

GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE

23rd NOVEMBER 2015

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 and comment on the proposed updated Single Equality Scheme, attached at Appendix A,*
- 2.2 *Delegated authority is given to the Head of Central Services in conjunction with the lead Member for Equalities to update the Single Equality Scheme with any comments received from the Council's Management Team and submit the scheme to full Council for inclusion in the Council's constitution*
- 2.3 *Note and comment on the proposed Action Plan at Appendix B aimed at delivering on the Single Equality Scheme*
- 2.4 *This Committee supports the decision of the Equality Steering Group (ESG) not to pursue the Local Government Improvement and Development revised standards for their Peer Assessment Review*

3.0 KEY ISSUES

- 3.1 Members will be aware that Melton Borough Council has published a Single Equality Scheme (SES) which covers all our legal duties as required by The Equality Act 2010. The SES sets out the Council's objectives and approach to promoting equality and diversity, good relations and in tackling discrimination and harassment. The existing scheme has run from 2012-2015. Attached at Appendix A is the proposed new SES to cover the Council from 2016-2020.
- 3.2 The Council was required by 1 April 2012 and every four years to publish one or more equality objectives that we aim to address. The 4 objectives from the current SES have been reviewed and the proposed objectives to be published which build on the work that the Council has undertaken and have been identified as being most relevant to the Council and the Community are:

- Ensure that we engage, consult and communicate in appropriate and accessible ways and empower under-represented groups and individuals to participate in society and at work.
- Ensure services are accessible, responsive and appropriate for all our community
- Instil confidence within the community to report, tackle and prevent discrimination, bullying, harassment and hate incidents experienced by people in relation to their protected characteristic
- Be recognised as an employer of choice for people from all communities ensuring fairness and equality of opportunity for all

3.3 A draft action plan has been produced to focus on the Equality objectives stated above. (See appendix B)The plan will be presented to the Equalities Steering Group on 30 November 2015 for consideration.

3.4 As the Single Equality Scheme is included within the Council's Constitution any changes to the scheme will need to be presented to full Council for approval.

Actions taken during the year

Leicester LGBT Centre

3.5 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 number of Equality Impact Assessment (EIA's) surgeries for both policy writers and managers.

3.6 Although the Council has made significant progress over the last few years in dealing with the issues affecting vulnerable people, the major area where there was less support and knowledge available to both professionals and individuals and families concerned people from the Lesbian Gay Bi-sexual and Transgender (LGBT) communities. For members of the LGBT Communities living in the Melton Borough area, the only opportunity for face-to-face contact was by visiting the Leicester LGBT Centre. To give people an opportunity for face-to-face contact in the Melton Borough and to enable professionals both from the Council and for partners working at Parkside to be able to support clients they were working with, negotiations took place during 2014 for the Leicester LGBT Centre to provide a service from within Melton.

3.7 This service started in January 2015, where a member of the Leicester LGBT Centre is present in the Council Offices 1 day a month. Over the year-to-date, staff from Leicester LGBT have provided training sessions for staff, attended team meetings, given advice and support to professionals working at Parkside. Members of the public have had the opportunity to have private 1-2-1 sessions. The outcomes for many of the members of the public is that this is the first time they have been able to talk to someone about their issues and be given support to improve the quality of their lives.

3.8 Evidence of the impact of having the Leicester LGBT in Melton is that it has led to a support group, Melton Pride, being set up and led and run by members of the LGBT communities living in Melton.

- 3.9 The original proposal for the Leicester LGBT Centre was to provide their service for 1 year. Following a presentation to the ESG in September, it has been agreed for Members to consider funding to the Leicester LGBT Centre for 2016/17.

Sports Development

- 3.10 The Sports team within the Council has been undertaking targeted work to support people who maybe disadvantaged from accessing a healthy lifestyle. This has involved targeting communities and community groups to provide information and guidance. The team has supported community groups to run activities so that they become sustainable rather than simply be put on for a set period and then the activity stop. Reports provided by Leicestershire and Rutland Sports show that we are in excess of our targets for participation, including people from the BME community.
- 3.11 Some of the activities undertaken have been
- Working with partners such as Age Concern
 - Working to meet a Leicestershire wide and Melton Borough specific disability action plan
 - Member of staff dedicated to delivering the disability action plans
 - Ellesmere College provide a member of staff, for free, 1 day a week to work with people with disabilities. This will be increasing to 2 days a week in the new year
 - Specifically designed and targeted to older people including; table cricket, tea dances, senior walks, tai chi, stroke club, walking football
 - Aimed specifically at the Polish community

Hate Crime

- 3.12 The area of Hate Crime reporting has had a particular focus during the year. A Hate Crime is a usually violent, prejudice motivated crime that occurs when a perpetrator targets a victim because of his or her perceived membership in a certain social group. Examples of such groups include but are not limited to: ethnicity, gender identity, disability, language, nationality, physical appearance, religion, or sexual orientation.
- 3.13 The aim has been to send a message that hate crimes are not going to be tolerated and action will be taken against the perpetrators and to encourage reporting of any hate crimes. Presentations have been made to resident forums and to schools. Posters and leaflets have been provided to these forums and also made available at community centres. Leaflets have been placed at the 11 Key Safe Locations within the Melton Borough. A campaign to coincide with a national initiative ran during October where use of social media – facebook and twitter under the strapline #Donthatethedifferencemakethedifference. The aim has been to raise awareness with an expected increase in reporting of hate incidents which is reflected in the number of incidents increasing between June 2014 and June 2015.

Other Activities

- 3.14 In addition to the actions identified above, the following activities have also been undertaken during this year to promote and foster good community relationships in the borough:

- 2 equality training sessions for Members
- Market stall event to raise awareness for Members following the election in 2015.
- Market Stall held for staff to raise awareness of Equality and Diversity issues
- Recognising and celebrating national days i.e Holocaust Memorial day, International Day against Homophobia (IDAHO), Seniors month etc.
- Key partner in hosting the British Institute Human Rights at the De Montfort University as part of their beneath the headlines tour in October.
- Promotion of events and activities on the MBC website
- Staff joining a campaign to send the message Stop domestic violence.
- Deaf awareness training for staff
- Discussions with Action on Hearing Loss to provide support to customer services
- Mental Health First Aid Lite course held at Parkside
- Dementia training/awareness sessions for staff
- On-going work undertaken with vulnerable people through Me and My Learning
- Multi-faith group for staff continues to meet

3.15 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 has reviewed their approach on the frequency of renewal of the 'Achieving' level status. This has resulted in a refresh of the assessments and what is required to meet the standards. .A review of the new requirements has led the ESG to consider that at the present time this is not the focus of the Council and it does not have the resources available to meet the new standard. It is recommended that this committee supports this decision.

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.

4.2 The Council has undertaken to comprehensively refresh the Council's Corporate Priorities for 2015-2020. Equality is an integral and direct feature within the Council's eight Corporate priorities, which are based around three core themes of: Place, People and Agile council, by promoting equality of opportunity, good relations and look to tackle issues in relation to discrimination and harassment. As a key policy document the Corporate Plan provides a robust approach to supporting the single equalities scheme; ensuring that our vision, priorities and spending decisions are based on sound evidence, extensive engagement and a thorough understanding of community needs – helping to align the Council's focus and resources so we can encourage sustainable communities within a stronger, fairer and prosperous place.

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 from 2014/2015. Support is provided through an

agreement with an Equality and Diversity specialist. However, additional duties can be purchased as required – e.g. Members Equality and Diversity Training.

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 practice 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.

Contact Officer: Martyn Bowen

Date:

Appendices: Appendix A - Single Equality Scheme
Appendix B - Melton Borough Council – Equality and Diversity Action Plan 2016-2020

Background Papers: N/A

Reference: