

CABINET ITEM COVERING SHEET PROFORMA

AGENDA ITEM:

REPORT TO CABINET

13th March 2008

**REPORT OF THE CORPORATE
MANAGEMENT TEAM**

CABINET DECISION

Portfolio: Corporate and Social Inclusion - Lead Cabinet Member: Councillor Laing

SINGLE EQUALITY SCHEME

1. Summary

This report introduces the draft 3rd edition of the Single Equality Scheme and requests Cabinet approve it.

2. Recommendations

It is recommended that Cabinet agree the draft 3rd Edition of the Single Equality Scheme.

3. Reasons for the Recommendations/Decision(s)

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. 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 (**paragraphs 10 and 11 of the code of conduct**).

A Member with a prejudicial interest in any matter must withdraw from the room where the meeting considering the business is being held -

- in a case where the Member is attending a meeting (including a meeting of a select committee) but only for the purpose of making representations, answering questions or giving evidence, provided the public are also allowed to attend the meeting for the same purpose whether under statutory right or otherwise, immediately after making representations, answering questions or giving evidence as the case may be;
- in any other case, whenever it becomes apparent that the business is being considered at the meeting;

And must 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**).

Further to the above, it should be noted that any Member attending a meeting of Cabinet, Select Committee etc; whether or not they are a Member of the Cabinet or Select Committee concerned, must declare any personal interest which they have in the business being considered at the meeting (unless the interest arises solely from the Member's membership of, or position of control or management on any other body to which the Member was appointed or nominated by the Council, or on any other body exercising functions of a public nature, when the interest only needs to be declared if and when the Member speaks on the matter), and if their interest is prejudicial, they must also leave the meeting room, subject to and in accordance with the provisions referred to above.

AGENDA ITEM:

REPORT TO CABINET

13th MARCH 2008

**REPORT OF CORPORATE
MANAGEMENT TEAM**

CABINET DECISION

Portfolio: Corporate and Social Inclusion - Lead Cabinet Member: Councillor Laing

SINGLE EQUALITY SCHEME

SUMMARY

This report introduces the draft 3rd edition of the Single Equality Scheme and requests CMT approve it for consultation and submission to Cabinet.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. It is recommended that Cabinet agree the draft 3rd Edition of the Single Equality Scheme.

BACKGROUND

The Single Equality Scheme

1. This is the draft 3rd edition of the Single Equality Scheme for Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council. The first edition was agreed by Cabinet in November 2006, with a revision 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), being approved by Cabinet on the 12th April 2007. Changes to the scheme are highlighted in the attached draft.
2. The statutory revision of the Race Equality Scheme is due by the end of the current financial year. This has 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 have been rolled forward as well, although services have been encouraged to develop additional action points as a result of their equalities related activities during the current year. Only the revised scheme and revised Race Equality Action Plans are submitted to Cabinet for approval as no significant changes are made to the existing Disability and Gender Equality Action Plans which are available on the Council's website.
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: equality objectives are closely linked to the Council Plan and action plans for Race, Gender and Disability closely link to the appropriate service improvement and business unit plans. This, coupled with the engagement of Head's of Service in the

development of the three action plans ensures equality targets and activities are considered in all services, crucial for continuous service improvement and continuing to maintain the Council's high CPA rating.

Equalities Legislation

5. There is a significant raft of legislation relating to equalities which can 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 is 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 have all been published since the last edition of the scheme was approved and in response a new Equality Bill is expected later this year expected to introduce, amongst other things, a single positive equality duty. 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 3rd Edition of the Scheme

6. Progress against the second edition of the Single Equality Scheme has 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 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 have been identified to address areas of slippage and performance at year end will be reported to Cabinet in due course.
7. Community consultation and engagement is crucial in the ongoing development of the Single Equality Scheme. Not only was data collected from BVPI, MORI and Viewpoint surveys used to develop the Scheme originally, the revision of the Race Action Plan was informed by a "Tell Us What You Think" event at ARC in September. The event was a great success with over 170 local people attending and giving their views to officers from the over 20 Council and partner services.
8. A key development in the current year has been the roll out of a new Equality Impact Assessment Process. This process assesses 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 can then either be addressed or amendments made to the proposals accordingly. This approach, which is now embedded in the Council's revised Constitution, ensures Members of Cabinet can be assured that all significant new policies requesting Cabinet approval will be in line with the Council's equality and diversity commitments. Almost 50 officers from across the Council have been trained in carrying out Equality Impact Assessments and services have been encouraged to include the findings and action points from these assessments in their SIPs and BUPs where appropriate.
9. In addition, it is vital that the Council carries out equality impact assessments of its existing services, and a new Council Plan target has been developed to carry out 50% per year for the next two years. This will ensure that our existing services are meeting our equality duties and is a key action for meeting level 3 of the Equality Standard for Local Government.

Training and Development

10. In addition to Equality Impact Assessment Training referred to above, the Diversity Team continue to carry out training in telephone translation as well as responding to bespoke training requests and the corporate training programme roll out continues to progress well. We remain on target for training all first, second and third tier officers, as well as 10% of all other employees by April 2008, and this target is included in the Council Plan.

FINANCIAL AND LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

Financial

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

Legal

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

RISK ASSESSMENT

13. Low risk

SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY STRATEGY IMPLICATIONS

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

CONSULTATION INCLUDING WARD/COUNCILLORS

15. Consultation arrangements are outlined in the report.

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Background Papers

- Single Equality Scheme 1st Edition – Cabinet 30th November 2006
- Single Equality Scheme 2nd Edition – Cabinet 12th April 2007
- Diversity: Performance and Progress – Cabinet 22nd November 2007

Ward(s) and Ward Councillors:

The Scheme affects all wards in the Borough

Property

At this stage there are no links to the Corporate Asset Management Plan.