
REPORT TO: Organisational Improvement & Environment Scrutiny Commission

DATE: 5th March 2007

DEPARTMENT: Department of Corporate Policy and Improvement

REPORTING OFFICER: Ann Duncan

SUBJECT: **Draft Diversity Strategy 2007-2010**

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1** The purpose of the report is to provide an update to the Commission on the position the Council is currently at in relation to agreeing and delivering an overall Diversity Strategy.
- 1.2** The report outlines work already carried out, requirements that need to be met and how the agenda is to be taken forward. A copy of the draft strategy is attached.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION/S

- 2.1** The Commission is asked to comment on the content of the strategy document and in particular;
- a) Identify what elected Members can add to the strategy and if there are any areas missing from this agenda?
 - b) What are the issues within the Members wards that relate to the strategy?
 - c) What information do Members require around this agenda?
 - d) That future diversity work comes back to the Commission, in particular the supporting action plan that is in the process of being developed.

3.0 RECOMMENDED REASON/S FOR DECISION/S

- 3.1** A diversity strategy has to be developed and implemented in order to meet both statutory and legal requirements of public authorities.

- 3.2** The Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) District Council framework published in July 2006 acknowledged that there would be continued consideration given to diversity and how it is effectively integrated within the Council and within local context.
- 3.3** In order to meet the statutory level requirements of the Equality Standard for Local Government it is essential that the Council have a Diversity strategy that will be supported by an action plan that is implemented and reviewed on a regular basis. Actions will be derived from the self-assessment process currently undertaken within the services.

4.0

ALTERNATIVE OPTION/S CONSIDERED AND RECOMMENDED FOR REJECTION

- 4.1** Not having a diversity strategy covering all legal requirements in place could result in the Council being issued with compliance notices in connection with breaches of the duty, which can be enforceable in the courts.
- 4.2** Failing to integrate diversity within the Council will be highlighted through CPA and impact on any potential reassessment.
- 4.3** Not undertaking the self assessments and action planning would mean that the Council would remain at Level 1 (the lowest level out of 5) of the Equality Standard for Local Government and not progress to improve performance against Best Value Indicator 2a (BVPI2a). Failing to reach Level 2 would mean that continuous improvement would not be evidenced, which is required from the Council.

5.0 PROGRESS TO DATE

- 5.1** Up until November 2005 various pieces of work have been carried out in the preparation for the development and implementation of a diversity strategy. The Officer taking this forward then left the Council and this work was not picked up again until August 2006 when the Corporate Partnership Development Officer came into post.
- 5.2** A report went to CMT on the 24th August 2006 detailing the Council's current situation in relation to this agenda. The development of a single diversity strategy and service based self-assessments to meet statutory and legal requirements were supported.
- 5.2.1** The draft strategy was developed by the Diversity Framework Group and was approved by CMT on the 30th November 2006.
- 5.2.2** The final strategy is scheduled to go to Cabinet on the 14th March 2007 for approval.
- 5.3** **Diversity Framework Group**

- 5.3.1** The internal Diversity Framework Group was re-established on the 27th September 2006, they met for the first time in over a year. The group is chaired by Councillor Cooper and has two other Members represented on it alongside Officer representation.
The membership, terms of reference and project brief were all revised and agreed at this initial meeting taking into account new legislative requirements and timescales for carrying out the work.
- 5.3.2** The objectives of the group are to:
- Develop a Diversity Strategy for the Council and monitor its implementation;
 - Ensure the Council complies with equality legislation;
 - Ensure the Council's compliance with the Equality Standard for Local Government (ESLG);
 - Monitor, review and where possible improve the Authority's performance against the relevant performance indicators and the key lines of enquiry in the ESLG;
 - Ensure equality issues are addressed as part of Best Value reviews;
 - Ensure the needs of minority, under represented and socially excluded groups not referenced by statute are adequately catered for in employment and service provision.

- 5.3.5** The original strategy that was in place was used as a core, keeping the original policy aim and statement and developed further taking into account the new requirements. The draft developed by the Group details the following;
- Background and context of the Harrogate District in relation to equality and diversity;
 - The Harrogate Borough Council employee profile;
 - The Legal Framework that the strategy is based upon;
 - Corporate Vision and Values;
 - Harrogate Borough Council's Diversity Policy Statement;
 - The Strategic Approach to this agenda;
 - The Way Forward

5.4 Equality Standard For Local Government

- 5.4.1** The main objective for the Standard is to instil equality corporately and to ensure that equality is considered within all work and service provision. The standard is a mandatory requirement within Public Authorities and performance is monitored on a quarterly basis internally within the Council alongside a collection of other best value and locally derived indicators relating to diversity.
- 5.4.2** There are five levels to be achieved, level 5 being the highest. All levels have criteria to be met as detailed below;
- Level 1- commitment to a Comprehensive Equality Policy (CEP)
 - Level 2- assessment and consultation
 - Level 3- setting equality objectives and targets
 - Level 4- information systems and monitoring against targets

- Level 5- achieving and reviewing outcomes.

5.4.3 Harrogate Borough Council is currently at Level 1 with the aim of being at Level 2 by the end of March 2007 and Level 3 by September 2008.

5.5

Diversity Needs/Impact Self-Assessments

5.5.1 In order to meet Level 2 Of the Standard an impact assessment has to be carried out within the departments. A Diversity Needs/Impact Assessment Tool-kit has been developed utilising best practice and Officer feedback. Theresa Stearn, Audit Commission provided training to Service Heads and nominated officers on a brief overview of the new diversity legislation requirements and carrying out self-assessments in December 2006.

5.5.2

Departments have completed the assessments and attended a follow up training session on the 28th February 2007 held again by Theresa Stearn, to look at developing a supporting action plan for the strategy based on the assessment findings.

5.5.3 The Diversity Framework Group will submit the Action Plan for approval by Cabinet in May 2007.

6 NEW LEGISLATION AND STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS

6.1 The new main legislative areas for consideration are;

- Disability Discrimination Act 2005
- Age Discrimination Act
- Equality Act 2006

The background detail to the above Duties and what is required can be found on pages 6-8 of the draft strategy document.

7.0 Training

There is some budget set aside in the Corporate Training Budget for Equality and Diversity for staff and Member training in this area for 2007/08. We will be scheduling some diversity awareness training for frontline service staff and Members in the coming months.

8.0 CONCLUSIONS

8.1 There is a need to develop this area of work in a timely manner for compliance purposes as some pieces of legislation and statutory requirements have already come into or are due to come into force in the next few months.

8.2 In order to progress to Level 2 of the Equality Standard and improve

performance against the associated Best Value Indicators impact assessments need to be initiated and carried out so to identify areas of improvement to feed into an action plan and good practice.

- 8.3 A Diversity Strategy needs to be incorporated and implemented so that CPA can report that it is effectively integrated throughout the Council.

OFFICER CONTACT: Please contact Ann Duncan if you require any further information on the contents of this report. The officer can be contacted at Council Offices, Crescent Gardens, by telephone on 01423 556067 or by e mail – Ann.Duncan@harrogate.gov.uk

SUSTAINABILITY ASSESSMENT / POLICY CONSIDERATIONS

		Implications are		
		Positive	Neutral	Negative
A	Economy		☐	
B	Environment		☐	
C	Social Equity	☐		
(i)	General	☐		
(ii)	Customer Care/People with Disabilities	☐		
(iii)	Health Implications	☐		
D	Crime and Disorder Implications		☐	

If all comments lie within the shaded areas, the proposal is sustainable.