
EXCERPT FROM THE MINUTES OF THE COMMUNITY OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE HELD ON 26 AUGUST 2004

COS.133/04 DIVERSITY POLICY – RACE EQUALITY SCHEME –UPDATE OF FRAMEWORK AND ACTION PLAN

The Executive Director presented Report SP.36/04 explaining the Council's duties under Race Relations legislation and describing work that must be undertaken in the near term to become fully compliant with that legislation.

The Executive on 17 August (EX.164/04) had considered the report and had:

- (1) noted the legal requirements of the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 and Equality Standard for Local Government for the City Council acting to achieve a greater level of equality for all in Carlisle;
- (2) accepted the Race Equality Scheme, subject to further periodic updates as the Council's work in this area develops;
- (3) agreed to further work being undertaken in Race Equality and other equality areas, along best practice lines, with progress reports to the Executive on a regular basis;
- (4) submitted the reports to this Committee for consideration and comment;
- (5) would consider appointing a Member champion for equalities when the report is further considered by the Executive.

The report enclosed the revised Race Equality Scheme which would meet the City Council's obligations under the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000, which places a general duty on listed public authorities to actively promote Race Equality through :

- (a) eliminating unlawful discrimination;
- (b) promoting equal opportunities;
- (c) promoting good race relations.

The Executive Director invited the comments of Members on the revised Race Equality Scheme.

Members then commented on and discussed the following matters :

(a) The report would benefit from the inclusion of statistics on incidents of racism and informed comments from agencies such as the Police in order to provide better information on circumstances and incidents.

(b) A Member commented that the Race Equality Scheme was to be part of a wider Diversity Policy within the original Forward Plan, and he requested information on the timescale for producing that Diversity Policy.

The Executive Director advised that she did not have a timescale for the production of the Diversity Policy but advised that she would raise this with the Head of Strategic and Performance Services and report back to a future meeting.

(c) A Member referred to the Council's requirements to assess the impact of its policies and services on minority groups under a process termed the Impact Assessment. The Council had not yet taken any steps to introduce impact assessment, so the initial work to put that right would be particularly resource intensive. There was a query as to where the resources for that work would come from.

The Executive Director responded that the Race Equality Scheme work was currently being undertaken by the Strategic and Performance Services Unit but there would be a need to look at the resource implications and where the final responsibility for this work would lie.

(d) Suggestions were also made about the links with Housing Strategy, Education and particularly the Citizenship Programme being run in schools. It was suggested that the Communications Section could include aspects of the Race Equality Scheme within their Citizenship Programme.

RESOLVED – (1) That the comments of the Committee as outlined above be forwarded to the Executive.

(2) That the Head of Strategic and Performance Services report back to a future meeting of the Committee on the timetable for production of a Diversity Policy.

(3) That the Communications Manager be asked to look at the inclusion of aspects of the Race Equality Scheme within the Citizenship Programme being run in schools.

(4) The Committee looks forward to further developments in this area.