

CABINET ITEM COVERING SHEET PROFORMA

AGENDA ITEM

REPORT TO CABINET

20 MAY 2010

**REPORT OF CORPORATE
MANAGEMENT TEAM**

CABINET DECISION

Portfolio Access and Communities – Lead Cabinet Member – Councillor Coleman

SINGLE EQUALITY SCHEME 4th EDITION

1. Summary

This report requests Cabinet approval for the fourth edition of the Council's Single Equality Scheme.

2. Recommendations

Cabinet is recommended to:

- i. Approve the draft Single Equality Scheme delegating any amendments to the Head of Policy, Performance and Partnerships
- ii. Task the Head of Policy, Performance and Partnerships to periodically review the scheme in line with the implementation of the Equalities Act and make any necessary amendments in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Access and Communities

3. Reasons for the Recommendations/Decision(s)

Approval of the 4th edition of the Single Equality Scheme will ensure the Council continues to meet its duties in relation to equality and diversity.

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.

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SINGLE EQUALITY SCHEME 4th EDITION

SUMMARY

This report requests Cabinet approval for the fourth edition of the Council's Single Equality Scheme.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Cabinet is recommended to:

- i. Approve the draft Single Equality Scheme delegating any amendments to the Head of Policy, Performance and Partnerships
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BACKGROUND

1. The Council has published three editions of its Single Equality Scheme, the latest being in March 2008. The scheme, which brings together the Council's Race, Gender and Disability Equality Action Plans ensures that the authority is fully compliant with the legal requirements and legislative duties of nine pieces of primary legislation and over 100 pieces of secondary legislation and guidance.
2. The scheme has been well received by a number of audiences, including Trades Unions and the IDeA and has proven to be a key driver behind the Council's significant progress in equality and diversity in recent years, culminating in the IDeA award of "Achieving" status in the new Equality Framework for Local Government.
3. The vast majority of the action plan objectives have now been achieved and the scheme is in need of updating to ensure it remains fit for purpose, particularly in light of the new Equality Act.

SINGLE EQUALITY SCHEME 4th EDITION

4. Both Corporate Diversity Working Group and Corporate Management Team have been giving detailed consideration to the requirements for the new scheme and considered a number of key drivers such as the Equality Act 2010 and the results of the Council's IDeA Peer Review of diversity. As a result the fourth edition of the scheme is a more concise strategy driven by the introduction of a single action plan to consolidate the separate race, gender and disability equality action plans. This new action plan is shorter and sub-divided into three levels:
 - Strategic development priorities – those issues which impact on all Council services and need to be considered by all Heads of Service
 - Service development priorities – areas for action and improvement within individual service areas. These actions have been identified by individual Heads of Service and link closely to SIP priorities
 - Operational priorities – small scale, or ongoing actions such as those identified through the Equality Impact Assessment process
5. Further detailed consideration has been given to consultation results, inspection reports and best practice guidelines to identify key development areas for the Council, these being:
 - Increase the diversity of the Council's workforce through implementing the Recruitment and Retention Action Plan
 - Improve the Council's understanding of and approach to LGBT issues
 - Develop the Council's approach to Equality and Diversity Training
 - Review and reinvigorate the Council's approach to Equality Impact Assessment
 - Develop and deliver a Diversity and Community Cohesion communications strategy
 - Improve the Council's approach to procurement in respect of Equality and Diversity
6. The Service development priorities have been arrived at by Heads of Service and Heads of Performance following discussion with the Diversity Team. These are detailed in Service Improvement Plans for individual service areas so appear only in summary form in the Single Equality Scheme. Operational priorities will arise through the ongoing Equality Impact Assessment processes of the Council and will be continually updated in the Single Equality Scheme on the Council's website. As has been the case with previous editions of the scheme, all actions will be monitored through the Council's usual performance management processes.

The Equality Act

7. As the 4th edition of the Single Equality Scheme has been under preparation, the Equality Bill has been working its way through parliament, culminating in its recent receipt of Royal Assent. This Scheme has been developed with the Equality Act in mind, although as many of the provisions in the Act require secondary legislation and none come into force until October 2010 at the earliest, the scheme is still reflective of long standing legislation and best practice. As a result of this, it is proposed that the Head of Policy, Performance and Partnerships monitors progress on the implementation of the Equalities Act and makes any necessary amendments to the scheme in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Access and Communities. As such the Single Equality Scheme will continue to be a live strategy, easily amendable, to ensure the Council remains responsive to the ever changing communities it serves.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

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

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

9. The new Single Equality Scheme will ensure the Council continues to meet its legislative duties and can respond easily to new duties introduced by the Equality Act 2010 when they come into force.

RISK ASSESSMENT

10. This report is categorised as low to medium risk. Existing management systems and daily routine activities are sufficient to control and reduce risk.

SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY STRATEGY IMPLICATIONS

11. Delivery of a new, revised scheme will support all objectives of the Sustainable Community Strategy, particularly those within the Stronger Communities theme.

EQUALITIES IMPACT ASSESSMENT

12. This report has been subject to an Equality Impact Assessment and has been judged to have a positive impact across all diversity strands.

CONSULTATION INCLUDING WARD/COUNCILLORS

13. The Single Equality Scheme 4th Edition has been developed following and is informed by significant and ongoing consultation activities with communities, partners and members.

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Background Papers

Single Equality Scheme 1st, 2nd and 3rd Editions

Ward(s) and Ward Councillors:

The Single Equality Scheme 4th Edition will have a positive impact on all wards in the borough.

Property

There are no direct impacts on the Council's Capital Programme and Asset Management Plan as a result of this report.