

## POLICY FINANCE AND ADMINISTRATION COMMITTEE 28<sup>TH</sup> SEPTEMBER 2011

### REPORT OF THE HEAD OF CENTRAL SERVICES ANNUAL REPORT ON EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY

#### 1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To update the Overview, Scrutiny and Audit Committee on the progress made by the Council to embed Equality and Diversity within service and policy development and delivery, work undertaken to meet its public sector equality duty as required by equality legislation, but more importantly to deliver services which are accessible and meet the needs of Melton residents.

#### 2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 Members of the Overview, Scrutiny and Audit Committee consider and review this progress report prior to its submission to the Policy finance and Administration Committee
- 2.2 Note the progress made between November 2010 to August 2011 in embedding equality and diversity across the council.

#### 3.0 KEY ISSUES

- 3.1 Melton Borough Council has been working to a number of separate Equality and Diversity Policies since 2005. Though these policies have been in place, limited progress has been made in the delivery of identified actions and targets set.
- 3.2 To further progress the work of the Council in ensuring that services delivered are fair and accessible and that the council is discharging its legal responsibility, it joined with the other six district/borough councils in August 2010 to form the Leicestershire District Councils Equality and Diversity Partnership ("Partnership").
- 3.3 The aim of the Partnership is to share resources, share best practise and assist each partner council to meet the "Achieving Level of the Equality Framework" and ensure compliance with the Public Sector Equality Duty. The Council will be externally inspected in March 2012 in order to assess if it has met this target.
- 3.4 Since the start of the Partnership, an MBC Equality Steering group has been formed and is chaired by the Chief Executive. The role of the MBC Equality Steering group is to oversee the delivery of the MBC equality action, plus take a pro-active role in embedding and furthering the Councils commitment to equality and diversity.
- 3.5 To assist the council and its officers to deliver the MBC equality action plan, a part time Equality and Diversity Officer has been appointed on a fixed term contract.

3.6 To ensure the council fully understands what work is currently being done and has been delivered over the last few years, a gap analysis through evidence collection has been started.

3.7 Members of the committee should note that work has already started on addressing some of the gaps identified. This includes:

- Training for officers and members on the new Equality Act 2010 has been delivered;
- Half day awareness sessions on Sexual Orientation and Transgender, and Religion/ Belief and Non-Belief, two of the new protected characteristics of the Equality Act 2010 have been delivered to staff in July 2011;
- Reviewing the council's separate equality and diversity policies and combining them into one Single Partnership Equality and Diversity Scheme;
- Refreshing the council's Equality Impact Assessment guidance and toolkit to encompass the requirements of the Equality Act 2010 and providing guidance on how to assess impact;
- Providing regular briefings to the council's Equality and Diversity champions.

#### 4.0 **POLICY AND CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS**

4.1 In order to ensure good corporate governance the council is required by legislation to ensure that in the exercise of its functions, it has paid due regard to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and fosters good relations.

#### 5.0 **FINANCIAL AND OTHER RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

5.1 The council has committed £8,000 to the Partnership for the period November 2010 to October 2011. The cost of the inspection is £4,100 plus expenses.

#### 6.0 **LEGAL IMPLICATIONS/POWERS**

6.1 There are no specific legal implications aspects to this report. However, failure to comply with the public sector equality duties could result in the council facing a legal challenge and its reputation being damaged.

#### 7.0 **COMMUNITY SAFETY**

7.1 There are no specific community safety aspects to this report.

#### 8.0 **EQUALITIES**

8.1 Good practise requires that regular equality and diversity progress reports are provided for scrutiny against agreed objectives for the council.

#### 9.0 **RISKS**

9.1 There are no direct risks associated from this report.

#### 10.0 **CLIMATE CHANGE**

10.1 There are no specific climate change implications relating to this report.

## 11.0 CONSULTATION

11.1 There has been no direct consultation with officers of the council or the communities of the borough. The delivery of the equality and diversity agenda is driven by equality legislation.

## 12.0 WARDS AFFECTED

12.1 There will be a positive impact on all wards as a result of the delivery of the equality and diversity agenda.

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Date: 8<sup>th</sup> September 2011

Appendices: None

Background Papers: Equality Act 2010  
Equality and Human Rights Commission: A guide for public authorities

Reference: