

Wiltshire County Council

DRAFT CORPORATE EQUALITY PLAN

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Introduction

Wiltshire County Council is committed to promoting equality of opportunity in the provision of services and in the employment of staff and to celebrating the diversity of people who live and work in Wiltshire. This commitment is stated in the Comprehensive Equality Policy which was published in 2004 (*appendix 1*)

In order to turn the commitment into a practical reality, this interim Corporate Equality Plan has been developed for consultation. Once it has been agreed, implementation will take place during 2005/06. The plan will be reviewed and revised as necessary in subsequent years. The County Council's Race Equality Scheme published in May 2002 (*appendix 2*) will continue to exist alongside the new Plan for the time being but the ultimate aim is for the two plans to be integrated into one.

The County Council sees the development of equality and diversity policies and plans as having a high priority from both a legal and moral point of view; celebrating diversity and promoting equal opportunities are aims in their own right. However, they are also seen as fundamental aspects of a wider corporate change programme which is currently underway. The purpose of this programme is to modernise and improve the accessibility and acceptability of services provided to the public and to value the contribution of the staff who deliver them. Equality and diversity are at the heart of these changes.

The policy and draft plan are also consistent with the wider Local Government Equality Standard Framework to which the County Council is committed. The aim here is to achieve Level 2 by 31 March 2005 with progress being made year on year through the levels to the ultimate achievement of level 5.

To achieve level 2 of the Standard the County Council will need to demonstrate:

- That it has engaged in an impact and needs/requirements assessment
- That it has engaged in consultation with designated community, staff and stakeholder groups
- That it has engaged in an equality action planning process for employment, pay and service delivery
- That it is developing a system of self-assessment, scrutiny and audit.

These general activities and developments translate into action in the four substantive areas of the Standard:

- Leadership and corporate commitment
- Consultation and community development and scrutiny
- Service delivery and customer care
- Employment and training

The four substantive areas form the core structure of the plan and will also provide an ongoing agenda over the next few years.

1. Leadership and management arrangements

Summary:

Equality and diversity are central to the County Council's strategic goals and leadership in this area sits with the elected Members of the Council and Chief Executive. Specifically, a Cabinet member acts as equality and diversity 'champion' on behalf of elected members, and a Chief Officer, accountable for overall delivery, leads on behalf of the Corporate Management Board. The lead Chief Officer is assisted operationally by a Principal Officer - Equality and Diversity.

In addition to the lead Chief Officer who has responsibility for the whole plan (this role is currently being undertaken by the Director of Adult and Community Services) other Chief Officers will also have responsibility for specific aspects which fall within their sphere of accountability. An operational lead for each objective has also been identified.

Oversight and monitoring is undertaken by the Equality and Diversity Steering Group.

Specific objectives:

1.1 Achieve level 2 of Equalities Standard

Outcome/Indicator: Cabinet will have recorded achievement of level 2.

Responsible Chief Officer: Chief Executive and lead Chief Officer

Operational lead: Principal Officer – Equality and Diversity

Time scale: By 31 March 2005

1.2 Publish interim Corporate Equality Plan, which includes but separately identifies the Race Equality Scheme for consultation.

Outcome/Indicator: Interim plan is published

Responsible Chief Officer: lead Chief Officer

Operational lead: Principal Officer – Equality and Diversity

Time Scale: By 31 March 2005

1.3 Publish final Corporate Equality Plan, which includes but separately identifies the Race Equality Scheme

Outcome/Indicator: Draft is published on WCC web-site, and in County Council publications

Responsible Chief Officer: lead Chief Officer

Operational lead: Principal Officer – Equality and Diversity

Time scale: By 31 May 2005

1.4 Fully incorporate the Race Equality Plan into the Corporate Equality Plan

Outcome/Indicator: Version 2 of the CEP incorporates the principles and objectives currently laid out in the Race Equality Plan

Responsible Chief Officer: lead Chief Officer

Operational lead: Principal Officer – Equality and Diversity

Time scale: By March 2006

1.5 Establish Steering Group terms of reference which (a) embrace all groups covered by Comprehensive Equality Policy and (b) identifies a membership which includes senior officers from each functional and service department who have authority and accountability to the lead Chief Officer for the delivery of the equality and diversity agenda in their departments

Outcome/Indicator: Terms of Reference and Membership will have been reviewed, amended if necessary and published.

Responsible Chief Officer: Lead Chief Officer

Operational lead: Principal Officer – Equality and Diversity

Time scale: By 31 May 2005

1.6 Establish the Steering Group as the recognised body for recommending to Cabinet the strategic direction, for monitoring corporate and departmental equality plans, and for establishing and developing monitoring and information systems

Outcome/Indicator: The Steering Group will be reporting regularly to the Corporate Management Board on Equality and Diversity and the Corporate Management Board will be reporting, in turn, to the Cabinet of Members.

Responsible Chief Officer: Lead Chief Officer

Operational lead:

Time Scale: By 31 August 2005

1.7 The lead Chief Officer for Equality and Diversity will be a Director of the County Council (currently it is the Director of Children and Adult Services) who will be assisted in the day to day work by the Principal Officer – Equality and Diversity. The lead Chief Officer will have accountability for the equality and diversity project which is a cross-cutting theme across all departments and areas of the Council's work.

Outcome/Indicator: (a) Lead Chief Officer clearly identified and (b) Principal Officer – Equality and Diversity appointed

Responsible Chief Officer: Chief Executive for (a) and Lead Chief Officer for (b)

Operational lead:

Time scale: By 31 March 2005 for (a) and 31 May 2005 for (b)

1.8 The lead Chief Officer will ensure that the Equality Diversity Policy and Plan is built into all service and organisational development initiatives, (for example 'Valuing People', 'Transforming the Customer Experience', 'Business Process Re-engineering') and brought to the attention of stakeholders and partner organisations (for example the Wiltshire Strategic Board, LPSA) for their consideration.

Outcome/Indicator: Equality and diversity will be a regular agenda item on the relevant Boards and Working Groups

Responsible Chief Officer: Lead Chief Officer/Director of Corporate Services

Operational lead:

Time scale: By 31 August 2005

1.9 Equality and Diversity objectives will be examined within the appraisal process of all managers (in particular within the 'How well am I managing?' self-evaluation tool).

Outcome/Indicator: Managers can demonstrate and are accountable for managing people in a fair and equitable way and with respect for diversity

Responsible Chief Officer: Human Resources Director

Operational Lead: Corporate Learning and Development Officer

Time Scale: Annual and on-going

1.10 Resources for developing and delivering the County Council's work on equality and diversity will be clearly identified

[NB Detail could form an Appendix 3 but funding to be specified against the following headings:

Principal Officer – Equality and Diversity (0.5 WTE)

Training

Disabled Access to Premises

Communications

Consultation

Accessible transport

Disabled Staff Forum

Black and Ethnic Minority Staff Forum

Funding made available to other organisations (eg WREC)

Specialist Education Services (eg gypsies and travellers)]

Outcome/Indicator:

Responsible Chief Officer:

Operational Lead:

Time Scale:

2. Consultation and community development and scrutiny

Summary:

It is intended that as wide a constituency as possible will be engaged in the development of the Corporate Equality Plan and equality policy in general. This includes staff, community groups, partner organisations from all sectors and individuals. The preferred method of consultation is through existing processes rather than 'bespoke' consultation exercises so that dialogue on these issues becomes part of everyday life.

Specific objectives:

2.1 The County Council will promote the existence of the Disabled Staff Forum and the Black and Ethnic Minorities staff Forum. It will support their development and help them to be effective advisers on policy and practice on an ongoing basis as well on the CEP specifically. Representatives of the two Forums will be full members of the Steering Group.

Outcome/Indicator: Both Forums will be meeting/networking, receiving administrative support and facilitation from Officers where required and influencing the development of policy.

Responsible Chief Officer: Lead Chief Officer

Operational lead: Principal Officer – Equality and Diversity

Time scale: Consultation on the Plan by 31 May 2005

2.2 Trade Unions will be similarly engaged and Equality and Diversity will be a regular agenda item on meetings of the Joint Consultative Committee. They will be consulted on this Plan and subsequent Plans.

Outcome/Indicator: Agendas/minutes will record Trade Union involvement

Responsible Chief Officer: Human Resources Director

Operational Lead:

Time Scale: Consultation on the Plan by 31 May 2005

2.3 Views and comments of voluntary organisations and other partner organisations will be consulted on this Plan and on subsequent plans. These organisations include XXXX

[NB Further detail/amendments on this awaited from Niki Lewis]

Outcome/Indicator:

Responsible Chief Officer: lead Chief Officer

Operational Lead: Head of Development Services

Time Scale: Consultation on the Plan by 31 May 2005

2.4 Departmental Heads and other managers will be engaged through the process of working to develop equality and diversity plans, in particular Equality Impact Assessment plans. This will be through the Service Planning Framework (see Section 3).

Outcome/Indicator: Each department will have an equality plan appropriate to its service.

Responsible Chief Officer: Lead Chief Officer working with other Chief Officers

Operational lead: Principal Officer – Equality and Diversity working with departmental heads/service planning leads.

Time Scale: Service Plans for 2005/06 to be finalised by 30 April 2005

3. Service Delivery and customer care

Summary:

The way to ensure that service provision is free from unlawful discrimination and, in practical terms, meets the widely differing needs of a widely diverse community, is to consciously think about who the 'customers and clients' are, what their needs might be, ask them if in doubt, and then take appropriate action. The key is the undertaking of 'Equality Impact Assessments' (EIAs). Priorities for undertaking EIAs will be established through the service planning process.

Specific Objectives:

3.1 Functional and service department managers will be required to plan a programme of equality impact assessments for all key policies and services to ensure that they are serving the needs of all groups appropriately. EIAs will be monitored by the Steering Group (see section 1) and guidance and training will be given (see section 5)

Outcome/Indicator: Timetable established by each major service area to complete EIAs as part of Service Plans for consideration by Equality and Diversity Steering Group.

Responsible Chief Officer: Lead Chief Officer

Operational Lead: Principal Officer – Equality and Diversity working with service planning leads.

Time Scale: 30 April 2005

3.2 Staff who are 'the first point of contact' for customers, clients and other members of the public will ensure that no individuals or groups are hindered by virtue of their ethnicity, disability, race, religious belief, gender, age, culture, sexual orientation in accessing services to which they are entitled

Outcome/Indicator: Staff who are 'the first point of contact' will demonstrate respect for diversity and the equal treatment of all individuals and groups. Fewer complaints will be made in respect of inappropriate treatment of customers, clients and members of the public by council staff (for training see section 5).

Responsible Chief Officer: All Chief Officers in respect of the services for which they are accountable.

Operational Lead: Principal Officer – equality and diversity

Time Scale: Ongoing

3.3 Complaints procedures will record racist incidents and action taken and monitor profile of complainants (ethnicity, disability, race etc)

Outcome/Indicator: Reports made to Equality and Diversity Steering Group

Responsible Chief Officer: Lead Chief Officer/Director of Corporate Services

Operational Lead: Corporate Standards Manager

Time Scale: Ongoing

3.4 A set of guidelines will be produced, for use by service communications officers and others producing communications materials, containing best practice guidance on communicating with people who have specific communications needs either because of disability or language.

Outcome/Indicator: Guidelines produced

Responsible Chief Officer: Director of Corporate Services

Operational Lead: Media Relations Manager

Time Scale:

3.5 Buildings Access

[NB This section awaited from Sarah Welch]

3.5 Services to gypsies and travellers...

[NB Conversation to be had with Mike Swaby]

3.6 External contracting...

[NB Conversation to be had with Mike Swaby]

4. Employment

Summary:

Pay arrangements, certain personnel policies, recruitment and information systems are all under review to ensure that they are not discriminatory and that they meet the diverse needs of staff and potential staff. Under a forthcoming reorganisation all employment matters (personnel and training/development) will be the responsibility of a new post of Human Resources Director. Pay structure review will be a separate project.

4.1 Job application forms and vacancy web site will be reviewed to ensure that, in addition to avoiding unlawful discrimination they embrace diversity and positively welcome applications from all groups

Outcome/Indicator: Documentation and web site amended

Responsible Chief Officer: Human Resources Director

Operational Lead:

Time Scale: December 2005

4.2 Advice will be sought from the Disabled Staff Forum and Black and Ethnic Minorities Staff Forum on how to encourage more applications from these groups with a view to increasing their numbers and thus more accurately reflecting the population at large.

Outcome/Indicator: Advice will be built into recruitment strategy

Responsible Chief Officer: Human Resources Director

Operational Lead:

Time Scale: 31 March 2005

4.3 Review of recruitment policy and practice will be undertaken, through Equality Impact Assessment to establish their impact on minority and marginalised groups.

Outcome/Indicator: Review undertaken and any required action planned.

Responsible Chief Officer: Human Resources Director

Operational lead:

Time Scale: September 2005

4.4 Survey of all staff will be undertaken to update, complete and render more accurate personnel information held in respect of ethnicity and disability.

Outcome/Indicator: Survey issued, results inputted onto personnel information system

Responsible Chief Officer: Human Resources Director

Operational lead: Principal Personnel Officer

Time Scale: 31 March 2005

4.5 A system for giving feedback to departments on the equal opportunity and diversity monitoring information which is collected and analysed will be developed in order to help departments to take targeted and meaningful action.

Outcome/Indicator: A system is in place and being used

Responsible Chief Officer: Human Resources Director

Operational lead:

Time Scale: 31 December 2005

4.6 A system of recording information on staff training will be reviewed to enable monitoring to take place.

Outcome/Indicator: 1) Regularity and quality of data collection and reporting will be improved 2) new electronic recording and reporting system will be in place 3) regular and timely information on staff training and promotions will be made available to all departments in order to address identified areas of poor access.

Responsible Chief Officer: Human Resources Director

Operational lead: Corporate Learning Development Officer

Time Scale: 1) by August 2005, 2) by April 2006 and 3) from April 2006

4.7 A system of recording information on internal promotion will be reviewed to enable monitoring to take place.

Outcome/indicator: A system is in place and being used

Responsible Chief Officer: Human Resources Director

Operational Lead:

Time Scale: 30 September 2005

4.8 Pay and grading arrangements will be reviewed and where necessary revised in order to ensure that any potential for unlawful discrimination is eradicated.

Outcome/Indicator: New pay and grading arrangements in place

Responsible Chief Officer: Director of Corporate Services

Operational lead: Chief Personnel Officer

Time Scale: By 31 March 2007

4.9 Personnel policies (for example on flexible working, carers' leave) will be reviewed to ensure they support the opportunity for all staff to progress appropriately in their careers.

Outcome/Indicator: Information collected on distribution of minority and marginalised groups through the pay bands analysed and relevant policies assessed.

Responsible Chief Officer: Human Resources Director

Operational Lead:

Time Scale: December 2005

5. Training and Development

Training in equality and diversity will be both integrated (as part of other programmes such as 'induction' and specific (in particular topics such as 'recruitment' or for particular groups such as County Council members).

5.1 All County Council members will be trained in equality and diversity to ensure their awareness and understanding of the issues (including the legislative framework) and to demonstrate to all staff the importance the County Council places on its stated policy in this area.

Outcome/Indicator: 1) All new Members will have attended equality and diversity sessions within the Induction Programme for New Members, 2) all existing (re-elected) Members will have attended equality and diversity sessions within the first half year of their current term of office and 3) members will demonstrate knowledge of the law and the implications of equality and diversity in their community leadership role and in their work as portfolio holders or on overview and scrutiny committees.

Responsible Chief Officer: Human Resources Director/Head of Democratic and Member Services

Operational lead: Corporate Learning and Development Officer

Time Scale: 1) May/June 2005, 2) December 2005 and 3) ongoing

5.2 Key managers in all support and service departments will receive training in undertaking Equality Impact Assessments, be given advice, guidance and information to supplement the training and assistance in forming a 'learning network' for mutual support and ongoing development

Outcome/Indicator: 1) All identified EIAs will be carried out successfully and 2) good practice/learning experiences will be shared with other managers involved in carrying out EIAs and with those planning EIAs

Responsible Chief Officer: Lead Chief Officer

Operational lead: Corporate Learning and Development Officer

Time Scale: 1) from April 2005 and 2) from July 2005

5.3 'Front-line' staff will be required to receive equality and diversity training as part of customer relations training

Outcome/Indicator: 1) training undertaken and 2) fewer complaints (see 3.2)

Responsible Chief Officer: Human Resources Director

Operational lead: Corporate Learning and Development Officer

Time Scale: 1) December 2005 and 2) ongoing

5.4 Equality and Diversity to be included in corporate induction programmes

Outcome/Indicator: 1) All new staff will be aware of what is meant by 'equality and diversity' and 2) all new staff will be clear about WCC policies and expectations which support equality and diversity in the workplace and in service deliver

Responsible Chief Officer: Human Resources Director

Operational lead: Corporate Learning and Development Officer

Time Scale: From June 2005

5.5 Equality and Diversity to be included in appraisal training and recruitment and selection training.

Outcome/Indicator: All staff carrying out appraisals or involved in the recruitment of new staff will be able to demonstrate awareness of equality and diversity issues and be confident in carrying out these duties in a fair and equitable way.

Responsible Chief Officer: Human Resources Director

Operational lead: Corporate Learning and Development Officer

Time Scale: Ongoing

5.6 Equality and Diversity training for managers will be included as a core (mandatory) module of the new Manager Learning and Development Programme

Outcome/Indicator: 1) All managers will be equipped to manage their staff fairly and with respect for diversity 2) all managers will be aware of equality and diversity implications in the planning and organisation of delivering their service.

Responsible Chief Officer: Director of Corporate Services

Operational lead: Corporate Learning and Development Officer

Time scale: June 2005
