

AGENDA ITEM

COMMITTEE: RACE ADVISORY FORUM

DATE: 9TH AUGUST, 2004

SUBJECT: FEASIBILITY STUDY ON EQUALITY AGENCY FOR LUTON

REPORT BY: HEAD OF EQUALITIES

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IMPLICATIONS:

LEGAL		STAFFING
EQUALITIES	✓	COMMUNITY SAFETY
FINANCIAL	✓	RISKS
OTHER		

WARDS AFFECTED: ALL

PURPOSE

1. To report to the Race Advisory Forum on progress made to date, in further exploring the possibility of the establishment of a race or equality agency in Luton.

RECOMMENDATION(S)

2. **Members are asked to note the report.**

REPORT

3. Luton is one of the few towns nationally and certainly in the Eastern region that has a significant minority population (of around 30%) but does not have a Race Equality Council (rec) to support the work of race equality. The Race Relations (Amendment) Act, 2000 strengthens the 1976 Race Relations Act by placing upon all public bodies a general duty which pro-actively requires them to work towards elimination of unlawful discrimination, and promotion of equality and good relations between people of different racial groups.

4. In addition a number of recent studies and research findings including the work of Professor Green on behalf of GO_EAST, the survey carried out by the Luton Multi agency Action against Racial Incidents (LMARIG) and the report to the OFSTED Inspectors in relation to Luton Schools have all in one way or another recommended the setting up of an umbrella "Race" organisation which could not only support race initiatives town-wide but also serve as a central resource.
5. The Council's own report on Community Cohesion also raised the issue that people who needed specialist advice or support about issues to do with discrimination would either have to go to Bedford or London. One of the actions set out in the action plan was for the Council to explore the possibility of setting up of an Equalities Agency that would address all aspects of equality and diversity and support all victims of unlawful discrimination.
6. Earlier this year, as part of its developmental programme, the Commission for Racial Equality agreed to a one-year grant of £15,000, to fund the feasibility study in Luton. It is worth noting that the CRE left open the option as to whether such an agency should be a "Race" or generic "Equality Agency". That decision is therefore dependent on the findings of the feasibility study and of course on the wishes of local individuals and organisations. The recent Government White paper proposals on the amalgamation of the existing Commissions into a new Equality and Human rights Commission may be relevant consideration in this regard.
7. The study will consider a number of questions through detailed consultation with key stakeholders as follows:

Does Luton need:

- (i) A race equality council (rec) OR
- (ii) A Luton Equality Agency (lea) covering all aspects of equality?
- (iii) Why? What role and functions could/should such an organisation perform?
- (iv) Are there any gaps in provision that existing organisations are unable/unwilling to fill?
- (v) What should be the structure and constitutional arrangement that best suit the options at (ii) and (iii) above?
- (vi) Are there specific service delivery/employment needs either in the public or private sectors, which such an organisation could meet? If so what are they?
- (vii) What kind of resources in cash or kind may become available to a rec/lea either now or in the future from the public or private sectors?

8. An Equality Agency Pilot Steering Group has been established by the Community Cohesion Themed Group with Terms of Reference as follows:

Terms of reference

- (1) Clarifying the likely nature, size ,scope, role and overall objectives of the Luton Equality agency.
 - (2) Scoping the role ,contribution and expectations of existing voluntary sector organizations involved in the partnership.
 - (3) Scoping the potential role and impact of any new agencies .E.g a unified national Equalities Commission.
 - (4) Assessing the needs and requirements of the Luton Equality Agency and the available funding options to meet set-up and annual running costs.(including the level of contribution pledges in cash or in kind from stakeholder and partnership agencies)
 - (5) Proposing an appropriate structure for the Luton Equality Agency and the partnership, defining the forms of governance of each, outlining linkages to the public sector and ensuring that the overall proposals meet the requirements of the Race Relations (Amendment)Act 2000 .
 - (6) Assessing the contribution the proposed agency could make to community cohesion in Luton.
 - (7) Ensuring wide consultation with relevant agencies, partners and stakeholders.
 - (8) To consider any other matters connected to the setting up of a Luton Equality Agency
 - (9) To report progress regularly to the Luton Forum Themed Subgroup.
9. The Commission for Racial Equality is expecting a number of targets to be met as well the completion of the feasibility study by March 2005. Please see work programme below:

OUTPUTS	MILESTONES	OUTCOMES
1. Identify and consult with special interest groups and stakeholders, e.g. Race, Gender, Young People, Disability, Gay and Lesbians, etc.	March 04 – Sept 04	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Establish working relationships and begin the consultation process with all stakeholders- Build trust- Formulate voluntary sector register of organisations

OUTPUTS	MILESTONES	OUTCOMES
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Discuss and agree role and function of major organisations delivering similar services in Luton - Identify gaps and overlaps in functional areas - Establish a potential role for a Luton Equalities Agency or Race Equality Agency - Clarify size, structure, scope of new agency.
<p>2. Investigate and identify future additional/ parallel funding streams and securing long term funding for agency.</p>	<p>(i).March2004-April 2005</p> <p>(ii) To have up to six meetings with specialist funding advisers in both public and private sectors</p> <p>(iii) TO work in partnership with the CRE, Regional Structures and regional REAs RECs to review progress quarterly</p>	<p>(i) To obtain firm commitments of assistance in cash/or kind from partner agencies</p> <p>(ii) Secure longer term national funding avenues, e.g. Community Fund, Lotteries, SRB, etc.</p> <p>(iii) Review and evaluate data collected and make appropriate recommendations for the new agency</p>
<p>3. Quarterly meetings with Officers/ Members working in Equalities, community cohesion/social diversity and social inclusion</p>	<p>Use already researched evidence in the “Sticking together” (Community Cohesion)</p>	<p>Ensure lessons learnt from Bolton, etc. and from research findings and Home Office recommendations .Aim to:</p> <p>i)Develop strong and positive relationships between people of different backgrounds.</p> <p>ii)Ensure that diversity is appreciated and positively valued.</p>

OUTPUTS	MILESTONES	OUTCOMES
	study recently carried out in Luton recently and other research to identify specific equalities which need to be addressed March04-Sept.04.	
4. Meetings with EOC; CRF; DRC to consider any ramifications of a national unified commission from their perspective on delivery to services to their specified client groups	Oct – Nov 2004 Keep abreast of local and national developments in approaches to equality and diversity	Assess any new proposals for impact on structure
5. Internal developmental outputs to include: formulation of relevant policies, procedures and adoption of core standards.	2.3.6 by March 2004. Others as required by the CRE and laid down in Core Standards.	To comply with CRE funding requirement.
6. Meetings with private sector representatives, Chamber of Commerce, Local Trade Manufacturers	March – Sept 04	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Win confidence and co-operation of local business. Ascertain needs and problems of local ethnic minority business community. Investigate and form judgement of how best to secure needs of the business community overall. What needs to be done to encourage the business sector to implement the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 <p>Begin to build bridges to assist future funding of LEA.</p>

