

MEETING:	SCRUTINY
DATE:	7 FEBRUARY 2005
SUBJECT:	CORPORATE EQUALITY UPDATE REPORT
REPORT OF:	COMMUNICATION AND PARTICIPATION MANAGER
Ward(s):	All
Purpose:	To report Corporate progress against the Equality Standard for Local Government and Corporate Equality Action Plan
Contact:	Monica Elsen, Communication & Participation Manager, Telephone 01323 415004 or internally on extension 5004. E-mail address monica.elsen@eastbourne.gov.uk
Recommendations	To inform Scrutiny Committee of the progress made against the Equality Standard for Local Government.

Appendix 1

Appendix 2

1.0	<u>Introduction</u>
1.1	This report details how the Council has responded to the Equality Standard for Local Government and the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000, over the second year and currently third year of the Equality Standard (Appendix

2.0	<u>Background</u>
2.1	<p>The Equality Standard for Local Government has five levels of achievement. These are:</p> <p>Level 1 commitment for a Comprehensive Equality Policy</p> <p>Level 2 assessment and consultation</p> <p>Level 3 setting equality objectives and targets</p> <p>Level 4 information systems and monitoring against targets</p> <p>Level 5 achieving and reviewing outcomes</p>
2.2	Level 1 explained:
2.3	<p>The policy involves a commitment to review and change Council practice. This is considerably more than the production of a policy statement and should extend to the planning and initiation of a series of processes across the Council and in partnership with other groups and organisations.</p>
2.4	Level 2 explained:
2.5	<p>In order to develop a clear set of equality objectives it will be important to carry out an impact and needs assessment. This should find out how well our current functions and policy address local needs/requirements.</p>
2.6	<p>Eastbourne Borough Council needs to be able to judge the possible adverse impact on existing disadvantaged groups of any policy change. The Council wishes to have a clear understanding of the needs of its community before progressing beyond level 1. There are still impact assessments to be carried out in several areas and once these have been completed the Council can progress through level 2.</p>
2.7	<p>The Council would assess itself corporately to be at Level 1.</p>

3.0	Progress made against the Standard throughout Year 2
3.1	Since May 2003 the main area of progress has been made in training, raising awareness, impact assessments, establishing contacts with local community groups, building on networks across the County and reviewing policies.
3.2	A harassment policy, entitled Maintaining your Dignity whilst at Work, was approved by Cabinet in March 2004, following consultation with stakeholders. This policy sets the tone for how the Council's employees should respect one another and respect the dignity of customers, visitors and clients. Training has been organised and is being delivered to assist in the implementation and mainstreaming of this policy across the Council.
3.3	Progress has been made to implement a flexible working strategy towards the end of 2005. Part of the implementation plan was to introduce a new Corporate Flexitime Scheme in April 2004 following full consultation with employees. This has been achieved and the new scheme provides further flexibility enabling individuals to better balance the demands in their lives. The overall strategy will assist in providing enhanced equal opportunities in employment by encouraging a wider diversity of applicant. We will look at developing this further in the next few months.
3.4	New European equality legislation covering sexual orientation and religion or belief came into force in December 2003, and has been disseminated throughout the Council via newsletters and briefings.

3.5	<p>In the latter part of 2003, an application was made to the Race Equality unit of the Home Office for a grant under their Connecting Communities fund. Sompriti, a voluntary organisation supporting and enabling black and minority ethnic people in East Sussex, presented the bid working in partnership with ten East Sussex public authorities. Eastbourne Borough Council is one of these. The bid was successful and the work of Connecting Communities Partnership commenced in January 2004. The work focuses on the areas of building trust and confidence among the bme community to access services and employment, eventually to feel confident to participate in public authority decision making processes. This is a large piece of work that will complement the Council's existing race equality work.</p>
3.6	<p>During year 2, Muslim women approached the Council with a wish to access leisure activities. The Council and EAVS worked with the Muslim women to build capacity among them to form an Association; be able to apply for funding; and to co-ordinate an exercise programme based on the doctrines of the Islamic culture. Officers are also helping to build capacity among the Muslim Women's Association to sustain the programme and to access other opportunities around funding, training and services.</p>
3.7	<p>Progress has also been made in several other areas as detailed in Appendix 2.</p>
3.8	<p>The Action Plan for year 3 incorporates carry forward objectives from year 2 and new initiatives for year 3. The Year 3 Action Plan is Appendix 1.</p>
3.9	<p>We anticipate that by May 2005, that we should have achieved Level 2 across the Council.</p>
4.0	<p><u>Data Collection and Consultation</u></p>
4.1	<p>The Council has reviewed its Consultation Strategy and screened this policy for equality. The strategy sets out how the Council will undertake consultation, provide a toolkit for consultation and explains why equality data should be requested.</p>

4.2	<p>The community feedback received, as part of the consultation phase of Eastbourne's Community Strategy, was instrumental in the development of The Eastbourne Community Strategy Foundation Document published in June 2003. This document is available on the Council's website. Subsequent consultation has been carried out recently on the revisions to the Community Strategy. The differing methods used to gather feedback have been innovative and extremely useful in collecting qualitative data from hard to reach groups such as young people and black and minority ethnic people. Councillors were also involved in a one-to-one consultative process with residents and heard firsthand community comments about this Strategy, feeding these back into the process.</p>
4.3	<p>The Eastbourne Strategic Partnership has sub-groups, one of these is the 'Altogether Eastbourne' group which is attended by nominated members of the ESP and other invited members. This groups looks at inclusive community issues. The Inclusive Community theme of the foundation document is 'We will give the people of Eastbourne the opportunity to take part in the economic, social, political and cultural life of the town.' The key issues and priority actions for inclusive community can be seen in the full ESP Revised Community Strategy.</p>
4.4	<p>Over forty-one different community based organisations have been contacted and invited to be consultees for our equality work, this will enable the Council to gain a representative view especially of hard to reach groups. A database has been set up to record the preferred methods of consultation for each organisation and we will endeavour to consult using these preferred methods.</p>
4.5	<p>Several equality consultees have taken the opportunity to provide feedback for our equality impact assessment work and their comments have influenced the actions the Council will take in future years.</p>
5.0	<p><u>Key Findings from Year 2</u></p>
5.1	<p>Year 2 has been a year of learning, familiarisation, partnership working and networking.</p>

5.2	<p>Impact assessments carried out in year 2 covered the following functions/policies:</p> <p>Communications Strategy</p> <p>Crime Reduction</p> <p>Cleansing</p> <p>Tourism Services</p>
5.3	<p>The most common corporate key findings of the assessments listed above are the need for language support in connection with access to services and continual equality awareness training. Officers conducting Equality Impact Assessments stated that they found the whole process both rewarding and enlightening.</p>
5.4	<p>Contact with community groups such as the Chinese Association is also essential for the Council to build trust and confidence among minority groups so that they feel encouraged to participate in Council services. The Muslim Women's Association is a prime example of this.</p>
6.0	<p><u>Conclusion</u></p>
6.1	<p>The action plan at appendix 1 forms part of the conclusions.</p>
6.2	<p>The Council is using year 3 to establish further links with the community, building trust and confidence among minority groups to participate in our work, in how we set policy and in our decision making. We will continue to work with Sompriti specifically to build trust and confidence among our bme community to access services and employment and participate in all areas of the Council. Building trust in this way will enable the Council to make decisions based on evidence and to deliver services that our diverse community have helped to develop.</p>

6.3	<p>The Council implemented a senior management restructure at the end of Year 2, creating Assistant Director posts to assist the Corporate Management Team deliver the strategies and vision of the Council. Equality is one of the core skills that 2nd Tier managers will need. These managers received specific training in order to ensure they have a high level of understanding in areas such as equality. They will support the work undertaken to develop and establish links with the community ensuring the Council continually improves its equality practices.</p>
6.4	<p>Much work has been carried out during Year 2 and this is bullet pointed below. It is intended to carry on this work until Equality is mainstreamed throughout the Council and strong links are established with stakeholders, partnerships, community groups, and representative bodies.</p>
6.5	<p>Year 2 achievements not detailed in Appendix 2</p>
	<p>§ Equality Representatives have received awareness training on new equality legislation and in reporting racist incidents</p> <p>§ Race Equality training continues to be delivered as part of the Council’s Corporate Induction programme</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Wednesday Morning Briefings and Management Team sessions used to raise awareness of harassment issues · Deaf and mental health awareness training has been organised · East Sussex Race Equality Scheme Co-ordination Group supported Sompriti in their submission for a Connecting Communities grant · Race Action Forum is raising awareness of reporting racial incidents within agencies represented at the Forum and continues to share good practice, discussing issues within the Borough and linking up agencies throughout the Town in regard to Race Equality – community reps now invited · Towner on the Town ‘arts’ community project continued during the year with hard to reach groups · EBC presented to the Sussex Employers Equalities Forum on how to conduct equality impact assessments · Racist Incident Reporting training cascaded to the Housing Management frontline employees, Cleansing Team frontline employees and training is programmed for all frontline employees within the Council · In total approximately 250 units of training were taken in equality awareness training either specific or

6.6	The Council is committed to achieving Level 2 of the Equality Standard at the end of Year 3 (2004-05). The framework is in place that will enable the Council to progress systematically and years 3 and 4 will build upon this framework in preparation for the Council to achieve all five levels by the end of the 2007/08 equality year.
-----	--

<p>Background Papers:</p> <p>The Background Papers used in compiling this report were as follows:</p> <p>Comprehensive Equality Policy</p> <p>Race Equality Scheme</p> <p>Corporate Equality Action Plan</p> <p>Year 2 Impact Assessment Reports</p> <p>Year 2 Service & Financial Plans</p> <p>Community Strategy Foundation Document</p> <p>Connecting Communities Partnership Application</p> <p>Connecting Communities Action Plan</p> <p>Connecting Communities Report</p> <p>To inspect or obtain copies of background papers please refer to the contact officer listed above.</p>
