

**REPORT FOR: PERFORMANCE &
FINANCE SCRUTINY SUB-
COMMITTEE**

Date of Meeting:	6 January 2015
Subject:	Corporate Equalities Objectives – Annual Progress Report and Review
Responsible Officer:	Alex Dewsnap Divisional Director Strategic Commissioning
Scrutiny Lead Member area:	Performance Lead Member – Councillor Adam Swersky Policy Lead Member – Councillor Stephen Wright
Exempt:	No
Wards affected:	All
Enclosures:	Annual Equalities Progress Report 2013/14 Revised Corporate Equality Objectives 2015-19

Section 1 – Summary and Recommendations

This report provides an update on our progress against the Council's Equality Objectives which were adopted by Cabinet in April 2012.

Recommendations:

Performance and Finance Scrutiny Sub-Committee are asked to:

- Note the progress made against our Corporate Equality Objectives for 2013/14);
- Note the revised performance measures to support the Equality Objectives for 2014/15
- Comment on the suggested amendments to the Corporate Equality objectives for 2015 - 2019

Section 2 – Report

Introduction

1. Harrow is one of the most ethnically and religiously diverse boroughs in London with people of many different backgrounds and life experiences living side by side. It is the richness of this diversity, and the positive impact that it has on the borough and the community, that helps make Harrow such a great place to live, work and visit. The borough's diversity is something to value and encourage and this report highlights the Council's commitment to maintaining and building on our strengths by ensuring equality and diversity is integral to everything we do.
2. Harrow's diverse population generates a range of needs and expectations all of which the Council has to understand in order to provide appropriate services. As resources become scarcer, it is even more important to understand the community, their needs and aspirations and to be able to provide the right services at the right time.

Equality Act 2010 and the Public Sector Equality Duty

3. The Equality Act contains a range of rights, powers and obligations to help the drive towards equality. The Act aims to strengthen and simplify the equality law that was already in place, such as the Race Relations Act and the Disability Discrimination Act.
4. Section 149 of the Act introduced a new Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) which requires public authorities, in the exercise of their functions, to have due regard to the need to:
 - Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act;
 - Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not; and
 - Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

5. The new PSED replaces the previous three Public Sector Equality Duties – for race, disability and gender - and now covers Age, Disability, Gender Reassignment, Pregnancy and Maternity, Race (this includes ethnic or national origins, colour or nationality) Religion or Belief (includes lack of belief), Sex and Sexual Orientation.
6. It also applies to Marriage and Civil Partnership but only in respect of the requirement to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination.
7. The PSED is supported by specific duties which are intended to help public authorities to meet its requirements. Public authorities covered by the specific duties are required to:
 - Publish by the 31st January each year information to demonstrate their compliance with the general equality duty; and
 - Prepare and publish by 6 April 2012, and at least every four years thereafter one or more equality objectives.

Collate and Publish Equalities Information

8. In order to meet the first requirement of the PSED, a number of local authorities have published spreadsheets containing equalities data about their service users and workforce, whilst others have agreed to continue to publish their annual equality in employment report relating to their workforce and Equality Impact Assessments (EqIAs) as required by the previous duties.
9. Although this approach meets the requirements, the Council decided to publish its equalities data in a more constructive way.
10. In order to ensure that the data published is easy to understand and to ensure transparency with regard to progress in addressing inequality and delivering services reflective of the needs of our community, the Council prepared and published equalities information/data in the form of a narrative document 'Our Harrow, Our Story'. This is a narrative of the services and projects delivered by the Council which not only support the Corporate Priorities but address inequality, advances equality of opportunity and fosters good relations. The document includes real life case studies of service users and is supported by a set of Appendices which hold the data.
11. In 2012 the Equality and Human Rights Commission undertook a review of how public services generally complied with the requirement to publish data and singled out Harrow Council as the best practice exemplar for the transparency and ease of access to the data that we provided. This year's compilation is available together with the data it supports at http://www.harrow.gov.uk/info/200041/equality_and_diversity/863/public_sector_equality_duty

Developing and Publishing Equality Objectives

12. In order to meet the second requirement of the PSED, 'Equality Objectives' were developed based on the research and consultation undertaken and the equalities information/data published.
13. The draft Equality Objectives were the subject of public consultation including an online questionnaire for staff and elected members and a separate questionnaire for members of the public, service users, voluntary and community groups, partners and stakeholders and the questionnaire was also sent out to the Residents Panel. As part of the consultation workshops for staff and voluntary and community groups, partners and stakeholders also took place. A cross party briefing was also held for elected members. The consultation produced support for the proposed Objectives which were adopted by Cabinet in April 2012.
14. In light of the change in Administration, the objectives (Appendix 1) have been reviewed to ensure they support they are still relevant to and support the corporate plan.

Measuring our Performance against the Corporate Equality Objectives

15. In line with the existing performance process, directorates produce quarterly progress reports against their directorate scorecards for the Improvement Boards. These form the basis of annual progress reports. This will not only mainstream equalities within existing processes and service plans but also adhere to the COUNT (collate once use numerous times) principle.

Financial Implications

All costs are contained within existing budgets.

Performance Issues

How we perform against the Corporate Equality Objectives is monitored via the Council's existing performance process via Improvement Boards and reported to Cabinet via the Strategic Performance Report.

Environmental Impact

There are no direct environmental impacts of this decision.

Risk Management Implications

There are no direct risk management implications of this decision.

Equalities Implications

The 'Equality Objectives' will address inequality, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations and help the Council to comply with the statutory requirements of the Public Sector Equality Duty introduced by the Equality Act 2010.

Council Priorities

The 'Equality Objectives' support all the Council's Corporate Priorities.

Section 3 - Statutory Officer Clearance

Not required for this report

Ward Councillors notified:	NO
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Section 4 - Contact Details and Background Papers

Contact: Mohammed Ilyas, Policy Officer, Ext.2322

Background Papers:

'Our Harrow, Our Story'

http://www.harrow.gov.uk/info/200041/equality_and_diversity/863/public_sector_equality_duty