

**COMMITTEE:** RACE ADVISORY FORUM  
**DATE:** 4<sup>th</sup> APRIL 2005  
**SUBJECT:** CORPORATE EQUALITY ACTION PLAN  
**REPORT BY:** HEAD OF EQUALITIES  
  
**CONTACT OFFICER:** VAL GRANT 01582 547147

**IMPLICATIONS:**

|            |   |                  |
|------------|---|------------------|
| LEGAL      |   | STAFFING         |
| EQUALITIES | ✓ | COMMUNITY SAFETY |
| FINANCIAL  |   | RISKS            |
| OTHER      |   |                  |

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**WARDS AFFECTED: ALL**

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**PURPOSE**

1. To consult the Race Advisory Forum on the five broad objectives outlined in the draft corporate equality action plan covering the period April 2005 to March 2006.

**RECOMMENDATION(S)**

2. The Race Advisory Forum is recommended to
  - (i) Note the key areas in the draft Equality Action Plan as outlined in paragraph 6 below
  - (ii) Note the specific service delivery issues to be addressed in paragraph(s) 9 to 23
  - (iii) Comment on the draft Corporate Equality Action Plan and make any necessary amendments as appropriate

**REPORT**

3. The Council has a rolling programme of annual equalities action plan which seek to address key issues in the areas of employment and training, service delivery, consultation, communication and monitoring. The key features of the Equality Plan reflects the corporate and departmental priorities,

achievement of the equality standard for local government, equality best value indicators and the Audit Commission's 'Journey to Race Equality'. The Equalities Action Plan framework sets out What we are trying to achieve, How we going to achieve it, How much can be achieved in the year and Who is responsible.

4. Many of the tasks in relation to Employment & Training, Consultaion, Communication and Monitoring are common to all departments and the main issues have been summarised in paragraph 6 under the specific headings. Members are therefore directed to the specific actions on Service Delivery which are summarised in paragraphs 9 to 23 below.
5. The structure of the Equality Action Plan is broadly similar to the corporate Service Plan framework and as such the Equalities Plan will dovetail into existing planning processes but will stand - alone for the purposes of corporate reporting and monitoring.
6. Consultation on the structure and content of the Equalities Plan has been carried out with a range of stakeholder groups both internal and external to the Council over the last three months. The attached plan has been amended to reflect the changes discussed and agreed.
7. The key issues covered in the action plan reflects the main areas covered by equality legislation and good practice guidance, which forms the basis of the Council's equalities work. The five key areas are as follows:
  - a. **Employment & Training:** The main purpose of this objective is to help us achieve a workforce that is broadly representative of the community we serve at all levels in all services. This objective is supported by the Council's People Strategy- Adding Value Through People'. All departments have set employment targets based on current performance in support of the corporate targets in paragraph 7 below. In addition targets have been set for representative recruitment panels, comprehensive monitoring of the employment duty under the Race Relations Amendment Act, compliance with the disability commitment and assessment against the equality standard.
  - b. **Service Delivery:** This section sets out the actions to ensure arrangements are in place to deliver improved services to local communities, provide access, appropriate services and meet the needs of Luton's diverse population. All departments have identified a number of key equalities issues for their respective services, which are summarised in paragraph(s) 9 to 23 below.
  - c. **Consultation:** To find out what service users think of our services using creating forms of engagement; to consult on the results of impact assessments; access; and outcomes for service users. A range of approaches will be used to consult all the groups specifically covered by equality legislation , including more use of Area Committees , Ward

Forums and representative Citizens Panels and monitoring of attendance at meetings as appropriate.

- d. **Communication:** To improve both internal and external communication through use of Luton line and Newsnow including the provision of information in different formats. To promote positive aspects of Luton's diverse communities, to ensure employees aware of and understand the diverse characteristics of the communities they serve, and to improve community cohesion and good relations between people from different backgrounds. This aspect of the work is to be researched further and a report prepared for consideration by the Community Cohesion Officers Group.
  - e. **Monitoring:** To identify whether all service users have equality of opportunity and access to services. Review monitoring arrangements for impact of policies and services, complaints, equality in partnership arrangements, Service Level Agreements, external contracts, progress on the Equality Standard, hate crime reporting, the employment duty and disability commitments. Quarterly monitoring reports will be prepared for the Corporate Directors Management Team and Member's Equality and Social Inclusion Steering Group.
8. The corporate workforce targets for 2005/06 are as follows:
- |    |                                     |     |
|----|-------------------------------------|-----|
| a. | Black and minority ethnic employees | 22% |
| b. | Disabled employees                  | 9%  |
| c. | Top 5% of earners who are women     | 50% |
| d. | Top 5% of earners who are BME       | 11% |
| e. | Top 5% earners who are disabled     | 9%  |
9. The Member's Equality and Social Inclusion Steering Group considered the draft action plan on the 3<sup>rd</sup> February and have requested copies of all departmental equality plans for consideration before the next meeting 12<sup>th</sup> May.

## **Departmental service summaries**

### **Chief Executive Department**

10. The Chief Executive Department will ensure all polling stations are accessible; will carry out seven equality impact assessments, consult and publish the results; implement the action plans from previous impact assessments, produce an action plan on the new Duty to promote disability equality; set equality objectives for all contracting arrangements, reduce differentials in social exclusion and deprivation, provide accessible information & services and encourage specific groups to participate in the electoral process.

### **Children and Learning Department**

11. The 1<sup>st</sup> April 2005 is the formal beginning of two new departments and a generic action plan has therefore been developed which is capable of being

further expanded upon by all of the existing service areas in both the current Lifelong Learning and Housing & Social Services departments and transferred to their new departments. Each service area will build upon the actions and identify specific, service level, tasks that are necessary in order to meet the departmental objectives. These are to be included in more detail in the individual Service Plans and monitored through the Service Planning Clinics as well as at Departmental Equalities Steering Group meetings.

12. There are impact assessments outstanding from 2004/05 in the existing Lifelong Learning department on Music Service, Adult Education and the Youth Service and the appropriate Service Areas will concentrate on these as their first priority. Action Plans from Impact Assessments carried out during 2003/04 and 2004/05 will continue to be implemented. These relate to Governor Support Services, Early Years & Childcare, Key Stage 3 Strategy, Statemented Pupils, School Attendance Policy, Provision of Free School Meals and Necessitous Clothing, Ethnic Minority Achievement Strategy, Traveller Education Service, School Organisation Plan, Behaviour Support Plan, Education Psychology Service.
13. Work will continue with schools on the significant gender gap in attainment, particularly at KS3 4 and an action plan will be developed by the Youth Offending Team to ensure that any difference between the ethnic composition of offenders on all pre-court and post-court disposals and the ethnic composition of the local community is reduced year on year. The department will continue to encourage all schools to report on racist incidents in schools and ensure that all appropriate members of staff are aware of what constitutes a racist incident and how to deal with them.
14. The new department will also concentrate upon meeting the Equalities Standard across all areas by ensuring continued representation on the Audit Group from all teams, identifying any gaps, developing action plans to fill those gaps and inputting the information into the [es@t](#) system. This will include developing further monitoring systems to capture data on all areas covered by legislation and/or Council policies, in particular for the Youth Offending Team in order that they can meet the new requirements of the Youth Justice Board.

## **Housing & Social Services Department**

15. The Housing & Social Services Department will complete the ambitious programme of carrying out impact Assessments within Older Persons Services. The department is currently in the process of completing the Action Plans for the following Impact Assessments:
  - i. Day Care Services for the elderly
  - ii. Sheltered Housing
  - iii. Voluntary Carers (Policy)
  - iv. Supporting People

16. Access & Care Management is a further service, which has been identified as a priority for completion of an Impact Assessment for this year along with the Social Services Statutory Complaints Procedure, Corporate Complaints Procedure and BME Housing Strategy.
17. The Supporting People Programme Equality Strategy Action Plan will be implemented including the following key tasks:
  - The introduction of ethnic monitoring of service user questionnaires.
  - Develop strategies to widen choice and speed up re-housing of BME communities
  - Conduct research into complaints and views from BME customers about service provision in homeless services.
  - Investigate wide variation in the number and variety of grants given to BME communities
18. The above is a small number of the comprehensive list of aims and objectives within the Supporting People Equality Action Plan. There is still work to be completed on the finalisation of the action plan following the Children's Services Best Value Review. A draft of a 'child friendly' complaints procedure has been developed, once finalised, will be available to all children in care and fostered through the Luton school's web sites.
19. The department is working towards the completion of the e sat equality standard for Local Government including validation of the evidence required to achieve level 4 of the standard and the programme of ensuring H&SS buildings providing services to the public meet the DDA requirements is continuing.
20. Meetings are taking place with elderly Lesbian Gay Bi-sexual and Transgender service users to identify issues in the provision of care of this group. The outcome of these meetings will result in a review of policy and practice in service delivery for LGBT service users.

### **Corporate & Customer Services Department**

21. Corporate and Customer Services will carryout six equality Impact Assessments, consult and publish the results and produce action plans for each of the service where adverse impact is identified and continue with the implementation of the action plans from previous impact assessments.
22. The department will provide accessible information and services, consider BS8300 when use to promote equality through the contracting/procurement process; continue with implementation of Arial font size 12 and no more than 3 adjacent words in capital letters in all documentation to do with Education Admission Appeals, review the use of Appeal Hearing locations in order to meet the requirements of the DDA and implement of a survey (on a random basis) of appellants of Education Admission Appeals, to check views regarding printed material and meeting Appellants needs at Appeal Hearing

locations and change font size default on all new PC image set ups to Arial 12 point to comply with best practice and the Council's guidelines.

## **Environment & Regeneration Department**

23. The department's 2005/06-equality action plan reflects the Corporate Objectives and targets for 2005/06

### **The following Equalities Impact Assessments will be carried out in 2005/06**

- Refuse Collection / Recycling (Street Services)
  - Environmental Health (Environmental & Consumer Services)
  - Traffic Regulations (Engineering & Transportation)
  - Best Value Review (Engineering & Transportation)
  - Best Value Review (Regeneration)
24. The department will continue to work towards the corporate target to achieve level 4 of the equalities standard, promote equalities through the contracting / procurement process and investigate all Hate Crime reports received and take appropriate action. The Regeneration service will review all services it provides to ensure compliance with DDA, provide a minicom link and offer advice to the Council on accessibility in listed buildings. All services will review contract / service level agreement documentation to ensure an equalities clause and a robust equalities policy evaluation process is in place.

## **EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS**

25. The revised Equalities Action Plans will form an integral and key part in the promotion of equality arrangements throughout the Council and in pursuit of our core values and strategic aims.

## **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

26. There are no background papers relating to this report