

**REPORT FOR: OVERVIEW AND
SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

Date of Meeting: 19th April 2016

Subject: Equalities Vision and Objectives

Responsible Officer: Tom Whiting, Corporate Director
Resources and Commercial

Exempt: No

Wards affected: All

Enclosures: Corporate Equality Objectives Action
Plan

Section 1 – Summary and Recommendations

This report sets out a summary of the recommendations agreed by the Corporate Equalities Group arising from the Equalities review undertaken to develop a 'Vision' for the Council for Equalities and revise the Corporate 'Equality Objectives' which are a requirement of the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) introduced by the Equality Act 2010.

Recommendations:

Members are requested to:

- Comment on the proposed 'Vision' for Equalities;
- Comment on the revised Corporate Equality Objectives and the Action Plan to support these (Appendix 1)

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 our community, that we believe helps make Harrow such a great place to live, work and visit. We know that the borough's diversity is something to value and encourage and this report highlights our commitment to maintaining and building on our strengths by ensuring equality and diversity is integral to everything we do.
2. Our diverse population generates a range of needs and expectations all of which the Council needs 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 get necessary changes in services right first time.

Background

3. The Council has been focusing on equality as a means of service improvement for a long time. We continue to be determined to provide the best possible opportunities for the people of Harrow by: ensuring that our workforce is reflective of the Borough's population; that people using our services feel that they are treated with dignity and respect at all times: working hard with businesses to get investment in jobs and local facilities: tackling unemployment; and ensuring the best possible health and care services for our residents.
4. In the last few years, the council has made great progress with regards to advancing equality of opportunity for both our staff and service users as well as mainstreaming equalities across the organisation. However, with local authorities facing continuing financial pressures, reduction in resources and capacity available and with the recent senior management restructure we are conscious that we need to review the way we work so

we can continue ensuring equalities is central to everything we do. In September 2015, the Corporate Equalities Group (CEG) commissioned a review to further mainstream equalities across the organisation with a view to identifying how we can streamline and improve policies and procedures taking into consideration the reduction in resources and capacity across the organisation, new organisation values and senior management restructure so we are clear what the focus and priorities for equalities should be in the Council and how we will deliver this agenda..

Objectives of the Review:

- to develop a corporate ‘Vision’ for Equality and Diversity to mainstream equalities across the organisation so it becomes ‘everyone’s business’ to make a real difference for all our staff, members and service users.
 - to review the Corporate Equality Objectives and priorities for 2016/17
 - to review the governance to mainstream qualities across the organisation.
5. This paper sets out the key findings from the review that were presented to and agreed by the CEG at their meeting on the 23rd February 2016.

Consultation and Engagement to Develop our Vision and Corporate Equality Objectives / Priorities

6. Two workshops (one for staff and members and one for representatives from the Voluntary and Community Sector) took place in January this year to help shape our ‘Vision’ and review the Corporate Equality Objectives. The workshops were very well attended with forty four people participating in total. A consultation also took place with members of the CEG and Directorate Equality Task groups (DETGs) to review the governance framework for mainstreaming equalities across the Council.
7. Following feedback from the workshops, a number of draft proposals for a ‘vision’ and a set of revised Corporate Equality Objectives were developed and presented to the CEG on the 26th January this year and delegates who attended the workshops were also consulted on these. Following this feedback, the options for the vision were shortlisted to two and the objectives narrowed down to three. The following vision and objectives were agreed by the CEG at their meeting on the 23rd February 2016.

Vision: A proud, fair & cohesive Harrow, a great place to live, work & visit

Corporate Equality Objectives

- An inclusive workforce that feels valued, respected and reflects our community
- An improved understanding of our communities to ensure services are fair, equitable and accessible to all
- Promote and celebrate the diversity of our Borough and foster community cohesion

8. The feedback from the CEG and workshops was that the council should focus on a few priorities and do them well, rather than spreading itself across a broad range of things and risk not progressing any of them, in order to make a real difference for our residents, service users and staff. The priorities to support the objectives have been derived from the challenges still facing us, recommendations from this year's Annual Equalities Progress report as well as feedback from the workshops. The priorities and actions to achieve these, together with the outcomes desired are available in **Appendix 1**.

Roles and Responsibilities

9. With the reduced capacity and stretching demands, it is even more important to ensure equalities is mainstreamed within the organisation and it becomes everyone's business. It is also important to ensure everyone is clear regarding the governance, roles and responsibilities around the equalities agenda. The review looked at the current structure for equalities within the council and the key findings presented to and agreed by the CEG are as follows:
 10. **Policy Team** – The strategic lead for equalities sits within the Policy Team in Strategic Commissioning. The Policy Team will continue to provide strategic leadership on the equalities agenda and support the CEG and Directorate Equality Task Groups (DETGs) to deliver their action plans and mainstream equality and diversity in to everything we do.
 11. **Corporate Equalities Group** – the CEG meets on a bimonthly basis and is the Council's strategic group leading on and agreeing the equalities agenda and monitors equalities outcomes and progress. It is chaired by the Corporate Director of Resources and Commercial and the membership includes the Portfolio Holder for Equalities, chairs of the DETGs, representatives from the unions, Legal, the staff Making a Difference Group (MADG), the policy team and from voluntary and community sector organisations (who either represent specific protected characteristics or a more general oversight of the equalities agenda).
 12. **Directorate Equality Task Groups (DETGs)** – DETGs play a key role in supporting the CEG in implementing the equalities agenda and mainstreaming equalities within their Directorates. DETGs are also instrumental in the implementation of the corporate equality objectives action plan, including proactively monitoring an annual programme of EqlAs for the directorate and ensuring key performance targets such as staff completing equality and diversity training is monitored.
 13. **Staff Making a Difference Group (MADG)** – the staff MADG will continue to play a key role in representing staff at the CEG, engaging with the Council in the development of staff related policies and procedures and proactively promote equality and celebrate diversity.

Performance Issues

14. The 'Vision' and 'Objectives' support the Council's Corporate Priorities and the progress will be measured against existing measures from directorate scorecards. The measures used to monitor our performance

against the Equality Objectives have been identified through the service planning process.

15. In line with the existing performance process, directorates will produce quarterly progress reports against their directorate scorecards for the Improvement Boards. These will then be forwarded to the Policy Officer for Equalities and Diversity to produce annual progress reports for Cabinet, Overview and Scrutiny Committee, the Corporate Equalities Group and the Corporate Strategic Board (CSB).
16. This will not only mainstream equalities within existing processes and service plans but also adhere to the COUNT (collate once use numerous times) framework.
17. Although the objectives being proposed will be reviewed every four years as required by the PSED, the targets and performance measures to achieve these objectives will be reviewed and set on an annual basis through our service planning cycle.

Environmental Impact

18. There are no direct environmental impacts of this decision.

Risk Management Implications

19. There are no direct risk management implications of this decision.

Legal Implications

20. The Public Sector Equality Duty, arising from the Equality Act 2010, requires public bodies to develop and publish a set of Corporate Equality Objectives. The proposed recommendations for Cabinet to agree and adopt these will ensure we are compliant with this requirement.

Financial Implications

21. The 'Equality Objectives' support the Council's Corporate Priorities and the progress will be measured against existing priorities and measures from directorate scorecards. Therefore Directorates are not being asked to undertake any additional work and costs will be contained within existing budgets.

Equalities implications / Public Sector Equality Duty

22. The 'Equality Objectives' will actually 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 (PSED) introduced by the Equality Act 2010.

Council Priorities

23. The proposed 'Vision' and Corporate Equality Objectives support the Council's Corporate Priorities for making a difference for the vulnerable, communities and families.

Section 3 - Contact Details and Background Papers

Contact: Mohammed Ilyas, Policy Officer Equality and Diversity Ext. 2322