

Report of	Meeting	Date
Head of Corporate and Policy Services	Customer Overview and Scrutiny Panel	6 July 2005

REVIEW OF RACE EQUALITY SCHEME

PURPOSE OF REPORT

1. To inform Members of progress made by Chorley Borough Council towards the objectives set out in the Race Equality Scheme Action Plan.

CORPORATE PRIORITIES

2. This report addresses issues concerning our priority of investing in our customers.

RISK ISSUES

3. The report contains no risk issues for consideration by Members.

SUMMARY OF PROGRESS MADE TOWARDS THE ACTIONS OUTLINED IN CHORLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL'S RACE EQUALITY SCHEME ACTION PLAN

4. The Council is committed to securing genuine equality of opportunity in all of our activities as an employer and service provider. Much of our work towards this objective has recently been looked at in the Access to Services review conducted by the Audit Commission. The intention is to use the information this review produces to inform our approach to improving customer accessibility, and to give a focus to service planning and delivery.
5. We are also taking this agenda forward through a Risk Management approach based on the requirements of the Equality Standard and the Duty to Promote Racial Equality. Identifying further work to undertake in these areas, informed by a local context, will help us to identify gaps in provision; this is something being taken forward throughout the Council, facilitated by the Council's Corporate Diversity Group. This will inform our Diversity Strategy and the ensuing action planning. The position with regard to diversity is by no means static and we are constantly reviewing how we take this agenda forward.

Development of an Equality Access Framework

6. Outcome: To assess current performance and policies for impact assessment, as per RES.

Chorley Borough Council has conducted a relevance review in relation to the services it provides. The Equalities Impact Assessment Framework, which outlines the procedure for undertaking a thorough and systematic analysis of policy to ensure that there will be no unintended or unjustifiable differential impact with respect to race when new policies or projects, or changes to existing, are planned, has recently been revised. Training in the revised approach took place in April/May 2005 for Senior Managers and Middle Managers, and comments received back from the training are being used to inform a further revision.



of the guidance. Whilst it is a legal requirement to conduct EqIA's for race, we will also be conducting EqIA's in relation to disability and gender. It is intended that the requirement to complete EqIA's will be monitored through Committee Reports and through the Corporate Diversity group. This high level monitoring is a reflection of the high level of importance afforded by Chorley Borough Council to ensuring that equality objectives are met throughout the Council.

Complaints procedure to monitor disability, ethnicity and gender of complainant.

8. Outcome: Identify areas of poor service provision for those user groups.

An overarching review of the way in which Chorley Borough Council deals with and utilises complaints as a means of improving service delivery is being undertaken. This incorporates the commitment to revise the complaints procedure to monitor ethnicity, disability and gender to help the Council to identify areas of poor service provision. A new complaints leaflet has been produced which includes a monitoring form. Work is currently underway to ensure that this data is monitored and used to inform the way that the Council operates, and to ensure that our services are responsive to the needs of all people in Chorley.

General Access to Services

9. Outcome: Results of monitoring via service plans.

An access to services review has recently been undertaken by the Audit Commission. The intention is that the results and recommendations of this review will inform the Council's actions in relation to ensuring equality in Access to Services and will facilitate the monitoring of progress made in this respect. In the interim, work is being progressed throughout the Council to address the needs of Ethnic Minority groups. Outcomes to date include:

- The establishment of a telephone service for Urdu and Gujarati speakers, through which it is possible to access any service provided by the Council.
- The establishment of a link on the Council's website to ensure that those who do not speak English as a first language are able to access the Council's services through this channel.
- Translated straplines are included on all Council mailings, which make provision for the translation of any information produced by the Council. The Council also provides this information in large print or on audiotape upon request.
- A Community Cohesion working group has been established, this group is currently developing a community profile that will help the Council and its partner agencies identify need, and target action where it will be most effective.
- All Service Units have outlined, in their business plans for 2005-6, a commitment to working to ensure equal Access to Services and to consistently challenge the way that they do things, in order to ensure continuous improvement in this area. This commitment is to be monitored through individual Service Units Business Plans and through the Council's Diversity Risk Register (to be maintained by the Corporate Diversity Group).
- An evening session for the local BME community was held to promote the 'One Stop Shop' and collect ideas on improving access to services.

Housing Issues

10. Outcome: Issue addressed as part of Best Value Review.

All housing leaflets are translated into a number of different languages including Urdu, Gujarati and Bengali. The service monitors the satisfaction rates of Ethnic Minority Groups specifically, and benchmarks this against other satisfaction rates, using this data to inform their work.

11. The Council is currently conducting an overarching review of the way in which its housing services are delivered and Housing Issues for minority groups will form a part of this review.

Training for Staff and Elected Members

12. Outcome: Ensure all staff are aware of their responsibilities in relation to equalities and how they can contribute to the Council's aims and Objectives.

Training events in equality and diversity for staff and members were planned originally for late 2003. They were to be delivered on the back of the creation of a new 'Equality and Diversity Policy' for the authority, and the events were to be used to launch the policy as well providing information on our responsibilities. The creation of an Equality and Diversity Policy was delayed by the decision to review all of the Council's employment policies. The Staff Equality and Diversity Policy is currently being consulted on, and events will be rescheduled as this policy is rolled out through out the Council, with a view to the training taking place in August/September 2005.

Recruitment, employment and retention issues.

13. Outcome: Examination of any areas where there can be improvement in the way that the Council operates these policies.

The Council is working towards a target of reflecting the profile of the wider community in our workforce by advertising all vacancies within the job centre, other authorities, the Asian Women's Forum, the Muslim Community and the Youth and Community Centre, and through developing strong links with community representatives. We also place adverts in 'Ethnic Britain' to promote Chorley Borough Council as an equal opportunities employer.

14. Our recruitment procedure has been tailored to meet equality objectives; objective/competency-based interviews are operated for all positions, and candidates for interview are selected on merit. In order to eliminate any potential for discrimination, in any respect, selecting managers only see candidates' work history and experience, and not their personal details.
15. An interfaith prayer room for Council Staff in the Council offices has been established in order to meet the needs of all faith groups and are sensitive and open to the needs of our workforce at large.

Burial Facilities

16. Outcome: Ensure that Burial services meet the needs of the Black and Ethnic Minority community.

Public Space Services are proceeding with work in phase 1 of 2, to construct the Muslim Burial Ground. 70% of the paths have been excavated and constructed up to stone level in phase 1. Public Space Services have met with the Muslim Welfare Society to agree the

size and location of the platform, which has been excavated ready for construction. The location for water service and a wooden building for the storage of prayer mats etc. have been agreed, and the building will be ordered shortly. Selected trees and some of the scrub have also been cleared from the site. Work is continuing, and a revised plan will be available soon. Phase 2 will involve a rolling programme of extending the site.

Racist Incidents

17. Outcome: Ensure reporting of Racist Incidents is user friendly and confidence in support is achieved.

The reporting of Racist Incidents is possible at a variety of venues including Doctors surgeries, Council Offices, Community Centres and Schools. Staff at a number of designated reporting venues are trained in dealing with those people seeking to report incidents in a sensitive and friendly manner.

18. We work with our partner agencies to ensure that the Racist Incidents reporting procedure is as effective as possible and information is shared to deliver the best possible outcomes for victims and the community at large. The Council meets with its partner agencies on a quarterly basis to discuss Racist Incident reporting and is currently conducting a review of how best to promote those procedures that have been put in place, to achieve the outcomes outlined above.

Community Development

19. Outcome: Developing the capacity of ethnic groups

The Council has been involved in numerous initiatives with the local community groups through PAiCE. Much of this work is undertaken with partners, for example, the Eid Festival, Chorley Children's Centre and projects to initiate groups and group activities. We have still to complete an audit of community development work with minority ethnic communities.

20. The Council has assembled a site for the new Mosque, and the Chief Executive meets with the Muslim Welfare Society on a regular basis.

Benefits Service.

21. Outcome: Ensuring Equality of Access to the Service.

A specific team in Benefits has been established to take forward work in relation to take up and customer involvement, and is committed to developing the service further to ensure Equality of Access.

22. The Council's translated strapline has been added to the Benefits claim form and there is now a system to 'flag up' customers needing translation services, where we are made aware of this need. In addition, there are links on the website to Benefits information in other languages.
23. There is also a monthly telephone survey of 1% of customers, in which they are asked how accessible they found the offices and service. The results are then fed back to the customer involvement team.

Leisure and Culture

24. Outcome: Develop monitoring systems for participation levels of different groups; discover problems that may prevent participation.

The new Indoor Leisure Contract is what is known as an 'output based contract'. This means that we will require the contractor to provide evidence of delivery against set objectives. The two areas that address this action point in the Race Equality Scheme, which will be of interest to Members, are:

- The requirement for the contractor to agree targets for participation, including take up by people from minority ethnic groups
- To achieve an agreed level of the Equality Standard - level 2 initially

25. It should be noted that, with the exception of the housing issues, leisure and culture, and community development actions, the lead officers for actions have changed since the production of the Race Equality Scheme.

26. Clearly much good work has taken, and is continuing to, take place, but we as a Council are by no means complacent. The progression of the actions in the Equality Action Plan is a dynamic process. It is felt that the information forthcoming from the Audit Commission 'Access to Services' review, along with the production of a Diversity strategy and the ensuing action plans will be instrumental in progressing our work in this area. We will keep Members informed of progress in these areas.

27. There are now plans to update the Race Equality Scheme by January 2006. The action plan will be consulted on, and the priority top 10 actions selected may include some of those in the current plan. This panel will be consulted on the revised documentation before it is published.

COMMENTS OF THE HEAD OF HUMAN RESOURCES

28. On 30 June 2005, Executive Cabinet will consider the establishment of an Equality and Diversity Officer in principle. On appointment this officer would lead on diversity matters both internal to the Council and outwards to the constituents of Chorley Borough.

COMMENTS OF THE DIRECTOR OF FINANCE

29. There are no immediate financial implications to this report.

RECOMMENDATION

30. Members are invited to comment on the report.

TIM RIGNALL
HEAD OF CORPORATE AND POLICY SERVICES

Background Papers			
Document	Date	File	Place of Inspection
Race Equality Scheme	January 2003	-	Intranet address: http://10.23.0.31/upload/public/Files/1/Corporate%20Equalities%20Plan.pdf
Report Author	Ext	Date	Doc ID
Tim Rignall	5140	27/06/05	Report on RES Update June 05