

**SCRUTINY COMMISSION – 18 JUNE 2008****EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY STRATEGY****REPORT OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE****Purpose of Report**

1. To present the draft Equality and Diversity Strategy for comment by the Scrutiny Commission.

Background

2. The Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000, Disability Discrimination Act 2005 and Equality Act (Gender Equality Duty) 2006 all give local authorities 'general' and 'specific' duties to promote equality. All local authorities are required to produce equality schemes that show how they will meet this duty.
3. The County Council's Race Equality Scheme came to an end in 2007 and, to bring the Council's approach in line with that of national Government and other public authorities, it was decided to produce a single equality scheme – the Equality and Diversity Strategy – that meets the requirements of the legislation and the amended Equality Standard for Local Government.
4. The draft Strategy incorporates the requirement to produce a Race Equality Scheme and will incorporate the Disability Equality Scheme and the Gender Equality Scheme when they are reviewed later 2008.
5. The reasoning for producing a single Strategy, which also contains the County Council's priorities for action for the equality 'strands' of age, religion or belief and sexual orientation, is to provide a consistent approach to achieving equality and diversity.
6. It will also make it easier in terms of reporting progress against equality and diversity objectives and targets, once they have been combined into a single Strategy.

Consultation and Involvement

7. The draft Strategy has been sent out for public consultation over a two month period between April and June 2008. It has been circulated to a wide range of stakeholders, including organisations from the public, private and voluntary sectors based in and/or providing services in Leicestershire.
8. Equality-focused organisations serving the county were sent copies of the draft Strategy and asked to get in touch if they were interested in attending a

briefing to consider any issues in greater depth. Although briefing sessions were not arranged due to limited interest, telephone conversations have been held with many organisations to talk through their comments on the draft Strategy.

7. A copy of the draft Strategy, and a questionnaire to use to make comments, has been available on the County Council's website and Intranet. An Intranet banner has been developed to encourage staff to participate in the consultation process.
8. To date, we have received 4 completed questionnaires and 6 additional responses. We have held one briefing session for staff where a number of additional comments were noted. A list of the responses is attached to this report at Appendix B.
9. It is anticipated that more responses will be received before the deadline date for comments of 9th June.

Timetable

10. Once all responses to the consultation have been analysed and any amendments made, a final version of the Equality and Diversity Strategy will be considered by Cabinet on 20 June 2008. Any comments from the Scrutiny Commission on the draft Strategy will be reported to Cabinet at that meeting.

Recommendation

11. The Scrutiny Commission is asked to comment on the draft Strategy.

Equal Opportunities Implications

12. The Equality and Diversity Strategy's purpose is to ensure that the County Council fulfils its general and specific duties under the various equalities legislation. It also meets the requirement of the revised Equality Standard for Local Government to address all six 'strands' of equality.
13. An Equality Impact Assessment is being completed on the draft Strategy, however initial findings show that it will have a positive impact on all members of the community.

Background papers

None

Appendices

Appendix A: Draft Equality and Diversity Strategy
Appendix B: Table of responses received to date

Officers to Contact

Andy Robinson 0116 305 7017
Sally Edwards 0116 306 7446

arobinson@leics.gov.uk
saedwards@leics.gov.uk