

Report to Community Overview and Scrutiny Panel

Agenda
Item:
A.5

Meeting Date: 11 September 2014
 Portfolio: Communities, Health & Wellbeing
 Key Decision: No
 Within Policy and
 Budget Framework YES
 Public / Private Public

Title: Public Sector Equality Duty review
 Report of: Policy and Communications Manager
 Report Number: PC 09/14

Purpose / Summary:

This report outlines proposals to review the Comprehensive Equality Scheme and equality objectives, to enable the Council to continue to fulfil the Public Sector Equality Duty. It also provides an overview of the progress of equality work since 2012 (Appendix 1).

Recommendations:

The Panel are asked to note and comment on the proposals for the Public Sector Equality Duty review.

Tracking

Executive:	15 September 2014
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1. BACKGROUND

The Equalities Act (2010) replaced the previous anti-discrimination laws with a single Act. A key measure in the Act is the Public Sector Equality Duty which came into force in April 2011. This duty ensures that public bodies tackle discrimination and provide equality of opportunity for all.

The Council must have due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act.
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

The Council must also:

- publish information to demonstrate our compliance with the Equality Duty, at least annually.
- set equality objectives, at least every four years.

The Council's Comprehensive Equality Scheme outlines how we meet the duties of the Equality Act. The scheme was adopted by the Council in September 2010 and updated in April 2011, following a successful peer assessment where the Council reached the Achieving level of the Equality Framework for Local Government.

In 2012, the Council set its equality objectives for the 3 year period 2012-2015 as:

- Improve the quality and volume of our customer information.
- Improve access and inclusion for all our services and across our partnerships.
- Diffuse community tensions and promote understanding.

It is an appropriate time for the Council to review its approach to equality and ensure that it reflects current legislation and best practice. Further information about the progress of equality work since 2012 is provided in Appendix 1.

2. PROPOSALS

The aim of the review is to refresh the Council's approach to equality to ensure it continues to meet the Public Sector Equality Duty. It will look at the Comprehensive Equality Scheme, equality objectives, equality impact assessment process and equality information the Council publishes to identify how we can improve our performance.

This will be undertaken by considering a range of information including consultation with staff, community/user groups feedback, customer information and surveys. The Council's progress will be benchmarked against other local authorities and information available from the Equality and Human Rights Commission. A Public Sector Equality Duty training session will be held in October 2014 to assist managers in implementing the duty. Outcomes from this session will feed into the review.

The review will be ongoing throughout 2014/15, it is proposed that the refreshed approach will be brought back to the Executive in April 2015. Community Overview and Scrutiny are asked to consider how they would like to be involved in the review and developing the new approach.

3. CONSULTATION

Comments from the Scrutiny Panel will be presented at the Executive meeting on 15 September 2014.

4. CONCLUSION AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

The Panel are asked to note and comment on the proposals for the Public Sector Equality Duty review.

5. CONTRIBUTION TO THE CARLISLE PLAN PRIORITIES

The Public Sector Equality Duty supports the Carlisle Plan's priorities by promoting equality of opportunity for all and encouraging a prosperous, vibrant city.

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Appendices Appendix 1 – Progress of equality work 2012 to 2014 attached to report:

Note: in compliance with section 100d of the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 the report has been prepared in part from the following papers: None

CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS/RISKS:

**Chief Executive's –
Economic Development –
Governance –
Local Environment –
Resources -**

Appendix 1 - Progress of equality work 2012 to 2014

Publish information to demonstrate our compliance with the Equality Duty

The Council updated the Comprehensive Equality Scheme in April 2011, following a successful peer assessment where the Council reached the Achieving level of the Equality Framework for Local Government. The Scheme sets out how the Council promotes equality of opportunity through its services, employment, procurement and partnership working.

We have continued to publish general equality impact assessments of service areas on our website. Specific impact assessments are also undertaken where it is felt that a policy change or decision may impact on a particular group. Examples of this include impact assessments of the Local Plan (2014), Localised Support for Council Tax (2012), and Historic Core On-street Parking (2012).

We provide information on the equality and diversity reporting section of our website about the Council's workforce profile, complaints and customer satisfaction with Council services.

Equality objectives 2012-15

Improve the quality and volume of our customer information

The Council's Customer Access Strategy focuses on ensuring our customers' experiences are of the highest possible standard and they can confidently and easily access the council services they need. Key to this is developing customer information to shape service delivery around our customers needs. It is intended that all customer service requests, requests for information and advice will be co-ordinated through the customer contact centre and recorded on the CRM database. This acts as a central point of information and is being developed as an intelligence tool. This work is supported by the drive to encourage residents to register for online services, website redesign and launch, and partnership work to improve accessibility in the community (for example using community centres as hubs).

We have implemented an integrated customer satisfaction and perception survey on our website, which enables us to gather continuous feedback from our customers. The findings of this survey feed into our customer satisfaction service standard that is reported to the Executive and Scrutiny Panels on a quarterly basis. This will also form a baseline to inform the development of new equality objectives.

The Council gathers customer information for specific service areas or issues through a number of mechanisms that can include Carlisle Focus surveys, online surveys, face to face interviews, road shows, and consultation events. The development of the Council's

social media tools are an additional means of improving communication with customers and encouraging feedback on our services. This has seen growing engagement over the past years as the Council builds its digital profile.

Improve access and inclusion for all our services and across our partnerships

As outlined under the previous equality objective, the Council's Customer Access Strategy aims at improving access for our customers. The redevelopment of the Civic Centre Foyer has improved access and it is continued to be developed as an information hub for partners. Cumbria Deaf Vision has moved its office into the building and is able to offer a signing service for contact centre customers upon request. Community kiosks have recently been made available within Brampton and Greystone Community Centres. These devices allows visitors to access services provided by the Council, Cumbria Constabulary and a number of local partners, that previously would have involved a visit to the Civic Centre in the city centre.

As part of the Carlisle Local Plan 2015 - 2030 development, an equality impact assessment has been undertaken to consider the likely impact of policies in the Local Plan to ensure it is in line with equality legislation and the Council's equality objectives. The impact assessment is being consulted on along side the draft Local Plan and is available on the Council's website. The assessment was shared with stakeholders with interests in single or multiple protected characteristics to encourage further feedback.

The Council provides many different services to the community that tackle discrimination and provide equality of opportunity for all. Some recent examples of good practice in the Council include:

- Food safety training sessions were run with the Chinese community in early 2014 and work has been undertaken to support Community Centres. The Environmental Health Team are also working in partnership with other districts in Cumbria, Public Health England and the NHS to look at how people with mental health issues can be referred from the Council to additional support services.
- All taxi drivers have to attend a disability awareness course as part of the licence approval process. The course was developed in response to complaints about the treatment of disabled customers.
- The Council continues to support the Carlisle Access Group, which promotes and improves the access of disabled people to buildings, facilities and services within the district. The Council is working with this group to review applications for cafe pavement seating areas and check accessibility is maintained.
- The Old Town Hall is undergoing significant regeneration to improve the facilities, which include a reception counter for customers with disabilities.
- The Council provides a permanent gypsy and traveller site at Low Harker Dene and is developing a transit site at the same location.

- The Homelessness Strategy is under review and will be open to consultation in Autumn 2014. It is envisaged that this will continue the important investment the Council has made in services for people who are homeless, including the John Street accommodation, Water Street Accommodation and Shaddon Gateway.

Work is ongoing to develop our workforce to better reflect the diversity of Carlisle and address the ageing profile of our employees. A key action from the Organisation Development Plan 2013-15 is to continue to identify areas of the Council where apprenticeships and graduate traineeships could be introduced. These schemes aim to encourage and develop younger employees. The introduction of the iTrent Human Resources management system will enable employee data to be analysed more effectively and a quarterly workforce profile for each Directorate will be developed to facilitate this.

Improving access to our services is underpinned by the learning and development of staff. The Council has developed a range of equality and diversity modules for the e-learning system, Learning Pool, that cover the Public Sector Equality Duty, Disability Awareness, Autism Awareness, Faith and Belief, Mental Health Awareness and Learning Disability Awareness.

The Council works in partnership with other local authorities in Cumbria through the Achieving Cumbria Equality (ACE) Group. This group seeks to develop best practice across Cumbria by sharing information, developing training and procuring services to support equality work. The group has developed Public Sector Equality Duty training that will be delivered to our service managers in Autumn 2014.

The budget is screened for equality impacts as part of the annual budget setting process. This identifies if a change will have a positive or negative impact on a specific group and what measures can be taken to address the impact if appropriate.

Diffuse community tensions and promote understanding

The Council supports local communities and promotes diversity through a range of events. These events offer opportunities for the community to join together and celebrate differences:

- The Council is working in partnership with Prism Arts to run a free summer school for young people and adults with learning disabilities to create puppets for the Carlisle Pageant performance.
- Free guided Breeze cycle rides were offered as part of the Festival of Sport. Breeze's aim is to help women feel more confident and comfortable about going on a bike ride. The programme also featured sports taster sessions including Watchtree Wheelers, an organisation that specialises in adaptive cycling and encourages people of all abilities to ride.

- Carlisle City Council and Carlisle Leisure Limited provided a programme of tennis activities in April 2014 that included taster sessions, wheelchair tennis and cardio tennis. A Disability Multi Sport Open Day was also held in Bitts Park with Come & Try sessions available for young people aged between 11 and 16 years old.

Events supported by the Council include:

Holocaust Memorial Day	2012
Carlisle Access Group's 21 st anniversary	2012
Olympic Torch Relay	2012
Queen's Jubilee Celebrations	2012
Tour of Britain	2012, 2013
Peace Day	2012
English Tourism Week	2013
Homecoming Parade	2013
Carlisle Pageant	2013, 2014
Cumbria Gay Pride	2014
Patriot Games (Festival of Sport)	2014
Easter International Market	Annual
Carlisle Music City	Annual
Upperby Gala	Annual
Open air performances in Bitts Park	Annual
Fireshow	Annual
Remembrance service	Annual
Christmas Lights Switch on	Annual
Christmas International Market	Annual

Following the Community Scrutiny Panel's Hate Crime report in March 2014, the Council has committed to working in partnership with Cumbria Constabulary to re-launch the hate incident reporting scheme. We are encouraging partners and third sector organisations to take up the opportunities offered in our events programme for 2014-15 to raise awareness of hate crime and the reporting scheme. Reporting centres were featured in the Carlisle Focus Summer/Autumn 2014 edition to help promote awareness.