

59/06 – **DRAFT DIVERSITY STRATEGY 2007-2010:** The Corporate Partnership Development Officer submitted a written report and delivered a presentation which updated the Commission on the Council's current position in relation to agreeing and delivering an overall Diversity Strategy and sought input from Members. A copy of the Draft Strategy was attached to the report. She advised that a Diversity Framework Group was re-established in September 2006 and was Chaired by Councillor Cooper, Cabinet Member (Environment), and was also served by Councillors Fox and Parnaby. There was also officer representation from a range of Council departments. She commented that the main objectives of the group were to:

- develop a Diversity Strategy and monitor implementation;
- ensure legislative compliance;
- monitor and review performance against relevant indicators; and
- ensure the integration of all aspects of diversity both within services and as an employer.

The Draft Strategy developed by the Group detailed the background and context of the Harrogate District in relation to equality and diversity; the Harrogate Borough Council employee profile; the Legal Framework; the corporate vision and values; the Harrogate Borough Council's Diversity Policy Statement and the strategic approach to equality and the way forward. She stated that, in relation to the Equality Standard for Local Government, the main objective was to instil equality corporately and to ensure that equality was considered within all work and service provision. There were five levels to be achieved (level five being the highest) each level with criteria to be met. Harrogate Borough Council were currently at level one, committed to a comprehensive equality policy, but aimed to be at level two, assessment and consultation, by May 2007 and at level three, setting equality objectives and targets, by March 2008. In order to achieve level two status an impact assessment was needed to be carried out with the Departments and training had been given by the Audit Commission to Service Heads and nominated officers in December 2006 and the assessments were to be completed by February 2007. Following on from this there would be the development of an action plan that would support the delivery of the strategy.

Questions were then invited. One Member commented on the ageing population throughout the District, particularly in rural areas and the difficulties faced in accessing services such as shops, doctors surgeries, banks etc, as many were closing down. The Cabinet Member (Environment) acknowledged this and commented that this has been taken into account in the Draft Strategy. Referring to the index of multiple deprivation at Ward level, one Member sought clarification over the areas of Knaresborough East which fell within this category. The Corporate Partnership Development Officer **agreed** to look into this and respond to Councillor Willoughby. In relation to Ward information, it was noted that the Council's website now featured a 'my property' function which, after entering a post code, detailed all relevant local information to that area (www.harrogate.gov.uk - icon on home page). The Cabinet Member (Environment) also informed the Commission of the web tool used in planning that published annual district data. This was available at www.harrogate.gov.uk/immediacy-4075 The issue of

increases in Eastern European workers in the District was also discussed and it was noted the figures in relation to ethnic origins in the draft were based upon the 2001 Census and, as a result were out of date. The Executive Director, Corporate Policy and Improvement, commented that he was confident that the Council would achieve level two status. It was also **agreed** that the Commission would continue to be involved in the development of the strategy.

(6.09 pm - 6.45 pm)