

**Subject:** Single Equality Scheme  
**Date of Meeting:** 11 February 2010  
**Report of:** Director of Strategy & Governance  
**Contact Officer:** Name: Mary Evans Tel: 29-1577  
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**Key Decision:** No  
**Wards Affected:** All

**FOR GENERAL RELEASE****1. SUMMARY AND POLICY CONTEXT:**

- 1.1 The Equalities & Inclusion Policy sets out policy and priorities for the next three years 2008-2011 and actions arising were set out in the Equality Scheme Action Plan.
- 1.2 The Equality Scheme Action Plan was based on the existing Race Equality Scheme 2006-2009, Disability Equality Scheme 2007-2010 and Gender Equality Scheme 2007-2010.
- 1.3 The proposed Single Equality Scheme will replace the current schemes which are due for renewal thus addressing the statutory requirements, and incorporate actions to address the other equality strands and cross-cutting inequality and inclusion issues.

**2. RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- 2.1 That Cabinet approves the Single Equality Scheme 2010-2011.
- 2.2 That updates be reported every six months (as described in paragraph 3.5).

**3. RELEVANT BACKGROUND INFORMATION/CHRONOLOGY OF KEY EVENTS:**

- 3.1 The current legislative framework requires us to set out our responses to the general and specific duties on us as local authorities in relation to race, disability and gender – for example our arrangements for monitoring and assessing the equality impact of policies and services.
- 3.2 The Equalities Bill currently making its way through Parliament is intended to:
  - create a general single public sector equality duty with Ministers able to impose specific duties on public authorities to require processes or outcomes that fulfil the duty;
  - prohibit 'unjustifiable' age discrimination in the provision of goods, facilities and services and the exercise of public functions (including adult social care);

- create a new duty on local authorities to consider how their strategic decisions might help to reduce inequalities associated with socio-economic disadvantage; and
  - The Bill also enables Ministers to require public authorities to report on equality issues (including pay).
- 3.3 In practice this should mean a more streamlined approach with all equalities strands being considered and more support for work which tackles multiple deprivation and discrimination.
- 3.4 The benefits of a Single Equality Scheme are that:
- It will help the Council to articulate much stronger ambitions for equality, and address multiple issues more effectively
  - It makes sense to bring all our commitments and aspirations in respect of equality into a single document instead of three
  - Although the law does not require us to say how we are working to improve equality on the grounds of religion and belief, age or sexual orientation, we believe they are important considerations and a combined scheme is a way for us to tell you how we are including them in our overall approach to promoting equality
  - We anticipate combined equality schemes will be a legal requirement within the next two years

### **Decision-making & Monitoring**

- 3.5 Following approval of the Single Equality Scheme it will be reviewed annually. Overview & Scrutiny Commission have requested 6-monthly updates which will also be prepared for Cabinet. The officer mechanism for review and monitoring is the Equalities Steering Group.

## **4. CONSULTATION**

- 4.1 Our consultation pack was available on our website and publicised via the community and voluntary sector from 21 September until 13 November 2009. This was also sent to the unions and the minority staff forums who have since seen the draft version of the Scheme. Some comments were received which have been incorporated.
- 4.2 A series of public consultation events were held on 3, 5 and 29 October in partnership with the PCT and local hospitals' trust and a follow-up event of focus groups with BME, Disabled and Men's groups was held on 10 November to ensure that issues for these groups were included.
- 4.3 A public feedback session was held on Wednesday 2 December with people who had attended the consultation events to feedback on how we will take their comments on board. The Single Equality Scheme highlights the headlines from their comments and more detailed issues have been raised with the service areas concerned.
- 4.4 Overview & Scrutiny Commission received a draft version of the Single Equality Scheme at their meeting on 15 December 2009 and set up a separate sub-group to provide feedback which was held on Tuesday 12 January. Their feedback was

generally positive and their additional comments have been taken into account as far as possible.

## **5. FINANCIAL & OTHER IMPLICATIONS:**

### Financial Implications:

- 5.1 The Single Equality Scheme action plan covers the period January 2010–December 2011 and the commitments made have been included in the Council's service planning and budget setting proposals for the financial year 2010/2011. Actions proposed for 2011/12 will need to be considered in the development of budget strategies for the Council and partners organisations.

*Finance Officer Consulted: Anne Silley Date: 26/01/10*

### Legal Implications

- 5.2 The Council has a legal duty to produce an Equalities Scheme covering Disability, Gender and Race - this duty can currently be met by producing one scheme or separate schemes. It is anticipated that a combined scheme will be a requirement of the new Equalities Bill and therefore the approach set out in this report will ensure that the Council is in a good position to implement the new requirements when they come into force.

*Lawyer Consulted: Elizabeth Culbert Date: 25/01/10*

### Equalities Implications:

- 5.3 The equalities implications are directly addressed by the work contained within the report.

### Sustainability Implications:

- 5.4 None directly in relation to this report.

### Crime & Disorder Implications:

- 5.5 The Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership and the Partnership Community Safety Team are key contributors to equalities & inclusion work in the city and this is will be reflected in the single Equality Scheme.

### Risk & Opportunity Management Implications:

- 5.6 The implications for risk are directly addressed by the actions contained within the report.

### Corporate / Citywide Implications:

- 5.7 The actions contained within the report have been developed with input from all council Directorates.

**6. EVALUATION OF ANY ALTERNATIVE OPTION(S):**

- 6.1 The alternative option would be the development of 3 Equality Schemes to address issues of Race, Gender and Disability. The advantage of this is the clear focus on the issues for these groups. The advantages for a Single Equality Scheme are described in paragraph 3.4 and we have found in practice that many of the issues identified can be addressed by generic actions.

**7. REASONS FOR REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 7.1 To address the legal requirements as described above, provide an action plan to support the Equalities & Inclusion Policy and a mechanism for reporting on progress.

**SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION**

**Appendices:**

1. Draft Single Equality Scheme 2010-11

**Documents in Members' Rooms**

None

**Background Documents**

None