

CABINET ITEM COVERING SHEET PROFORMA

AGENDA ITEM:

REPORT TO CABINET

12TH APRIL 2007

**REPORT OF CORPORATE
MANAGEMENT TEAM**

CABINET DECISION

Social Inclusion and Neighbourhoods – Lead Cabinet Member – Councillor Johnson

SINGLE EQUALITY SCHEME

SUMMARY

The report presents and recommends Cabinet to approve the 2nd edition of the Stockton Single Equality Scheme.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That Cabinet approves the 2nd edition of the Single Equality Scheme, subject to any necessary amendments resulting from ongoing consultation or further guidance.
2. That any final amendments are approved via delegated responsibility to the Assistant Chief Executive and relevant Cabinet Member.
3. Reasons for the Recommendations/Decision(s)

This is the draft 2nd edition of the Single Equality Scheme for Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council. It has been updated to meet the requirements of the Gender Equality Duty to eliminate unlawful discrimination on the basis of gender and promote equality of opportunity between men and women. The new duty comes into effect on the 6th April 2007 with the requirement to publish a Gender Equality Scheme by 30th April 2007. This report ensures the Council is complying with this legal requirement.

The Council is required by law to develop and publish schemes and action plans under its Duty to promote Race, Gender and Disability Equality. The Single Equality Scheme and its associated action plans ensure the Council is meeting these duties.

4. Members Interests

Members (including co-opted members with voting rights) should consider whether they have a personal interest in the item as defined in the Council's code of conduct (paragraph 8) and, if so, declare the existence and nature of that interest in accordance with paragraph 9 of the code.

Where a Member regards him/herself as having a personal interest in the item, he/she must then consider whether that interest is one which a member of the public, with knowledge of

the relevant facts, would reasonably regard as so significant that it is likely to prejudice the Member's judgement of the public interest (paragraph 10 of the code of conduct).

A Member with a prejudicial interest in any matter must withdraw from the room where the meeting is being held, whilst the matter is being considered; not exercise executive functions in relation to the matter and not seek improperly to influence the decision about the matter (paragraph 12 of the Code).

AGENDA ITEM:

REPORT TO CABINET

12TH APRIL 2007

**REPORT OF HEAD OF POLICY
AND PERFORMANCE**

CABINET DECISION

Social Inclusion and Neighbourhoods – Lead Cabinet Member – Councillor Johnson

SINGLE EQUALITY SCHEME

SUMMARY

The report presents and recommends Cabinet to approve the 2nd edition of the Stockton Single Equality Scheme.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That Cabinet approves the 2nd edition of the Single Equality Scheme, subject to any necessary amendments resulting from ongoing consultation or further guidance.
2. That any final amendments are approved via delegated responsibility to the Assistant Chief Executive and relevant Cabinet Member.

DETAIL

1. This is the draft 2nd edition of the Single Equality Scheme for Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council. It has been updated to meet the requirements of the Gender Equality Duty to eliminate unlawful discrimination on the basis of gender and promote equality of opportunity between men and women. The new duty comes into effect on the 6th April 2007 with the requirement to publish a Gender Equality Scheme by 30th April 2007.
2. The opportunity has also been taken to revisit and update the Council's response to the Race Equality Duty with an updated Race Equality Action Plan being included in the scheme. These have been developed following analysis of available consultation and workforce data. The Disability Equality Action Plan was approved by Cabinet last year and is included for information only.
3. The Council is required to develop and publish schemes and action plans under the Duties to promote Race, Gender and Disability Equality. The Single Equality Scheme and its associated action plans ensure the Council is meeting these duties.
4. The scheme ensures the promotion of equality and diversity are firmly embedded at the heart of the Council's planning cycles with the equalities objectives being read through from the Council Plan, but also individual targets from the Race, Gender and Disability Action Plans being written into the appropriate service and business unit plans. This, coupled with the engagement of Heads of Service in the development of the three action plans ensures

equalities targets and activities are at the heart of all council services. This is crucial for continuous service improvement and the forthcoming Corporate Assessment.

Equalities Legislation

5. There is a significant raft of legislation relating to equalities which can be found summarised on page 10 of the Scheme, with more detailed discussion of recent key legislation included on pages 11 and 12. Equalities legislation is continually changing and developing with a number of new initiatives on the horizon. The equalities review has recently published its findings with the Discrimination Law Review Green Paper and Commission on Integration and Cohesion report being expected in the coming months. This coupled with the ongoing introduction of the Equality Act 2006 including new service regulations on sexual orientation, shows the scope of the agenda. The draft Single Equality Scheme has been prepared to anticipate as far as possible these new requirements and ensure the Council remains compliant with all equalities legislation.

Development and review of the Scheme

6. Community consultation and engagement is crucial in the development of the single equality scheme. Not only was data collected from BVPI and Viewpoint surveys used to develop the Scheme and Action Plans bespoke consultation was also carried out with BME communities and disabled people. The ongoing involvement of the community in the review and monitoring of the Single Equality Scheme is crucial.
7. Consultation on the draft scheme has also been carried out with Trades Unions, all Members, with all Officers and the public having been able to offer comment on the draft scheme via the Council's website.

Training and Development

8. The scheme also outlines how equalities training will be developed and rolled out across the Council. Whilst equality training is already in the Member induction programme there is an ongoing need to deliver training to employees. With this in mind it is proposed to train all first, second and third tier officers, as well as 10% of all other employees by April 2008.

Next Steps

9. Consultation on the draft scheme has recently been completed and implications are currently being considered by Officers. This, coupled with the delayed publication of some central guidance requires delegation of final amendments to the Assistant Chief Executive in conjunction with the appropriate Cabinet Member. Following this, the Scheme will be available on the Council's website in advance of 30th April, thus ensuring the Council is meeting its statutory obligations.

FINANCIAL AND LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

Financial

10. There are no financial implications arising as a direct result of this report.

Legal

11. The Council is required to adhere to the various legislation outlined in the Single Equality Scheme.

RISK ASSESSMENT

12. The Single Equality Scheme is categorised as low to medium risk. Existing management systems and daily routine activities are sufficient to control and reduce risk.

COMMUNITY STRATEGY IMPLICATIONS

13. The Single Equality Scheme supports all objectives of the Community Strategy.

CONSULTATION INCLUDING WARD/COUNCILLORS

14. Consultation on the draft scheme has been carried out with Trades Unions, all Members, with all Officers and the public having been able to offer comment on the draft scheme via the Council's website.

Contact Officers

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Background Papers

Single Equality Scheme 1st Edition – Cabinet, 30th November 2006

Ward(s) and Ward Councillors:

The Scheme affects all wards in the borough

Property

The Single Equality Scheme has no direct implications for Council property at this stage.