

GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE

26 NOVEMBER 2016

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, policy development and delivery; work undertaken to meet our 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 progress made in meeting our equalities duties and commitments as outlined in this report.***

3.0 PROGRESS

- 3.1 Members will be aware that Melton Borough Council publishes 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 advancing equality and diversity, fostering good relations and in tackling discrimination, harassment and victimisation. The initial scheme ran from 2012-2016. An updated version of the SES was agreed by the Governance Committee in November 2015, by full Council in December 2015 and covers the period 2015/16 - 2020.
- 3.2 The Council is also required by legislation to set one or more specific equality objectives every four years. The first set of objectives ran until April 2016. Four new equality objectives were agreed at the Governance Committee in November 2015 and form part of the new SES. They build on the work that the Council has undertaken and have been identified as being the most relevant to the Council and the Community.
- 3.3 The 4 equality objectives for the period 2016-2020 are set out below.
- 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
- 3.4 The SES action plan, including progress to date, is shown at Appendix A and is derived from the revised SES and approved by this committee. The action plan is monitored by the Equalities Steering Group (ESG) on a regular basis.
- 3.5 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.

Equality Impact Assessments

- 3.6 A refresh of the Check and Challenge group has been undertaken during 2016. The group provides advice and guidance to managers on any equality implications when undertaking an Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) relating to policies, practices, procedures, services or functions. The group also forms part of the formal approval process and monitors actions arising from completed EIAs whilst ensuring completed EIAs are published on the Council's website.
- 3.7 The equality impact assessment form (or template) has been updated and includes revised wording in places to make it is more user friendly. At the same time new sections have been added to ensure more rigorous compliance with the equality duty. A step by step guide has also been produced to support any staff members who are undertaking an EIA. Training sessions on the revised EIA form and guidance was provided to the Check & Challenge group and to T3 who have been asked whether they would like further training for their own staff.
- 3.8 Demographic data relating to the equalities profile of the Melton area (including some mid-term statistics) has been collated and provided for staff to ensure easy access to the data for officers undertaking an EIA and to provide consistency of approach.

Training

- 3.9 During 2016:
- All Members elected since 2015 have received equalities training.
 - Equalities training was delivered to staff from Property Services (particularly toilet attendants and caretakers) in March 2016.
 - EIA training has been provided to the Check and Challenge group (June) and T3 (August 2016).
 - A new online equalities training package have been created based on bronze, silver and gold attainment levels. All staff are to complete the bronze level followed by the silver level 6 months later. The Gold level is for Heads of Service and Team Leaders. The packages will be placed on MIKE.
 - Prevent training has also taken place for Councillors and Officers

Town Centre Access Audit

3.10 In February the chair of the Melton Access Group attended the Equalities Steering Group meeting and highlighted a number of Town Centre access issues faced by disabled people. Some of the main issues highlighted were:

- Access to businesses. (The chair of the access group felt that advertising of access to local businesses could be demonstrated by the use of a disability symbol in shop windows and in all literature from MBC. This symbol could also be included on digital Town Centre map.)
- Parking on pavements, especially on Market Days and generally in the Market Place;
- Street Furniture e.g. the number of “A” boards being displayed on pavements and the use of seating areas for business advertising;

3.11 At its meeting in May, the ESG agreed to a proposal by the Centre for Accessible Environments to undertake a general access audit of the town centre to address some of the issues identified.

3.12 The access audit took place a report was presented to Melton Borough Council in August. A number of access themes were considered including; the presentation of access information on the Council’s website; way-finding and signage; parking; crossings; circulation; sanitary and welfare accommodation; street furniture; retail units and stalls. The audit identified several areas where improvements could be made. Some of the work relating to property issues has already been commenced. The report has been taken to ESG and it has been agreed for further action to be taken to include identifying where recommendations affect partners and for them to be advised and identifying where recommendations can be acted upon within existing budgets. Already some of the proposals related to Property have been included in support and maintenance programmes for next year and some of the findings are to influence work around car parking and toilets. The Council is currently identifying an internal resource to take the recommendations forward.

Appendix B shows the actions specifically relating to Melton Borough Council and have been rated High, Medium and Low. Other recommendations for partners will be forwarded to them for their consideration.

Other activities

3.13 Activities have also been undertaken in the following areas;

- The Disability Pages have been improved on the Council’s website. The Council are using web champions to look at accessibility issues.
- The Pride Day took place on the 3rd September. MBC were represented through the Leicestershire Equalities Forum at the event.
- The Council continues to be represented across the County on the Community Safety Partnership. In particular work continues on the Prevent and Hate Crime agenda. As part of National Hate crime during 8-12 October, a number of events were organised including:

- Campaign posters displayed at the following places: The Cove Youth Club, The Edge Youth Club, Fairmead Youth Club, Phoenix House, Venture House, Melton Library, Latham House medical Practice, Council office main reception, Melton Police Station
- Staff at the youth clubs will deliver a short permeation about the campaign - enquires to be directed to ASB lead, at Melton BC
- Information about the awareness will be circulated to the residents groups in Melton
- Banner will be displayed in the main offices building and enquiries to be directed to ASB officer at Melton BC
- Information about the awareness will go live on MBC website
- Information about the awareness will appear in the press; The rage News and In Touch
- Awareness sessions will be delivered by ASB officer to residents groups - The Rage and The Town Centre
- Town Centre chat (various locations at different times) - Police & ASB Officer
- LGBT – The Council has funded staff from the Leicester Lesbian Gay Bisexual and Transgender Centre in Leicester to provide a presence at Melton Borough Council Offices for an afternoon once a month. The service is for both Council Officers and partners to help them when working with members of the LGBT communities and also for individuals from the LGBT communities to have someone to talk to on a 1-2-1 basis
- LSEF – The Council continues to play an active role in the Leicester Shire Equalities Forum
- The Council has been represented at the annual Police Inter-cultural Awareness event

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.

The Council has undertaken to comprehensively refresh the Council's Corporate Priorities for 2015/16-2020. 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 One Council 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 Action Plan
Appendix B - Town centre access audit

Background Papers: N/A

Reference: