

# Report

**Subject** : Equalities Action Plan Incorporating the Council's Race Equality Action Plan

**Report to** : The Cabinet

**Date** : 07 June 2006

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**Cabinet Member for Community and Housing:** Councillor Cole-Morgan

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**1. Matters for Consideration:**

The Cabinet is requested to approve a revised Equalities Action Plan (appendix 1) following completion of Equality Impact Screening Assessments for all council services.

**2. Introduction and Background:**

At its meeting on 7<sup>th</sup> September 2005 the Cabinet approved its draft comprehensive equalities policy incorporating an updated Race Equality Scheme. The Cabinet adopted the policy on the 1<sup>st</sup> February 2006 following a period of consultation with interested groups and organisations. The policy included a series of proposed actions which are included in the modified action plan.

As part of the policy it was agreed to undertake initial screening equality impact assessments in all service areas of the Council. This has now been completed. It is clear that the council's services have an overwhelmingly positive impact for equalities groups with many of our services targeted to support those people in need. However, the assessments identified three key issues that the council should be aware of in preparing its detailed action plan. These are:

- Potential exclusion of residents without access to the Internet
- Access to services for rural residents
- Language and communication barriers

Additionally the council has been working with South Wiltshire Strategic Alliance Diversity Sub-Group on a joint approach to removing barriers for Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) citizens within the district. A recently published report "Safe and Sound in South Wiltshire" identifies a series of issues which reinforce the impact assessments carried out by service units. The recommendations contained within the report are due to be considered by the South Wiltshire Strategic Alliance on 24<sup>th</sup> May 2006.



Awarded in:  
Housing Services  
Waste and Recycling Services



The original action plan has now been revised and updated to reflect the major corporate findings arising from the equalities impact assessments and the recommendations arising from the "Safe and Sound in South Wiltshire" report.

As part of the Local Government Equalities Standard, the council is required to consider setting equality targets for service delivery. There are already Best Value Performance Indicators covering our corporate approach, employment, housing, benefits and public satisfaction. The council has recently additionally developed a local Performance Indicator relating to access to rural services. Given the scale and impact of district council services it is not intended to add any further targets, unless evidence of a need for them emerges as a result of consultation. Progress on equalities targets will be reported as part of the council's quarterly performance monitoring report.

### **3. Consultation:**

Improving our understanding of diversity and equality is an ongoing process which will develop through the engagement of representatives from diverse communities. It is therefore recommended to circulate to appropriate groups and organisations a summary of our equality impact assessments and detailed action plans relevant to their area of interest for their feedback and comments. These comments can then be considered as part of an annual review of the policy and action plan in February 2007.

### **4. Recommendations:**

The Cabinet is requested to:

- (a) Note the summary findings of the equality impact assessments and the findings from the "Safe and Sound in South Wiltshire" report.
- (b) Approve the revised action plan outlined in Appendix 1.
- (c) Authorise officers to consult with appropriate organisations and groups on their specific issues and action plans
- (d) Authorise officers to make amendments to the policy and action plan in consultation with the leader and community and housing portfolio holder to take account of comments received.
- (e) Thank officers for completing the assessments in accordance with the agreed timescales

### **5. Background Papers:**

Comprehensive Equalities Policy - September 2005  
Equality Impact Assessments – April 2006  
"Safe and Sound in South Wiltshire" report of the SWSA Diversity Sub Group

### **6. Implications:**

- **Financial:** It is considered that all the actions can be contained within existing budgets.
- **Legal:** Action plan is in line with latest legal requirements and prepares the council for publication of a Disability Equalities Policy.
- **Human Rights:** Conforms to Human Rights Legislation.
- **Personnel:** None.
- **Community Safety:** Included within policy.
- **Environmental:** None.
- **Ward(s) Affected:** All.
- **Consultation Undertaken:** External consultation of policy. Further consultation recommended.

## Appendix 1

Action	Lead	Target Date	Comment
Communicate the Comprehensive Equalities Policy to all staff and build equalities awareness into all related training and on the council's website	DN	Completed and Ongoing	Article in Link Up. Referenced in training material and available online
Aim to be in the top 25% of district councils for both these performance indicators. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Local Government Equalities Standard</li> <li>Race Equality Scheme</li> </ul>	DN	Completed and Ongoing	Currently Level 2 for Standard, and 84% Target Level 3 by 31/03/07 Target 89% by 31/03/07
Set out our progress within the Corporate Plan against this policy, and highlight what major steps we plan to take in the following year	DN	Completed and Ongoing	
Undertake an annual review of our Comprehensive Equalities Policy and Race Equality Scheme	DN	February 2007	
Ensure that equality assessments are incorporated as part of all new policies, strategies, plans, best value reviews, scrutiny reviews and service reviews completed as part of the Business Process Re-engineering project	SUHs	Ongoing	Equality Assessments now incorporated into Best Value Framework, Scrutiny Review Process, and Project Management Frameworks. Also, subject to agreement worked into the draft pro-forma for Scrutiny Panels to consider alongside the quarterly Performance Monitoring reports (this is a working document aimed to assist them in challenging performance).
Consult service units, citizens, democratically elected representatives, users of our services, and equalities organisations on the contents of our equalities action plan, and update our actions as needed in line with expectations.	SM	Dec 2006	Completed consultation on policy. Additional consultation on revised action plans
Monitor and develop services with communities, customers and users of our services, through existing mechanisms, as set out in our consultation strategy and compact agreements, adapting them where necessary and reasonable to get appropriate representation.	SUHs	Ongoing	
Review our managers' equalities skills and training requirements as part of the annual Staff Development Interviews and assess them as well as all staff for equalities as one of the council's key competences	RB	Completed and Ongoing	
Develop equality impact assessments for all new policies, strategies, plans, and significant projects, at the planning stage and publish completed assessments as background papers	SUHs	Ongoing	

Encourage staff to be involved in equality impact assessments for services and setting equality targets relevant to their areas	SUHs	Completed and Ongoing	SUHs were encouraged to involve their senior management teams and other staff in preparing the initial impact assessments
Invite Trade unions to attend the Equalities and Diversity Group	DN	Completed and Ongoing	
Report recruitment, retention, and other HR issues quarterly to the Joint Consultative Forum	AMcC	Completed and Ongoing	Equalities statistics relating to recruitment and retention being reported and discussed
Encourage contractors, suppliers and funded organisations to promote equalities and diversity through procurement strategy and processes	CD	Completed and Ongoing	Revised Procurement Strategy cross references with Comprehensive Equalities Policy
Increase awareness through the roll-out of online equalities training models for all staff and councillors and provide more detailed staff training programmes for those officers who regularly come into direct contact with customers/clients	RB	Completed and Ongoing	All staff were required to complete Online diversity and equalities training modules last summer
Use positive action to put right imbalances in the workforce	AMcC	Ongoing	Work required to define imbalances. HR Information Co-ordinator to provide reports on equality data by Unit which will further identify areas requiring attention.
Ensure all our publications (including the Citizen, Tourism Guide, our website and promotional leaflets) promote images that reflect the district we serve	GG	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All printed material carries the current disability and discrimination statement which is: "This information can be made available in other formats." If requests are made, they will be dealt with by the Communications team.</li> <li>• The Communications Officer checks that photography used within all material, where relevant, is 'inclusive' – i.e. portrays south Wiltshire's population. This is part of the approval checklist for publications and printed material.</li> <li>• When helping with photography and design, Communications Officer can advise on choice of images, to reflect diversity of the population.</li> <li>• Citizen articles cover broad range of topics and include various articles on different sections of the population.</li> <li>• When targeting a particular age-group we advise the designer to use images that reflects</li> </ul>

			and attracts this target audience – one example being the artwork and branding for the Youth Strategy and young people's website.
<b>Equalities and diversity in employment</b>			
Improve the employment opportunities available to women	AMcC	Ongoing	Equal Pay Review underway. Career pathways available in some Service Units – application/progress to be monitored. Evaluation of both of these will support further work around maintaining the gender balance of the organisation.
Provide personal development opportunities to equip potential candidates with the skills to apply for those jobs under represented	RB	Ongoing	
Design employment practices to support women and men who have responsibilities for children and dependents whilst ensuring an effective and efficient workforce	AMcC	Completed and Ongoing	Work-life Balance policies now approved. Launched in May 2006 to promote flexible working options available to all employees. Future work aims to monitor it's effectiveness, and equality in application across organisation.
Take reasonable steps to provide and adapt premises, facilities, or equipment wherever possible to meet the needs of people with disabilities	SUHs	As required	
Take positive steps to attract people with disabilities to council jobs	AMcC	Ongoing	Recruitment team will focus on obtaining Disability Two Tick Symbol in 2006. Draft policy on 'Employment of People with Disabilities' has been drawn up and will support both applicants and employees who are disabled. Some networking with pertinent organisations has taken place i.e. Shaw Trust, Action for Blind People. Have also advertised organisation as an employer in Disabled & Supportive Carer Magazine.
Make our application form available in different formats	AMcC		Will be supported by Employment of People with Disabilities policy
Undertake special recruitment campaigns for people with disabilities if required	AMcC	As required	Will be supported by Employment of People with Disabilities policy
Provide assistance to people with disabilities to complete application forms, where requested	AMcC	As required	Will be supported by Employment of People with Disabilities policy
Maintain grievance, disciplinary and other codes of practice to deal effectively with any incident of harassment or discrimination that may occur	AMcC	Complete and Ongoing	Comprehensive processes in place to deal with issues relating to employee conduct. Dignity at Work policy in place as framework to tackle bullying/harassment.

			Further work planned in monitoring the application of these policies across the organisation.
Introduction of 'Bullying & Harassment Advisors' as a support to any staff member that has been bullied or harassed, including racial, sexual harassment etc.	RB/KG	July 2006	Identified group have had first days training, more to follow. Service will be promoted to staff July/August 2006.
Utilise information contained within exit questionnaires to deal effectively with harassment and discrimination at work	AMcC	Complete and Ongoing	Need to continue to encourage still further the use of exit interviews as a means monitoring trends
Brief and train any employee or Councillor involved in any stage of the recruitment process in the provisions of this policy	RB	Complete and Ongoing	
Ensure Equal Opportunities awareness is part of Salisbury District Council's induction training.	RB	June 2006	Training/Recruitment Team evaluated induction process in Feb 2006. Information relating to Equal Opportunities to be expanded upon and built into all new corporate inductions from June 2006
<b>Equalities and diversity in service delivery and customer care</b>			
Budget for the costs of inclusive access to all people from diverse communities, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o accessible formats;</li> <li>o interpretation services;</li> <li>o help for people with communication impairments and learning difficulties;</li> <li>o help for people who require special assistance because of age or mental infirmity.</li> </ul>	HF	Ongoing	
Ensure our website complies with accessibility standards as defined by the World Wide Web Consortium AA standard	TJ	Complete and Ongoing	
With the South Wiltshire Strategic Alliance develop a joint strategic plan to identify social exclusion and poverty in our community and put in place measures to address them	RT	November 2006	Currently developing final draft strategy for formal consultation
Carry out a rolling programme of equality impact screening assessments (incorporating race equality) on all of our services to citizens	SUHs	Complete	All initial service assessments completed by end of March
Carry out equality impact assessments on Cabinet decisions that may impact on the priority concerns of online services, communication and rural services	SUHs	Ongoing	Will identify those Cabinet items that require an assessment within the forward work programme

Work together with our South Wiltshire Strategic Alliance partners to ensure consultation is effective without over-burdening a relatively small number of groups and individuals	SM	May 2006 and ongoing	Currently developing a consultation calendar based on multi agency consultation requirements
Consider how to utilise Peoples Voice and Market Research to be more representative of black and ethnic minority views	SM	June 2006	Launching an online peoples' voice panel in the Summer and it is intended to attempt to include a representative BME subset and weight results to give statistically valid results for South Wiltshire.
Continue to provide some services specifically to disabled people, such as adaptations, activities and classes	SUHs	Ongoing	
Provide flexible services, with extra support and equipment where reasonable, to make sure that disabled adults, young people and children have equal access to services	SUHs	Ongoing	
Improve sites we own and use to meet Disability Discrimination Act 1995 requirements in accordance with the work programme approved by Cabinet	JC	March 2008	Currently implementing a Cabinet approved work programme
Ensure that our new offices and any other new buildings are fully accessible to the current building regulations	JC	March 2008	Recently approved designs for new offices fully meet the requirements
Make reasonable access improvements in any planned refurbishment projects, and make sure that future work does not reverse any previous access improvements	JC	Ongoing	
No longer buy any buildings for general public access which are inaccessible to people with disabilities, unless there is a clear and costed plan to make the site accessible to the correct standard within an acceptable period of time	JC	Ongoing	
Require any third party providing services on behalf or in partnership with the council in non-council premises meet the council's Disability Discrimination Act obligations	SUHs	Ongoing	
Consult people with disabilities and those with young children on improving access and ask for advice on preferred solutions	SM	December 2006	Establish quota sample from mid year census estimates. Undertake SNAP questionnaire and one-to-one interviews as necessary.
Work with local groups to tackle the problem of homophobic motivated hate crimes	RT	Ongoing	
Work with our South Wiltshire Strategic Alliance partners in promoting understanding and tolerance of different religions, encouraging mutual respect and bringing people together	AS	Ongoing	The council to explore ways of demonstrating community leadership
Implement the programme of actions contained within the Council's youth strategy	RT	Ongoing	

<p>With other South Wiltshire Strategic Alliance partners:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ review findings in the Rural Facilities Study to identify villages most deprived of local services</li> <li>○ review range of services provided by mobile services</li> </ul>	DN	December 2006	Consider findings of the Scrutiny Review on access to services
	DN	Complete	A review of the mobile learning units has been completed but was not practicable for extending local services
Consult with parish councils on our assessments relating to rural issues	SM	December 2006	Using Peoples' Voice and Parish consultation to critique draft proposals in the Rural Review in addition to direct consultation with individual parishes
Keep records on the number and type of complaints of harassment within the council (regardless of whether they are upheld or not) and report as part of our quarterly performance monitoring reports	HF	Complete and Ongoing	BVPI 174 & BVPI 175 monitor racial incidents and are reported on within the quarterly Performance Monitoring Reports. Monitor complaints of harassment through the Passport to Improved Services in the future.
Work with South Wiltshire Strategic Alliance partners to produce training and development for front line staff and key players regarding BME issues.	AS	Ongoing	
<p>Work with South Wiltshire Strategic Alliance partners to produce clear and accessible information for BME and Eastern European groups/individuals including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Generic Welcome posters and key contact details for use by all organisations.</li> <li>▪ The CRE booklet – 'Welcome to Britain' as an opportunity to provide information to the BME Community</li> </ul>	AS	December 2006	
Work with South Wiltshire Strategic Alliance partners to develop a diversity checklist to be used by agencies aimed at reducing blocks to access services	AS	December 2006	
Work with South Wiltshire Strategic Alliance partners to update contact list of BME organisations and support groups	AS	December 2006	
Work with South Wiltshire Strategic Alliance partners to promote the BME Survey findings and recommendations	AS	Ongoing	
Work with South Wiltshire Strategic Alliance partners to establish in dialogue with members of the BME community a BME forum/consultation body.	AS	Ongoing	
Work with South Wiltshire Strategic Alliance partners to establish a multi agency working group on the complex needs of gypsies and travellers	AS	March 2007	



Work with South Wiltshire Strategic Alliance partners to consider the implications of the influx of Eastern European workers	DN	April 2007	
Share examples of good practice with South Wiltshire Strategic Alliance partners.	AS	Ongoing	
Work with South Wiltshire Strategic Alliance partners to encourage the dissemination of positive image stories relating to our diverse communities.	AS	Ongoing	
Work with South Wiltshire Strategic Alliance partners to promote and distribute True Vision material.	AS	Complete and Ongoing	
Work with South Wiltshire Strategic Alliance partners to agree on a similar system to report hate crime and incidents ensuring that information is shared where possible.	AS	March 2006	
To utilise the South Wiltshire Strategic Alliance Diversity sub group as a consultative body on new and reviewed policies as and when required	AS	Complete and Ongoing	