

APPENDIX C

WAVERLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL

EXECUTIVE - 31 MARCH 2009

Title:

**WAVERLEY CORPORATE EQUALITY SCHEME 2009-2011
AND
SELF-CERTIFYING AS ACHIEVING LEVEL 2 OF THE EQUALITY STANDARD
FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT**

**[Portfolio Holder: Cllr Ms Denise le Gal]
[Wards Affected: All]**

Summary and purpose:

The Corporate Equality Scheme sets out Waverley Borough Council's approach to ensuring equal life chances for all, in service delivery, community shaping and developing, and in employment matters.

The Equality Standard for Local Government is a nationally recognised voluntary Best Value Performance Indicator to show the progress a Council has made to integrate age, disability, gender, race, religion or belief and sexual orientation into council policy and practice at all levels.

How this report relates to the Council's Corporate Priorities:

Equality and diversity span all areas of the Council's work. Improving our ability to deliver equal life chances for all, and unlocking the benefits of diversity, will help improve our service delivery and make us a better employer.

There are particularly strong relationships to the following Corporate Priorities:
Improving Lives – The equalities work set out in the Scheme will help us better deliver services and meet the needs of the most vulnerable members of our society, such as the elderly and the disabled. It will also help improve the life chances of all Waverley residents that face barriers in playing a full part in the life of the Borough.
Value for Money – Improving our understanding of the needs of our residents, and the barriers they face, will help us better target our resources to improving lives and delivering services.

Equality and Diversity Implications:

The Corporate Equality Scheme is the key document for driving forward all the Council's work on Equality and Diversity.

Resource/Value for Money implications:

The only resources explicitly identified for delivering the Scheme in 2009/10 are:
£20,000 – project manager time (including all overheads)
£5,000 – incidental expenses, including securing external assessment
£25,000 Total

In addition to this, there are a number of other costs associated with E&D for 09/10:
£40,000 for DDA (Disability Discrimination Act) compliance
£31,500 (plus staff time) for training on E&D
£42,000 for staff time (including all overheads) managing training, supporting critical partner groups and developing internal processes
£5,000 for incidental expenses, such as room hire for critical partner groups etc
£116,500 Total

These figures are largely unchanged from 08/09 (other than training, which is a significant increase), and are likely to be lower in 10/11 (as training requirements are reduced).

We also believe that as our understanding of our customers and residents grows, this will lead to better targeted services and significant efficiency savings.

Legal Implications:

This Scheme supports our three statutory equalities schemes (race, gender and disability), and provides strong evidence of our compliance with the general duties to promote equality.

Background

The Corporate Equality Scheme

1. The law recognises six strands of potential inequality – race, gender, disability, age, religion or belief and sexuality. The Council already possesses statutory equality schemes for three of these strands – race, gender and disability – but not for the other three. This Corporate Equality Scheme sets out an overarching strategy for delivering equal life chances for everyone across all six areas.
2. The Scheme sets out our approach for delivering equal life chances for all. It should be emphasised that this is no less relevant to Waverley than it is to any other area, although the issues facing us are different. For example, accessibility problems and the rural isolation experienced by many elderly or disabled people is one clear area of Equalities which is more pronounced in Waverley than many other areas.
3. The Corporate Equality Scheme was developed throughout the second half of 2008/09. Its development was deliberately inclusive, and supported by a broad consultation programme. This included:
 - o Presentations to all critical partner groups;
 - o Discussion at an equalities forum;

- Circulation to all WBC Councillors;
 - Presentation and circulation to all WBC staff, and;
 - Invitations for public comment through newspaper articles, Making Waves and the website.
4. Although there were many comments on points of detail, the response was overwhelmingly positive, with most groups and individuals thanking the Council for its clear commitment to these important issues.
 5. The Scheme covers the two years up to March 2011. This is in order to allow a successor scheme to be developed in tandem with the next Corporate Plan.

The Equality Standard for Local Government

6. The Equality Standard for Local Government is a nationally recognised voluntary Best Value Performance Indicator to show the progress a Council has made to integrate age, disability, gender, race, religion or belief, and sexual orientation into council policy and practice at all levels. There are 5 levels.
7. The Council are currently at level 1 of the Standard, which places us in the bottom quartile of councils. This has impacted negatively on recent Audit Commission enquiries and our CPA assessment.
8. To achieve level 2 of the Standard, an authority needs to demonstrate:
 - That it has developed systems for self-assessment, scrutiny and audit as the basis for continuous improvement
 - That it has engaged in equality impact assessment
 - That it has undertaken self-assessment across the authority
 - That it has involved designated community staff and stakeholder groups in service planning
 - That it has engaged in the development of information and monitoring systems
 - That it has engaged in an equality action planning process for employment, pay and service delivery
9. It is considered that these standards have now been achieved, with the Corporate Equality Scheme as our primary evidence. Achieving level 2 of the Equality Standard is done by self-certification – the Council may self-certify when it feels it has achieved the recognised standard. In order to ensure objectivity and rigour, we have commissioned Deloitte and Touche to validate our assessment. They are doing this during the week commencing 16 March, and we will have their report before 31 March.

Conclusion

10. The Corporate Equality Scheme sets out our key strategy for achieving equal life chances for all. The draft version was exposed to a wide-ranging consultation exercise and was strongly welcomed in feedback from all stakeholders.

11. Subject to the validation of our internal assessment and the adoption of the Corporate Equality Scheme, we believe that we are in a position to self-certify as having achieved level 2 of the Equality Standard for Local Government.

Recommendation

It is recommended that

1. the Corporate Equality Scheme be formally adopted; and
2. the Executive formally self-certifies Waverley Borough Council as having achieved Level 2 of the Equality Standard for Local Government.

Background Papers (CEX)

Technical annexes to the Corporate Equality Scheme:

- o The draft action plan for delivering equalities 2009-2011 (Annex 1)
- o Waverley's three statutory equalities strategies (covering race, gender and disability) (Annexes 2-4)
- o An extract from the Waverley Procurement Strategy (Annex 5)
- o Baseline demographic data on Waverley residents (Annex 6)
- o A glossary of terms (Annex 7)

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