

## **CABINET – 18TH NOVEMBER 2004**

### **CORPORATE EQUALITY PLAN**

#### **REPORT OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE AND THE DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL SERVICES**

#### **PART A**

##### **PURPOSE OF REPORT**

1. The purpose of this report is to ask the Cabinet to approve a Corporate Equality Plan for consultation.

##### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

2. That the Cabinet :
  - a) Approves the Corporate Equality Plan for consultation.
  - b) Receives a report on the outcome of the consultation in March 2005.

##### **REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

3. The Medium Term Corporate Strategy to 2005 (MTCS) contains a target to reach level 5 of the Equality Standard for Local Government by 2007. To achieve Level 1 of the Equality Standard the Council has to approve a Comprehensive Equalities Policy and a Corporate Equality Plan.

##### **TIMETABLE FOR DECISIONS, INCLUDING SCRUTINY**

4. An important element of the Equality Standard is a commitment to consultation and scrutiny on all aspects of equality work. It is proposed that this report should be referred to the Scrutiny Commission.

##### **POLICY FRAMEWORK AND PREVIOUS DECISIONS**

5. At its meeting on 6th April 2004 the Cabinet resolved that:
  - a) The Equality Standard for Local Government be adopted;
  - b) Approval be given to the Action Plan setting out how the Council would work to achieve Level 1 of the Equality Standard;

- c) A Corporate Equality Plan be submitted to the Cabinet in November 2004 setting out in detail how the Council aims to progress through the 5 levels of the Equality Standard.

## **RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

6. One of the requirements of level 1 of the Equality Standard is a corporate commitment to earmark specific resources for improving equality practice. In the revenue budget for 2004-05 additional resources of £95,000 were approved to support the work of the Equalities Board set up to respond to equalities/diversity across the County Council to comply with anti-discrimination legislation and promote equalities.
7. It is expected that the costs of developing and implementing the Equality Standard will be contained within the resources already allocated, but that additional requirements are likely to arise as the Council takes forward its work to promote equality e.g.
- The training, monitoring, additional publication and translation requirements arising from the duties under the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 and the Disability Discrimination Act 1995. In addition, Equality Impact Assessments covering race, disability and gender may indicate the need for service developments, with cost implications.
  - Other costs may arise from the duties under the Disability Discrimination Act 1995. In the 2004-05 capital budget the sum of £150,000 was allocated to continue the work programme arising from disability access audits.
8. If and when additional resource requirements are identified they will be fed into the budget planning process. The Director of Resources has been consulted in the preparation of this report.

## **CIRCULATION UNDER SENSITIVE ISSUES PROCEDURE**

None.

## **OFFICERS TO CONTACT**

John Sinnott Tel: 0116 2656000  
Tony Harrop Tel: 0116 2657455  
Barry Davies Tel: 0116 2657565

## **PART B**

### **BACKGROUND**

9. The Equality Standard was published in 2001 by the Employers Organisation for Local Government, the Commission for Racial Equality, the Equal Opportunities Commission, the Disability Rights Commission and the Audit Commission. The stated purpose of the Standard is:

“To provide a generic framework through which local government can address its legal obligations under anti-discrimination law”.

10. The Medium Term Corporate Strategy to 2005 (MTCS) sets out the Council’s commitment to promote equality:

“To work to reduce disadvantages, discrimination and inequalities of opportunity, and promote diversity in terms of the people it serves, its workforce, the partners it works with and the services it delivers.”

### **EQUALITY STANDARD**

11. The Equality Standard is essentially a business or service planning framework to enable an organisation to plan, monitor and report on its performance on equalities. The Standard emphasises the importance of key processes in the local authority and sets these out as five levels of achievement:

#### **Level 1 - Commitment to a Comprehensive Equality Policy**

12. The key element of Level 1 is the adoption of a Comprehensive Equality Policy by the authority, supported by a Corporate Equality Plan to show how it is to be implemented. A range of other evidence is required under the following 4 main headings:

- Leadership and Commitment
- Consultation and Community Development and Scrutiny
- Service Delivery and Customer Care
- Employment and Training

13. Essentially the achievement of this level is about putting in place a robust framework throughout the Council, through which equalities work is to be taken forward and which is capable of systematic monitoring and reporting. The achievement of the subsequent levels of the Equality Standard then build on the framework established at level 1.

## **Level 2 - Assessment and consultation**

14. This is a systematic assessment of how well the authority currently meets local needs and requirements in relation to service delivery and employment.

## **Level 3 - Setting equality objectives and targets**

15. Based on the outcome of the assessment at Level 2 clear equal access objectives and targets are then set for employment and service delivery.

## **Level 4 - Information systems and monitoring against targets**

16. The monitoring system needs to be developed during earlier levels and implemented at Level 4.

## **Level 5 - Achieving and reviewing outcomes**

17. Progress in achieving targets is reviewed including a fundamental review of all elements in the process to determine what changes are needed.

## **CORPORATE EQUALITY PLAN (CEP)**

18. The proposed CEP is attached as Appendix 'A' to this report. It is set out in two sections:
  - a) The Corporate Equality Plan Section - sets out the foreword, purpose, context, equalities policy, commitments and priorities;
  - b) The Action Plan Section – sets out the action plan over three years on how level 5 will be achieved.
19. The action plan splits actions into four distinct objectives areas:
  - a) To show effective leadership and commitment in delivering equality of opportunity and tackling discrimination in its various forms (e.g. race, gender, disability, religion or belief, age and sexuality);
  - b) To carry out equality impact assessments across County Council services, establish consultation, scrutiny and audit arrangements, and take action on the results of assessments and consultation;
  - c) To improve the equality of access to goods, facilities and services in the areas of race, religion or belief, disability, gender, age and sexuality;

- d) To improve the County Council's management of diversity issues in order to maximise the potential of employees, ensure it reflects all sections of the community within its workforce, improve the access to and delivery of services and to raise the profile of the authority as an outstanding Equalities employer.

## **CONSULTATION**

- 20. There are two levels of consultation that will need to take place before the CEP is finally adopted and published:
  - a) Internal consultation with Members and Officers, including Trade Unions and Workers Groups;
  - b) External consultation with community groups and key stakeholders/partners.
- 21. It is proposed that the consultation process runs for 12 weeks, after the Cabinet has considered the CEP on 18th November 2004, in line with the guidance in the Council's draft Consultation Standards.

## **EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES IMPLICATIONS**

- 22. The purpose of the Corporate Equality Plan, and the Equality Standard, is to develop the County Council's approach to promoting equality and eliminating discrimination.

## **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

Race Equality Scheme – Leicestershire County Council – December 2003  
Report to the Cabinet 6th April 2004; "The Equality Standard for Local Government"

## **LIST OF APPENDICES**

Appendix A – Corporate Equality Plan