

**GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE**  
**18<sup>th</sup> NOVEMBER 2014**  
**REPORT OF THE HEAD OF CENTRAL SERVICES**  
**ANNUAL REPORT ON EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY**

**1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 1.1 To update the Governance 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 *Note the progress made in delivering against the actions identified in the Equality and Diversity Action, attached at Appendix A;*
- 2.2 *Note the progress made in ensuring that staff feel that the Council is an employer of choice, attached at Appendix B;*

**3.0 KEY ISSUES**

- 3.1 Progress has been made during the current financial year in incorporating the consideration of equalities and diversity into business as usual. This can be seen in improvement actions delivered as detailed within the action plan attached at Appendix A.
- 3.2 Members should be made aware that the Equality Framework for Local Government (EFLG) against which the Council has chosen to work against, has recently undergone a 'light touch' sector-led refresh, to take into account of the recommendations from the Public Sector Equality Duty review, around focusing on outcomes, and embedding equality and diversity into policies and practices.
- 3.3 The actions therefore detailed in the current action plan will be reviewed by members of the Equality Steering Group and transferred as appropriate into the new revised framework against the 'Achieving' level criteria's. The revised action plan will also seek to close of any gaps identified as set out against the revised 'Achieving' level criteria.
- 3.4 The Council's Check and Challenge group continues to provide advice and guidance to managers on equality implications when drafting policies and services and has held a number of Equality Impact Assessment (EIA's) surgeries for both policy writers and managers.
- 3.5 Training has also been delivered to a group of volunteers, mainly Council tenants on EIA's. Members of the group have agreed to assist Housing Officers in completing Housing EIA's and so ensuring that Housing EIA's are robust and meet the needs of tenants.

- 3.6 In addition to the actions identified in the Appendix A, the following activities have also been undertaken during this year to promote and foster good community relationships in the borough:
- Gypsy and traveller awareness session for members,
  - Saturday market stall event to raise awareness of disability and hate crime reporting,
  - Discussions started with Leicester Lesbian Gay Bisexual and Transsexual Centre to provide outreach services from the council offices on a regular basis,
  - Recognising and celebrating national days i.e Holocaust Memorial day, International Day against Homophobia (IDAHO), Seniors month etc.
  - Key partner in hosting the county wide “Let’s talk Equality event at the NSPCC in September 2014,
  - Working with local business and Assistance Dogs UK to promote better access to services/businesses for people with disabilities.
- 3.7 Members of the committee were advised last year that the Local Government Improvement and Development (LGID)) which are the sponsoring body for the diversity peer assessments were reviewing their approach on the frequency of renewal of the ‘Achieving’ level status. The timescale for renewing the award has now been set at every three years.
- 3.8 Melton Borough Council was awarded the ‘Achieving’ level status in March 2012, this in theory means that the Council needs to consider submitting itself for a reassessment in 2015 against either the ‘Achieving’ level or aiming for a validation against the ‘Excellent’ level of the framework.
- 3.9 As the EFLG has recently been refreshed, it would be advisable to review the current position of the council before any approaches are made to the LGID. Therefore, at present, a decision of the committee to guide officers on future attainment is not requested at this stage.
- 3.10 Members of the committee will be aware that the Council set four broad equality objectives to help it to meet its public sector equality duty, these are:
- ensure services are accessible, responsive and appropriate for all our communities
  - remove barriers that prevent people from fulfilling their potential
  - instill confidence within the community to report, tackle and prevent discrimination, bullying, harassment and hate incidents experienced by people in relation to their protected characteristics
  - be recognised as an employer of choice for people from all communities.
- 3.11 Appendix B, attached at this report shows the progress that the Council has made in ensuring that staff employed by the Council feel that the council is an employer of choice.

#### **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 foster good relations.

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

5.1 The council's annual budget associated to resourcing for Equality and Diversity has been decreased to £4k for 2014/2015 from an initial allocation of £8k in 2013/2014; this equates to 560 hours/annual of support provided through a contracting agreement direct with an Equality and Diversity specialist. However, additional duties are purchased as require d- e.g. Support and guidance in relation to the Me and My Learning Centre

#### **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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Contact Officer: Martyn Bowen

Date:

Appendices: Appendix A - Equality and Diversity Action Plan

Appendix B - Staff Satisfaction Survey results 2013

Background Papers: N/A

Reference: