

OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Agenda Item 5

Brighton & Hove City Council

Subject: Equality and Inclusion Policy Progress Report

Date of Meeting: 15 July 2013

Report of: Paula Murray, Assistant Chief Executive

Contact Officer: Name: Sarah Tighe-Ford Tel: 29-2301

E-mail: sarah.tighe-ford@brighton-hove.gov.uk

Key Decision: No

Wards Affected: All

FOR GENERAL RELEASE

1. SUMMARY AND POLICY CONTEXT:

- 1.1 This report provides an update on the council's Equality and Inclusion Policy 2012-15 and Action Plan which defines the council's equality aims, activities and progress measures. It also updates on wider equalities work across the council and in the city.
- 1.2 Our [Equality & Inclusion Policy \(E&IP\)](#) was agreed by Full Council in March 2012. It defines our corporate equality objectives and helps us to meet our legal duties under the Equality Act 2010. A summary of the Public Sector Equality Duties is provided as a background document. The Policy has five overarching areas of focus. Under each one are objectives which meet our legal duties.
- 1.3 Alongside the Policy is an Action Plan (Appendix A) that lists the priority equality activities across the council which will enable us to meet our equality objectives. This was developed in consultation with stakeholders (including council staff and the Community and Voluntary Sector).
- 1.4 We committed to reporting on our progress against the Action Plan. Thus far two events have taken place (Nov 2012 and May 2013) involving council staff and representatives from the Community and Voluntary Sector Forum (CVSF). These events are an opportunity to identify changes in the city and the council which may require a change in actions or approach and offers a chance for us to explain our approach and learn how it is working for residents, partners, Community and Voluntary Sector (CVS) groups and others in the city.
- 1.5 As part of the monitoring process reports are made annually to OSC and reviews are held with communities and the CVS. The Action Plan update covers the period April 2012-April 2013.
- 1.6 At the end of this first year we are planning to review the action plan to update actions which are now due to be completed, revising actions in light of changed circumstances (where appropriate) and ensuring that actions reflect activity across the council.

1.7 The council's Equality Impact Assessment process has also been revised and improved and the council has re-stated its commitment to using EIAs to meet our legal duties within the Equality Act 2010.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

2.1 To note progress and good practice within the equality action plan.

2.2 To note areas of challenge and work in progress to address these.

2.3 To note our new Equality Impact Assessment process and the council's commitment to this as the process for meeting our equality duties.

2.4 To note the review process for the action plan.

3. ACTION PLAN PROGRESS

3.1 Below are the main achievements that have had a significant impact on specific groups or are examples of best practice. They are listed by main theme.

3.2 Promoting equality and inclusion through better engagement between the council and communities, groups and individuals

3.2.1 **Community Development Commissioning (CDC):** Using newly released census data neighbourhood population profiles are being built into the Brighton & Hove Local Information Service (BHLIS). This information will inform the further development of neighbourhood-based equalities groups, supported by the CDC providers. Working in partnership with city-wide organisations and services that support equalities, such as Amaze, specific groups are being created and developed to respond to the needs of specific groups protected in law (eg: the Hangleton & Knoll LGBT group). To help identify key issues and remove barriers to participation we have also developed a simple Equality Impact Assessment template for CDC Providers to use for events, community activities and meetings. The Fed Centre for Independent Living has been commissioned to deliver 6 separate training modules on inclusion (focusing on physical access). Sessions are confirmed for the Neighbourhood Governance pilot areas: Whitehawk, Hollingdean and Coldean. Three training programmes on leadership are being run for BME residents. These free 12 session courses will cover self-esteem, personal confidence, teamwork, communication skills and community leadership.

3.2.2 **Children & Families:** Amaze is contracted to work on behalf of the Local Authority to increase the numbers of families (including BME families) who are registered on the Compass: the city register for disabled children. The Compass provides the council with valuable data and offers families significant benefits in terms of access to community activities. To increase and support engagement with their communities, Children's Centres employ parental involvement workers and activities are run for specific target groups, for example families with English as an Additional Language, Gypsies and Travellers, and families with disabled children. Recognising the barriers that fathers and male carers can experience,

work has been targeted to engage with them to support their caring role and strengthens family relationships.

3.3 Promoting equality and inclusion through more effective joint work with statutory organisations and other partners

3.3.1 The Housing Inclusion Team: the council has developed a Financial Inclusion Strategy, addressing residents' problems with access to banking, affordable credit and saving. The Housing Inclusion Team has been operational since October 2012 & has received 140 referrals from council tenants for support in relation to financial inclusion issues and 68 for learning and participation. A skills audit has been undertaken in the Housing Management staff team and financial inclusion training, loan shark advocacy training and a 'money mentors' programme are planned for this year. Fuel Poverty Training sessions have already been held for 37 staff and 7 residents in January and March 2013.

3.3.2 Community Safety: The Bereavement and Cemeteries Working Group is a statutory-community partnership of council officers and 20 representatives from mainly Muslim organisations. It meets regularly and visited the Woodingdean Lawn Memorial Cemetery and its washing facilities. The council Cemeteries Team used findings from 54 other local authorities' work with diverse faith groups to develop best practice for the city. Muslim burial rites are now included in the cemeteries' guidelines and services. The group plans to formalise how it works with the council and communities, including clear communication of services and how they meet residents' diverse needs.

3.4 Promoting equality and inclusion through fair and accessible services

3.4.1 VisitBrighton: We continue to ensure that the city is seen as a destination for people from diverse groups, and that information and local facilities are appropriate to people's needs. We have hosted four press trips for UK and international journalists from LGBT publications; media writing for publications tailored towards older / retired visitors (eg 'The Lady'); and a disability access audit with a representative from UNITE. Recognising the specific physical challenges in relation to disabled visitors we have carried out familiarisation trips to hotels focussing on accessibility to increase staff knowledge, updated our product data with current access information and offer VisitBrighton Greets for visitors who use a wheelchair. We are also a participating destination in a national "Accessible Itineraries" tourism campaign led by VisitEngland. This scheme identifies tourism businesses in our area that provide particularly excellent levels of service to visitors with access needs and also encourages and supports businesses to increase accessibility in relation to customer service and visitor information.

3.4.2 Library Service: Volunteers continue to be recruited to extend computer support sessions which now run at 9 libraries across the city. All front line staff continue to support people using the internet, with, in addition, the development of digital inclusion specialism officers to champion the use of the 'Council Connect' service (enabling people to pay bills, register to vote and use other council services online, with support). Group ICT courses are also being delivered in addition to one to one help. This is all feeding into the development and delivery of the Universal Digital Nation Library Offer. All computers available for public use in all libraries have special software for dyslexic and visually impaired people. Also, each library has at least one computer with: software that enables printed

material to be scanned and read out, an adjustable height table for ease of use with wheelchairs, special keyboards and mice to assist with various mobility and sensory problems.

3.4.3 Trading Standards Team: The Consumer Challenge Quiz raises awareness of consumer issues in an exciting and fun way for students with special educational needs. A school from Brighton won the regional final and will progress to the national final, held in Brighton this summer. A Safety in Action week for 2013 is currently being planned for June 2013 and all but two spaces have already been taken. We are exploring work with a range of groups in the city to identify which communities would most benefit from targeted safety information and plan to develop new partnerships to deliver community talks and respond to highlighted needs.

3.5 Promoting equality and inclusion through improving the quality and breadth of information held and used by the council

3.5.1 Equalities Monitoring: The Census 2011 data is now becoming available and we are using this to produce reports on the areas covered by the questions. We have already revised our equality monitoring form ethnicity categories to reflect what the census has told us about people in the city. Information at ward level and information looking at two or more characteristics (eg: age and gender) will be available later in the year. We will use all this information to update the equality monitoring form and guidance.

3.5.2 The Social Work Advice Contact and Assessment Service (ACAS) has developed a new way of monitoring service users in relation to their protected characteristics. Comparing this data to the population of the city enables us to identify where people are not accessing the services or are not benefitting from it as much as they could. The work has been shared with the whole ACAS team as part of our EIA Action Plan. We are currently developing the Children's Centre IT system. This will also allow better analysis of service user data, enabling us to target our resources, advertising and service more effectively.

3.6 Promoting equality and inclusion through our employment and procurement practices

3.6.1 Human Resources: All job applicants must now complete all sections of the recruitment monitoring form, significantly improving the quality of our data. To improve data on our existing workforce we asked all staff in December 2012 to check and update their equality information. This resulted in a slight increase in completed profiles. In April 2013, we launched an online 'How To' guide to help employees update their personal/equalities information on PIER. We have reviewed our monitoring categories in light of the 2011 Census data and are currently updating our recruitment monitoring form. We have also extended disability monitoring to include summary details of impairment(s). Individuals can choose not to disclose this. After these changes we will ask existing staff again to review their equality information against the new categories. We are also reviewing our equalities workforce targets in the light of the 2011 Census data.

3.6.2 Human Resources: Key activity in relation to the Global HPO report: 'Race Equality in Employment at Brighton & Hove City Council' is the completion of an action plan to address the consultants' recommendations. This plan is going to the Policy & Resources Committee for endorsement on 11th July. The report identifies issues in relation to race equality and wider equality issues. There has

been a good amount of progress so far. Our values are now enshrined in the constitution, in all codes of conduct and in the PDP process. We also have a new set of behaviours. This work is linked to the review of the corporate Equality Steering Group, establishment of Directorate equality groups and the Workforce Equality Group.

- 3.6.3 **Property & Design:** Recent projects include the installation of a new accessible lift at Brighton Town Hall. The lift car exceeds the minimum dimensions for wheelchair users. Call and control panel buttons are accessible to wheelchair users, and have tactile markings / voice announcer to assist people with visual impairments. Unusually this lift has a separate power supply and fire protected refuge areas with direct access to the lift on each floor. This means disabled people unable to use stairs or self-transfer into an Evac chair can be safely evacuated.

4. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENTS (EIAs)

- 4.1 Whilst the EIA process is no longer defined or mandated in law there is still an explicit legal requirement for public bodies to 'evidence due regard' to the potential impacts on all 'protected characteristic' groups (Appendix B has more information on 'due regard' and 'protected characteristics').
- 4.2 The council has given a commitment to meet this duty by continuing to apply its well-established EIA process to all new policies/services and when they are changed or reviewed. Our EIA process (copy available in the Members' Room) has been updated in line with the Equality Act 2010 and improved in response to recommendations from the Global HPO 'Race Equality in Employment at Brighton & Hove City Council' report. Training is being delivered based on the new EIA templates.
- 4.3 Our EIA timetable for all Directorates is continually updated by equality representatives in all areas. This timetable is a record of all the EIAs planned, whether on new services/policies or reviews of existing ones. Indicators relating to the timetable are now included in the council's performance management processes, including quarterly reporting and monitoring to the Executive Leadership Team (ELT).
- 4.4 During the budget-setting process for 2013-14 EIAs were carried out on all proposed changes with a potential impact on service-users and an assessment made of cumulative impact (across changes). This enabled the council to demonstrate its compliance with the law in giving 'due regard' to the needs of groups protected by the Equality Act 2010 during our decision-making processes. Other authorities have been subject to legal challenge where they have not been able to evidence this.
- 4.5 The EIAs were made available with the overall budget information to Community and Voluntary Sector (CVS) groups in the city, as part of the consultation process. A number of groups provided views which were considered by officers and members during the budget setting process.

5. INTERNAL COUNCIL EQUALITY STRUCTURES AND ROLES

- 5.1 After the corporate restructure we have reviewed the Equality Steering Group (ESG) and Workforce Equality Group (WEG) to clarify their different and complementary roles. The ESG has a primary focus on equality in service provision, and the WEG focuses primarily on equality issues relating to the workforce. New Terms of Reference and membership have been agreed for both groups.
- 5.2 Directorate Equality Groups have been re-established. These are to create and support positive commitment and energy for equality work across the directorates and to ensure compliance with legal duties. The groups will meet regularly and be a conduit for information to and from the ESG and WEG. Members of the Communities and Equality team take a lead for each Directorate and provide business partnering support for their equalities work (ie: Equality Impact Assessments, equality monitoring and issues relating to staff and services).
- 5.3 The Terms of Reference for the Workers Fora (for BME, Disabled, LGBT and women staff) have all been reviewed and updated versions have been agreed by the Fora and ELT. All Fora are holding elections to their steering groups. They are expected to produce a joint business plan which includes individualised elements as necessary. They have also started to produce a joint learning and development programme, to be implemented after the election processes are complete. Forums continue to receive support from the Communities and Equality Team.
- 5.4 The Executive Director Finance and Resources - Catherine Vaughan - is the Equality Champion on behalf of the Executive Leadership Team this includes the Trans Champion role recommended by the Trans Equality Scrutiny. The Communities and Equality Team is within the Assistant Chief Executive's directorate.

6. CITY INCLUSION PARTNERSHIP

The City Inclusion Partnership exists to lead, develop and support equalities approaches in strategic planning and implementation across the city, in order to improve local service delivery, support partnership working and reduce inequalities in Brighton & Hove. Members represent all the statutory bodies covered by the Public Sector Equality Duties in the Equality Act 2010. The Partnership has defined work areas for 2013: Human Resources, work relating to the Trans community, and exploring the potential for links with other partnerships in the city-wide 'family of partnerships'.

7. FINANCIAL & OTHER IMPLICATIONS:

Financial Implications:

- 7.1 There are no financial implications arising from the recommendations to this report. The actions carried out to date and those proposed can be funded through identified budgets.
Financer Officer consulted: Anne Silley Date 26/06/13

Legal Implications:

- 7.2 The Council's Equality and Inclusion Policy and Action Plan assist the Council to meet its statutory responsibilities under the Equalities Act 2010.
Lawyer consulted: Elizabeth Culbert Date 30 June 2013

Equalities Implications:

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

Sustainability Implications:

- 7.4 The strategic objectives of the policy and action plan will contribute to the One Planet Living principles of Culture and Community and Equity and Economy as defined in the Brighton & Hove Sustainability Action Plan.

Crime & Disorder Implications:

- 7.5 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 reflected in the action plan

Risk and Opportunity Management Implications:

- 7.6 The implications for risk and opportunities are directly addressed by the actions contained within the action plan.

Corporate / Citywide Implications:

- 7.7 The actions contained within the report have been developed with input from all council teams. To this end the policy and action plan have impacts on communities across the city.

