



COMMUNITY OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL

Panel Report

Public

Date of Meeting: 12 January 2012

Title: Annual Equalities Report

Report of: Policy and Communications Manager

Report reference: PPP 21/11

Summary:

This report highlights the main developments during 2011 and preparations for the new duty in 2012.

Recommendations:

The Panel is requested to:

1. Note the developments in raising awareness within the Council; and
2. Comment on the proposed timetable for setting equality objectives.

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1. REASON FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

This year there has been a focus on developing a new approach to raising awareness of Equality and Diversity within the Council. This awareness raising paves the way for a fresh approach to equalities in 2012, the key challenge is setting equality objectives. The Panel has an important role in scrutinising the draft objectives required under the new duty.

2. IMPLICATIONS

Impact assessments

Does the change have an impact on the following?

Equality Impact Screening	Impact Yes/No?	Is the impact positive or negative?
Does the policy/service impact on the following?		
Age	Yes	
Disability	Yes	
Race	Yes	
Gender/ Transgender	Yes	
Sexual Orientation	Yes	
Religion or belief	Yes	
Human Rights	Yes	
Social exclusion	Yes	
Health inequalities	Yes	
Rurality	Yes	

If you consider there is either no impact or no negative impact, please give reasons:

Impacts have been considered throughout the year, this approach will continue in 2012.

3. North West Employers' Equality Awards 2011

In September, the Council, alongside all the Cumbrian local authorities, received an award from North West Employers for the success of the 'Achieving Cumbria Equality' project. This award proved a fitting end to the project which resulted in every district reaching the goal of 'Achieving' on the Equality Framework for Local Government. The officer and member groups behind the project continue to meet to share work and good practice, working together to maintain the standard set.

4. Organisational Development and Equalities

Awareness raising and training continues to form the backbone of our approach to equalities. The Organisational Development team has recently introduced Learning Pool to the City Council. This is an E-learning website that supports the face to face courses and workshops available to staff and Members. It is designed to meet learning and development needs by guiding the learner through a variety of modules across different subjects.

Learning Pool was introduced to managers at the October Management Briefing and was formally launched on 8 December 2011 at an event that was attended by around 25 officers and members.

One of the subjects covered is Equality & Diversity (E&D). Behind this heading are introductory modules to E&D and a module on the City Council's approach to carrying out Equality Impact Assessments (EqIA). This module will assist managers to maintain and update their respective EqIAs on the City Council's website. Further modules under E&D focus on particular equality strands such as Faith and Belief, and Disability Awareness.

Other training activity includes a continued Disability Awareness/Equality programme delivered by external partners. Several workshops associated with this programme were held during 2010/11 and have continued this year. Further introductory and refresher workshops are scheduled for 2012/13.

5. Meeting the new duty in 2012

The Equality Act 2010 replaced previous anti-discrimination laws with a single Act. It simplified the law, removing inconsistencies and making it easier for people to understand and comply with. It also strengthened the law in important ways, to help tackle discrimination and inequality.

The public sector Equality Duty (section 149 of the Act) came into force on 5 April 2011. It supports good decision-making by ensuring the Council considers how different people will be affected by its activities, helping it to deliver policies and services which are efficient and effective; accessible to all; and which meet different people's needs.

The Equality Duty is supported by specific duties, set out in regulations which came into force on 10 September 2011. The specific duties require the Council to publish relevant, proportionate

information demonstrating compliance with the Equality Duty; and to set ourselves specific, measurable equality objectives.

Publishing relevant equality information will make the Council transparent about its decision-making processes, and accountable to service users. It will give the public the information they need to hold the Council to account for its performance on equality. There is however, no longer a requirement for a Single Equality Scheme.

The three aims of the Duty are:

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

The Specific Duties – in the exercise of the General Duty the Council must have ‘due regard’ to:

- Publishing sufficient information to demonstrate compliance with the general duty across all functions (Deadline is 31st January 2012).
- Preparing and publishing Equality Objectives (Deadline is 6th April 2012); and
- Publication of actions to meet the Equality Duty

The purpose of the deadlines is to ensure that the public have an opportunity to review the evidence before the authority sets objectives. There are two months available between publishing the evidence and setting objectives during which we would encourage informed feedback and suggestions on possible objectives. Once published, we are expected to update these objectives every four years. The objectives will be influenced by an updated workforce profile and consultation will be conducted through a report to Joint Management Team and Overview and Scrutiny Panel.

A proposed timetable for the objectives is:

Action	Date
Publishing refreshed Equality Impact Assessments on website	31 st January 2012
Draft objectives report for Joint Management Team	1 st March 2012
Draft objectives report for Community Overview & Scrutiny Panel	22 nd March 2012
Publishing objectives on website	6 th April 2012

6. Equality Profiles

To aid the setting of draft objectives the Cumbria Observatory has been commissioned to create Equality Profiles for each of the Districts and the County. The first edition of the profiles will be available in February with a refreshed profile expected in July 2012 with the first release of Census 2011 data.