

CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL

Cabinet Member for Performance and Capacity

Date of Meeting: 12th March 2010
Report of: Head of Policy and Performance
Subject/Title: Draft Single Equality Scheme and Action Plan 2010-13

1.0 Report Summary

- 1.1 This report introduces the Draft Single Equality Scheme and Action Plan 2010 – 2013.

2.0 Recommendation

That the Cabinet Member for Performance and Capacity

- (1) approve the Draft Single Equality Scheme and Action Plan 2010-2013 and the Equality Impact Assessment Toolkit and Guidance, the documents to be approved in draft to allow extensive consultation with partners, voluntary, faith and community stakeholders, staff and citizens; and
- (2) approve an extension to the Interim Single Equality Scheme 2009-10 to 31st July 2010 to ensure that the Council remains statutorily compliant whilst consultation takes place.

3.0 Reasons for Recommendations

- 3.1 Cheshire East Borough Council is committed to providing high quality, customer-focused services for all people living in, working in or visiting the Borough. We are determined to further develop our Equality and Diversity agenda both to meet our statutory responsibilities, provide quality customer services and as part of the achievement of our corporate aims and objectives. Our aim is inclusion for all. As a new Council created in April 2009, we developed an interim Single Equality Scheme and Action Plan 2009- 2010. We have now moved forward and we have developed this Single Equality Scheme for a three year period, beginning in April 2010 and ending in March 2013.

The Scheme is in draft form to allow the Council to consult widely with partners, voluntary, faith and community stakeholders, staff and citizens so that their views can also be reflected in the Scheme and Action Plan. We intend to finalise the three year Scheme and Action Plan by June 2010 following these extensive consultations.

The information and intelligence used to produce the draft Scheme builds on the work of previous authorities and includes the views and comments of a range of stakeholders. The Research and Intelligence Team prepared an equality profile of the Borough in 2009 and this has been updated in 2010 to inform the development of the Scheme. The ethos of understanding our communities and mapping issues relating to equal access and inclusion was the basis for the action plan. Cheshire East Council is a relatively new organisation and needs to have a greater understanding of the way people live in, work in and visit the Borough. It also needs to understand the issues of disadvantage and how these impact on people so that more can be done to make things fairer.

To assist Council Services in making things fairer, a new Draft Equality Impact Assessment Toolkit and Guidance has been developed and forms an Appendix to the Draft Single Equality Scheme and Action Plan 2010-2013. An Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) is a way to make sure that individuals and teams think carefully about the likely impact of policies or procedures, strategies, functions and services, to identify any unmet needs, and to provide a basis for action to improve services where appropriate.

It systematically assesses and records the actual, potential or likely impact of a service, policy or project – or a significant change in a service, policy or project – on different groups of people.

The toolkit goes further than identifying the impact of policies, services and procedures. It also assesses whether people's needs are being met and if legislative requirements are being met.

The Council has a legal responsibility under the Race, Gender and Disability Equality Duties to assess both our existing and new policies and functions, and to set out how we will monitor any possible negative impact on disability/gender and race equality.

In addition, the Council is working towards the Equality Framework for Local Government which requires us to impact assess for race gender and disability, and demonstrate commitment to addressing the needs of and impact assessing around sexual orientation, age, and religion and belief, the 6 strands within our Draft Single Equality Scheme 2010-2013.

4.0 Wards Affected

4.1 N/A

5.0 Local Ward Members

5.1 N/A

6.0 Policy Implications including - Climate change - Health

6.1 No implications for climate change

6.2 Policy implications for health are recognised within the Interim Single Equality Scheme. The Scheme will support the addressing of health inequalities

7.0 Financial Implications for Transition Costs (Authorised by the Borough Treasurer)

7.1 None

8.0 Financial Implications 2009/10 and beyond (Authorised by the Borough Treasurer)

8.1 None

9.0 Legal Implications (Authorised by the Borough Solicitor)

9.1 As detailed in the Report the Interim Single Equality Scheme will cover the Council's statutory duties and responsibilities under current equality legislation

10.0 Risk Management

10.1 The Council will not meet its statutory duties and responsibilities contained in equality legislation if the Interim Single Equality Scheme is not approved

11.0 Background and Options

11.1 The Scheme covers the Council's statutory equality duties in relation to race, disability and gender and our non-statutory duties in relation to age, sexual orientation and religion/belief. While there is no statutory requirement to meet general and specific duties in these areas, broadening our approach to all six recognised equality strands illustrates the Council's commitment to equality for all, and puts it in a good and realistic position for expected changes in national equalities legislation. The Council has incorporated these groups into this Draft Single Equality Scheme also, and has identified four additional groups: Carers, Transgender People, Gypsies and Travellers and Disadvantaged White People for specific action.

12.0 Overview of Year One and Term One Issues

12.1 None

13.0 Access to Information

The background papers relating to this report can be inspected by contacting the report writer:

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