

Report

Body:	CABINET
Date:	December 2007
Subject:	Disability Equality Duty – Annual Progress Report
Report Of:	Councillor Andrew Goodwin, Disability Champion Monica Elsen, Communication and Participation Manager
Ward(s)	All
Purpose	To report progress on the Council's work in connection with the Disability Equality Duty.
Recommendation:	Cabinet notes the progress made against the statutory Disability Equality Duty and approves the objectives set out in the revised action plan (2008/09) subject to any further review that the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Disability Champion, consider necessary in the light of further comments received up to the end of the consultation period, which is due to end 1 st February 2008.
Contact:	Councillor Andrew Goodwin, Disability Equality Champion Monica Elsen, Communication and Participation Manager, Telephone 01323 415004 or internally on extension 5004. E-mail address: monica.elsen@eastbourne.gov.uk

1.0 Background

- 1.1 The Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) 1995 was amended in 2005 with revisions placing general and specific duties on local authorities. The totality of these duties is referred to as the 'Disability Equality Duty'.
- 1.2 The Council met its first obligations under the specific requirements to have in place a Disability Equality Scheme when it approved the Scheme last December.
- 1.3 The consultation period around the Scheme and associated action plan was re-opened when the Disability Involvement Group was formed to enable members of the DIG to discuss the plan they helped formulate, and have sufficient confidence to act as a monitoring body for same. The Disability

Equality Champion is a member of the DIG and formed part of the discussions in this respect.

- 1.4 The specific duty also requires authorities to report annually on the progress they are making towards the Disability Equality Duty. This paper introduces the first annual report which contains the current action plan with progress (appendix 3) and a revised action plan (appendix 4) presented for Cabinet's approval.

2.0 The Disability Involvement Group

- 2.1 The Council, Eastbourne Homes Ltd and the Eastbourne Strategic Partnership (ESP) worked together to organise and deliver a joint engagement event of disabled people in October 2006. This event was held in direct response to a request from disabled people who wanted the opportunity to raise local issues with public authorities and have influence on each of their schemes, with public authorities working together to avoid overloading disabled people with varied and numerous consultation exercises. Following this event a number of disabled people expressed their wish to participate in an involvement group and the Disability Involvement Group (DIG) was formed.
- 2.2 The DIG had its inaugural meeting in March 2007 and has continued to meet once every two months. The terms of reference for this group were devised and agreed by members of the DIG themselves. For further information on this group please refer to the attached annual report.

3.0 Elected Member 'Disability Champion'

- 3.1 The role of elected Members in equality is a critical element to its successful mainstreaming throughout the organisation. Members are responsible for the general duties set out in equality legislation and their decision making should be based on evidence from the community. The role of Disability Champion was introduced in 2006 with the adoption of the Disability Equality Scheme. This role reflects how committed the Council is to listening and responding to disabled people in Eastbourne. The first Champion was former Councillor Patrick Bowker.
- 3.2 Councillor Andrew Goodwin performs the role of Disability Champion and is a member of the DIG. Councillor Goodwin provides a direct link to Councillors and through his actions is building trust and confidence among disabled people and also between disabled people and the decision making body of the Council. This link is already showing positive outcomes in that the views of disabled people attending the DIG are being fed back directly to the Leader of the Council. For further information on the role of Disability Champion please refer to the attached annual report.

3.0 Consultation

- 3.1 Consultation on the annual report has taken place with disabled people who form part of the DIG and the groups they represent and Officers within the Council. The revised Action Plan sets out the Council's objectives and targets throughout 2008 and is now out to consultation with the DIG and wider groups and organisations representing disabled people who do not

form part of the DIG.

4.0 Resource Implications

- 4.1 Financial implications associated with the administration of the DIG and in the provision of short-term initiatives such as 'Scooterbility' will be covered by existing budgets.
- 4.2 Officer time dedicated to the DIG and in the delivery of certain short-term initiatives highlighted in the revised action plan is currently covered by existing resource levels.
- 4.3 Unplanned activity resulting from requests received from DIG members, the disabled community or as a result of initiatives set out in the plan may possibly result in human resource implications for the communication and participation team.

5.0 Other Implications - Equality

- 5.1 The revised action plan and associated activities of the DIG assist in the Council's compliance with the Disability Equality Duty and work towards the continual improvement and achievement of the Council's wider equality agenda.

Monica Elsen
Communication and Participation Manager

Background Papers:

The Background Papers used in compiling this report were as follows:

Disability Equality Scheme
Disability Equality Duty

To inspect or obtain copies of background papers please refer to the contact officer listed above.

(document reference)