

Report of	Meeting	Date
Director of Policy and Performance	Overview and Scrutiny	4 th December 2006

CHORLEY COUNCIL DRAFT EQUALITY SCHEME

PURPOSE OF REPORT`

1. To outline the purpose of, and background to, the draft equality scheme and to present the scheme to members.

CORPORATE PRIORITIES

2. This scheme is most closely linked to Strategic Objective Two: Improving equality of opportunity and life chances and Strategic Objective Four: Improved access to public services. This scheme, and associated actions, will also impact upon Strategic Objective Six: our ability to become a performing organisation.

RISK ISSUES

3. The issue raised and recommendations made in this report involve risk considerations in the following categories:

Strategy		Information	
Reputation	✓	Regulatory/Legal	✓
Financial		Operational	✓
People		Other	

4. The Council must produce a scheme to meet the statutory Race Equality Duty, which is already in force. The Council must also meet the statutory duties of the Disability Discrimination Act, which comes into force on The 4th of December 2006, and the Equality Act, which comes into force in April 2007. Failure to meet these duties could potentially have a negative impact upon the reputation and standing of the authority, particularly with hard to reach groups. Individual Directorates within the authority must deliver the actions set out in the scheme to ensure that we effectively progress our equalities agenda.

BACKGROUND

5. In April 2006 a decision was taken to commission a consultant (in partnership with South Ribble) to develop a scheme to meet the requirements of the Race Relations Act 1976 (currently in force), The Disability Discrimination Act 2005 (coming into force December 2006) and The Equality Act 2006 (coming into force in April 2007). The scheme will be a critical in helping to ensure that we deliver strategic objective two: improving equality of opportunity and life chances, and in embedding equality and diversity outcomes across the authority, which will be key to any forthcoming CPA assessment. In order to meet our statutory duties, as a public body, we will need to publish this document by the 4th December 2006.

THE EQUALITY SCHEME

6. We have ensured that the document, as well as outlining how we intend to meet the statutory duties outlined above, clearly sets out our approach to equality and diversity and makes a positive commitment to embedding equality and diversity at the heart of our organisation.
7. The document also outlines a commitment to achieving Level three of the equality standard by March 2009. The equality standard highlights the importance of fair and equal treatment in local government services and employment and has been developed as a tool to enable authorities to mainstream gender, race and disability into Council policy and practice at all levels. The standard provides a framework for improving equality practice and producing equitable outcomes in service delivery, employment and pay. The standard is a Best Value Performance Indicator (BVPI), and as such serves to integrate equalities policies and objectives with the Best Value Framework. The standard addresses six equality strands: age, disability, gender, race, religion/belief and sexual orientation. Achieving this level of the equality standard will take high level commitment and support, but failing to do so could preclude achieving recognition as an excellent authority in the longer term.
8. The intention going forward is to produce a summary leaflet of this document which sets out the critical elements of the document and will engage an even wider audience in all that we are trying to deliver by producing this document.
9. We will use the business planning process, equality impact assessments (EqIAs) and continued engagement with the people and organisations who informed this document to take the commitments outlined in this document forward.
10. The document makes reference to the fact that the scheme is a living document, additional elements which we may wish to include going forward include key information about the revitalised Community Cohesion Incidents Panel, our work with the Faith, Voluntary and Community Sector, and our commitment to address other strands of Diversity (age, sexual orientation and religion) which we do not currently have a statutory duty to include in this scheme.

COMMENTS OF THE DIRECTOR OF HUMAN RESOURCES

- 11.

COMMENTS OF THE DIRECTOR OF FINANCE

- 12.

RECOMMENDATION(S)

13. That the scheme be approved as the Council's Equality Scheme for publication.

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION (If the recommendations are accepted)

14. To ensure that we met our statutory duties in relation too Equality and Diversity and are able top use the document as the main driver for taking forward our work around equality, diversity and community cohesion.

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED

15. None

LESLEY-ANN FENTON
DIRECTOR OF POLICY AND PERFORMANCE.

There are no background papers to this report.

Report Author	Ext	Date	Doc ID
Lesley-Ann Fenton	5325	21 November 2006	ADMINREP/REPORT