

REPORT FOR: **CABINET**

Date of Meeting:	4 April 2012
Subject:	Corporate Equality Objectives and Equality of Opportunity Policy
Key Decision:	Yes
Responsible Officer:	Paul Najsarek, Corporate Director Community, Health and Wellbeing Tom Whiting, Assistant Chief Executive
Portfolio Holder:	Councillor Graham Henson, Portfolio Holder for Performance, Customer Services and Corporate Services
Exempt:	No
Decision subject to Call-in:	Yes
Enclosures:	Appendix 1- Single Equalities Scheme Progress Report Appendix 2 - Equality Objectives with supporting measures Appendix 3 - Equality of Opportunity Policy Appendix 4 - Reference from O&S Committee

Section 1 – Summary and Recommendations

This report sets out a summary of the progress and achievements made against our Single Equalities Scheme (SES) Action Plan and the proposed Corporate 'Equality Objectives' which are a requirement of the new Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) introduced by the Equality Act 2010 which will replace our SES.

It also sets out the review of Equality of Opportunity policy in light of the

Equality Act 2010.

Recommendations:

Cabinet are asked to:

- note the progress made against the Single Equalities Scheme (SES) action plan (Appendix 1);
- Agree the proposed Equality Objectives; (Appendix 2)
- Agree the proposed Equality of Opportunity policy (Appendix 3) and
- Agree to monitor our progress on equalities through Improvement Boards.

Reason: to ensure equalities are key to service development and decision making, our services are fair and equitable, improve our services, increase customer satisfaction and to comply with the Council's obligations under the Equalities legislation and the Public Sector Equality Duty.

Section 2 – Report

Introductory paragraph

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.

Summary of our progress and some of the achievements made against the SES Action Plan

3. On the 15th December 2010, Cabinet agreed our second Single Equalities Scheme (SES) which was a requirement of the previous Race, Disability and Gender Public Sector Equality Duties (PSEDs).
4. The Scheme provides a context within which the detailed requirements of the various duties will be addressed. It sets the framework for the Council's equalities approach that, together with the programme of equality impact assessments and other specific actions, will fulfil the

Council's responsibilities as well as engendering a positive and holistic response to equalities issues.

5. The SES has a three year action plan with six key objectives and a summary of the progress and achievements made against this can be found in **Appendix 1**.

Equality Impact Assessments

6. In developing our SES, we carried out a comprehensive review assessing all our functions, services and policies for relevance to the previous Equality Duties but also extending this to age, religion or belief and sexual orientation to develop a programme of Equality Impact Assessments (EqIAs).
7. As part of the Commissioning Panel process in 2011, each proposal was supported by an Initial Equality Implication Assessment which were considered by the panel as part of the decision making process, and then published on the Council's intranet.

Equality Act 2010

8. On 8 April 2010 the Equality Bill received Royal Assent and became the Equality Act 2010. The Equality Act contains a range of new rights, powers and obligations to help the drive towards equality. The Act aims to strengthen and simplify the equality law that is already in place, such as the Race Relations Act and the Disability Discrimination Act.
9. The Equality Act 2010 (which came into force on the 1st October 2010) introduced a new Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) (which came into force on the 5th April 2011) 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.
10. 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:
11. Publish by the 31st January 2012 information to demonstrate their compliance with the general equality duty; and
12. Prepare and publish by 6 April 2012, and at least every four years thereafter one or more equality objectives.
13. The new PSED replaces the previous three Public Sector Equality Duties – for race, disability and gender and now covers the following protected characteristics:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender Reassignment
- Pregnancy and Maternity
- Race – this includes ethnic or national origins, colour or nationality
- Religion or Belief – this includes lack of belief
- Sex
- Sexual Orientation

14. 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.

Collate and Publish Equalities Information

15. In order to meet the first requirement of the PSED, a number of local authorities have published spreadsheets containing equalities data on 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.

16. Although this approach meets the requirements, the Council decided to publish its equalities data in a more constructive way.

17. In order to ensure the data published is easy to understand and ensure transparency with regards to our progress in addressing inequality and delivering services reflective of the needs of our community, we prepared and published our equalities information/data in the form of a document 'Our Harrow, Our Story' on the 30th January 2012 which is available on our website (link below).

http://www.harrow.gov.uk/info/200041/equality_and_diversity/2542/public_sector_equality_duty-equalities_datainformation

18. This is a narrative of the services and projects being delivered by the Council which not only support our Corporate Priorities but address inequality, advance equality and foster good relations. The documentary includes real life case studies of service users and is supported by a set of Appendices which hold the data.

Developing and Publishing Equality Objectives

19. In order to meet the second requirement of the PSED, our proposed 'Equality Objectives' have been developed based on the research and consultation undertaken in producing our Single Equality Scheme (SES) as well as the equalities information/data being published to satisfy the first requirement of the PSED. They have also been reviewed by the Corporate Equalities Group (CEG).

20. The objectives support the Corporate Plan and are supported by a number of measures identified by Directorates through their Service Planning process (**Appendix 2**).

Corporate Equality Objectives

The proposed Corporate 'Equality Objectives' are:

1. Protect vulnerable people from the harmful impact of crime, anti-social behaviour and abuse
2. Celebrate the diversity of Harrow so the Borough is an increasingly cohesive place where people from all communities get on well together
3. Develop a workforce that feels valued, respected and is reflective of the diverse communities we serve
4. Deliver services which are accessible and welcoming to all communities and are capable of responding to the different needs and aspirations our customers have
5. Improve opportunities for vulnerable young people through our corporate parenting role and individual support
6. Minimise the impact on health inequalities and deprivation in the Borough through partnership working
7. Minimise the impact of budget cuts on equality groups
8. Support local businesses and residents in times of economic hardship

Consultation

21. The draft Equality Objectives were subject to a public consultation for six weeks from the 24th January to 4th March 2012.
22. This included 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.
23. Internally, the consultation and staff workshop was publicised through The Grapevine, Members Information Bulletin, directorate newsletters, and the intranet and via Directorate Equality Task Groups. Externally, the publicity included a Press Release, emails to voluntary and community groups, via Harrow Equalities Centre, organisations on the Community Development Database and various service user databases.

Consultation Analysis (external)

- In total there were 28 responses to the online questionnaire.
- 92.86% (26) Agreed Strongly / Agreed with Objective 1
- 89.29% (25) Agreed Strongly / Agreed with Objective 2 and 10.71% (3) who disagreed

- 82.14% (23) Agreed Strongly / Agreed with Objective 3 and 7.14% (2) who disagreed
- 92.86% (26) Agreed Strongly / Agreed with Objective 4
- 89.29% (25) Agreed Strongly / Agreed with Objective 5
- 96.43% (27) Agreed Strongly / Agreed with Objective 6
- 89.29% (25) Agreed Strongly / Agreed with Objective 7
- 78.57% (22) Agreed Strongly / Agreed with Objective 7

- 57.14% (16) of respondents rated Objective 1 as the most important objective, objective 2 was the second most important and objective 6 the third most important.

Consultation Analysis (internal)

- In total there were 43 responses to the online questionnaire.

- 95.35% (41) Agreed Strongly / Agreed with Objective 1
- 88.37% (38) Agreed Strongly / Agreed with Objective 2 and no one disagreed with it
- 93.02% (40) Agreed Strongly / Agreed with Objective 3
- 90.70% (39) Agreed Strongly / Agreed with Objective 4
- 83.72% (36) Agreed Strongly / Agreed with Objective 5 and no one disagreed with it
- 86.05% (37) Agreed Strongly / Agreed with Objective 6 and no one disagreed with it
- 67.44% (29) Agreed Strongly / Agreed with Objective 7 and 9.30% (4) disagreed with it
- 88.37% (38) Agreed Strongly / Agreed with Objective 8 and no one disagreed with it

- The most important objective for internal respondents (staff) was also Objective 1, with objective 3 the second most important and objective 4 the third most important.

Residents Panel

- In total 1,152 members were sent the questionnaire and 652 returned it, equating to a response rate of 57%.

- 94.10% (606) Agreed Strongly / Agreed with Objective 1 with 2.02% (13) disagreed
- 66.61% (429) Agreed Strongly / Agreed with Objective 2 with 11.80% (76) disagreed
- 79.06% (506) Agreed Strongly / Agreed with Objective 3 with 5.62% (36) disagreed
- 80.66% (517) Agreed Strongly / Agreed with Objective 4 with 5.46% (35) disagreed
- 82.84% (526) Agreed Strongly / Agreed with Objective 5 with 4.09% (26) disagreed
- 75.79% (479) Agreed Strongly / Agreed with Objective 6 with 6.48% (41) disagreed
- 54.74% (347) Agreed Strongly / Agreed with Objective 7 with 15.14% (96) disagreed
- 80.69% (518) Agreed Strongly / Agreed with Objective 8 with 4.85% (31) disagreed

- Objective 1 was the most important with 93.15% support, followed by Objective 5 (79.37%) and Objective 8 with 77.04% support.

24. As a result of the consultation and the overall support for these objectives, we recommend they are agreed by Cabinet.

Reviewing Equality of Opportunity Policy

25. Our last Equal Opportunities policy was adopted in June 2002. Instead of reviewing this as a stand alone policy, it was incorporated into our SES in 2010. As our 'Equality Objectives' will replace the SES, the Council will require a new Equality of Opportunity policy to reflect all the protected characteristics covered by the Equality Act 2010.

26. The revised Equality of Opportunity policy (**Appendix 3**) reflects the requirements of the Equality Act 2010 and was subject to internal consultation including staff, elected members; staff support groups and the Trade Unions.

Financial Implications

27. 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 should not face any financial implications, over and above existing activity in this area.

Performance Issues

28. The '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. Directorates have been asked to highlight which measures from their directorate scorecards will help to achieve the set objectives.

29. 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).

30. This will not only mainstream equalities within existing processes and service plans but also adhere to the COUNT (collate once use numerous times) framework.

31. 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

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

Risk Management Implications

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

Equalities implications

34. An Equality Impact Assessment has been completed and no adverse impact has been identified. 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 introduced by the Equality Act 2010.

Corporate Priorities

35. The proposed 'Equality Objectives' support all the Council's Corporate Priorities as illustrated in **Appendix 2**.

Section 3 - Statutory Officer Clearance

Name: Steve Tingle	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	on behalf of the Chief Financial Officer
Date: 14 March 2012		
Name: Jessica Farmer	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	on behalf of the Monitoring Officer
Date: 9 March 2012		

Section 4 – Performance Officer Clearance

Name: Alex Dewsnap	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	on behalf of the Divisional Director Partnership, Development and Performance
Date: 14 March 2012		

Section 5 – Environmental Impact Officer Clearance

Name: Andrew Baker



on behalf of the
Divisional Director
(Environmental
Services)

Date: 8 March 2012

Section 6 - Contact Details and Background Papers

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

Background Papers: None

**Call-In Waived by the
Chairman of Overview
and Scrutiny
Committee**

NOT APPLICABLE

[Call-in applies]