services:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual update of leaflets, ForestNet and employee library. • Publicise corporate activities. • Web pages. • Articles in magazines. • Advertise Helpline in Council Tax bills. 	<p>Service Plans monitored for Equality by Scrutiny Panels annually.</p> <p>To introduce welcome cards at Information Offices to identify alternative languages or accessibility needs of customers.</p>

4. EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING

Duties/Objectives	Actions To Date	Proposed Action & Timescale
Adopt recruitment procedures which use non-discriminatory practices.	Recruitment is already monitored and equal opportunities reported on.	
Commitment to an employment equality assessment of the local labour market area, workforce profiling and equal pay review.		Part of the Personnel work programme.
Commitment to establish a fair employment and equal pay policy.	Completed	
Commitment to establish an equal employment section of the CEP incorporating the employment related issues from the Race Equality Scheme and including those assessments of organisational and individual requirements required for compliance with the DDA.	Commitment made	Further work to be undertaken by Personnel
Commitment to adopt procedures to ensure that publicity for vacancies does not unfairly restrict the range of applicants.	Completed	
Commitment to produce a standard range of application forms and job descriptions that are clear and explicit.		Part of Personnel work in reviewing recruitment procedures

EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING (Cont./...)

Duties/Objectives	Actions To Date	Proposed Action & Timescale
Commitment to review personnel information system for monitoring suitability including underpinning the Council's statutory ethnic monitoring duties.	To monitor annually that representation in the workforce equals range of B&EM.	Staff questionnaire to be sent out and evaluated 2003/4.
Commitment to make procedures consistent with Employment Codes of Practice.	Completed	
Commitment to develop a programme of staff training in equality issues.	<p>Programme aims to train all employees and elected Members on this policy.</p> <p>Actions to date:</p> <p>Consulted TCOs and HoS for specific needs</p> <p>Diversity training for Members and employees.</p> <p>Awareness training for front line staff in visual impairment, hearing impairment, general disability awareness.</p>	<p>Make sure training includes CEP</p> <p>Members of Corporate Disability Group to attend all DMTs to give update on disability issues – summer 2003.</p> <p>Further training on equalities issues.</p>