

STOCKTON-ON-TEES BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET RECOMMENDATIONS

PROFORMA

Cabinet Meeting13th March 2008

1. Title of Item/Report

Single Equality Scheme

2. Record of the Decision

Consideration was given to a report that introduced the draft 3rd edition of the Single Equality Scheme.

The first edition was agreed by Cabinet in November 2006, with a revision to meet the requirements of the Gender Equality Duty being approved by Cabinet on the 12th April 2007. Members were provided with a copy of the draft Single Equality Scheme; changes to the scheme were highlighted in the document.

It was advised that the statutory revision of the Race Equality Scheme was due by the end of the current financial year. This had now been carried out, with new actions being included in the Council's Race Equality Action Plan as a result, in addition to those with a timescale beyond April 2008 being rolled forward from the existing plan. Actions in the Disability and Gender Equality Action Plans had been rolled forward as well, although services had been encouraged to develop additional action points as a result of their equalities related activities during the current year. It was noted that only the revised scheme and revised Race Equality Action Plans had been submitted to Cabinet for approval as no significant changes had been made to the existing Disability and Gender Equality Action Plans.

Members were advised that there was a significant raft of legislation relating to equalities which could be found summarised on page 13 of the Scheme, with more detailed discussion of recent key legislation included on pages 14 to 16. Equalities legislation was continually changing and developing with a number of new initiatives on the horizon. The Equalities Review, Discrimination Law Review Green Paper and Commission on Integration and Cohesion report had all been published since the last edition of the scheme was approved and in response a new Equality Bill was expected later in the year to introduce, amongst other things, a single positive equality duty. It was noted that the draft Single Equality Scheme had been prepared to anticipate as far as possible the new

requirements and ensure the Council remained compliant with all equalities legislation.

Members were informed that progress against the second edition of the Single Equality Scheme had been good with six monthly monitoring results showing that of the 78 targets in the Disability Equality Action Plan, 25 had been met, 46 remained on target and only seven had slipped. Of the 60 targets in the Race Equality Action Plan, 14 had been met, 44 remained on target and two had slipped with the 58 targets in the Gender Equality Action Plan showing 16 met, 40 on target and only two slipped. Remedial actions had been identified to address areas of slippage and performance at year end would be reported to Cabinet in due course.

It was explained that Community consultation and engagement was crucial in the ongoing development of the Single Equality Scheme. Data had been collected from BVPI, MORI and Viewpoint surveys and had been used to develop the Scheme originally and the revision of the Race Action Plan was informed by a "Tell Us What You Think" event at ARC in September. It was noted that the event was a great success.

A key development in the current year had been the roll out of a new Equality Impact Assessment Process. The process assessed all proposed policies and changes in service delivery for any possible negative impact against various groups in advance of their proposal to Cabinet. Any identified negative impacts could then either be addressed or amendments made to the proposals accordingly. This approach was embedded in the Council's revised Constitution. It was advised that almost 50 officers from across the Council had been trained in carrying out Equality Impact Assessments and services had been encouraged to include the findings and action points from these assessments in their SIPs and BUPs where appropriate.

In addition, it was vital that the Council carried out equality impact assessments of its existing services, and a new Council Plan target had been developed to carry out 50% per year for the next two years. This would ensure that the Council's existing services were meeting its equality duties and was a key action for meeting level 3 of the Equality Standard for Local Government.

Members were provided with an update on various other training courses being delivered by the Diversity Team and were advised that they remained on target for training all first, second and third tier officers, as well as 10% of all other employees by April 2008, the target was included in the Council Plan.

RESOLVED that the draft 3rd Edition of the Single Equality Scheme be agreed.

3. Reasons for the Decision

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. Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

None

5. Declared (Cabinet Member) Conflicts of Interest

None

6. Details of any Dispensations

Not Applicable

7. Date and Time by which Call In must be executed

By no later than midnight on Tuesday 25th March 2008

Proper Officer
17 March 2008