

**SUBJECT: REVIEW OF CORPORATE EQUALITY PLAN & SINGLE EQUALITY SCHEME**

**REPORT OF THE CHIEF FIRE OFFICER**

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**1 INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to inform Members of the current review of the Authority's Corporate Equality Plan (CEP) and Single Equality Scheme (SES).

**2 BACKGROUND**

- 2.1 Over five years ago a CEP was developed for the Authority. It was initially introduced as the overarching diversity and equality strategy document / plan for the Authority. The plan included improvement actions in relation to diversity and equality and was monitored via the Strategic Management Team.
- 2.2 Since the introduction of the CEP, the Authority has created and implemented a Single Equality Scheme (SES) incorporating the race, disability and gender duties and plans for religion or belief, Age and Sexual Orientation.
- 2.3 When the SES was introduced in 2009, it superseded the CEP as authorities were no longer required to publish a CEP.
- 2.4 The SES is currently under review to take into account requirements of the Equality Act 2010 and as part of this process diversity and equality personnel have commenced a review of all related strategic documents / plans including the CEP.

**3 REVIEW PROCESS**

- 3.1 A focus group was established in late 2010 to undertake a comprehensive review of the SES. The review group was made up of key personnel who had or were likely to have actions for their specific departments / areas within the SES such as Recruitment and Selection, Occupational Health Unit, Estates, Procurement and Service Delivery.
- 3.2 During the review process the purpose of the CEP and the SES was explored. It became apparent that the SES was viewed as both an overarching strategy document and a working document with equality and diversity actions. Personnel were clearly confused about the purpose of the SES particularly in terms of its relationship with the CEP.
- 3.3 The SES should be a document with an external focus containing specific actions that the Authority is taking to make improvements for its diverse communities. It should not be viewed as a strategy document which is in the main aimed at an internal audience.

- 3.4 The CEP is deemed no longer required as many of the actions within the CEP have been either complete or progressed via similar plans within the current SES. However, there is still a need for an overarching equality and diversity strategy document.
- 3.5 At present diversity and equality strategic aims / objectives are detailed in different sections of the Community Safety Strategic Plan and referred to in the HR strategy. Consideration has been given to the need for a diversity and equality strategy.
- 3.6 Not only is it considered best practice but many organisations have a separate diversity and equality strategy in place which provides clear direction and pulls together all of the key priorities, policies and work streams around diversity and equality.

## **4 NEXT STEPS**

- 4.1 Diversity and equality personnel are in the process of developing a diversity and equality strategy which will become the overarching strategy document for the Authority. The CEP will be subsumed into the new strategy.
- 4.2 The SES will clearly link into the diversity and equality strategy however it will be streamlined and developed into a working document that is more outcome focused.
- 4.3 The SES will be expanded to include the additional protected characteristics included in the Equality Act and revised to ensure it meets all of the requirements as set out in the Act.
- 4.4 Members are requested to consider the outcomes anticipated from the revisions and make comment as appropriate.

## **5 RISK MANAGEMENT**

- 5.1 Creating a diversity and equality strategy for the Authority, reviewing / revising the SES as described above and removing the CEP will provide clarity in relation to the Authority's strategic direction regarding diversity and equality. It will also allow the Authority to produce a more focused and readable SES.
- 5.2 If the review and amendment of the above documents was not carried out and a diversity and equality strategy was not developed there is a risk that diversity and equality aims, objectives and actions are not effectively aligned to the Authority's Strategic Plan.

## **6 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 There are no financial implications in relation to this report.

## **7 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.1 A clear diversity and equality strategy along with the revised SES containing action plans for all of the protected characteristics and changes as required under the Equality Act will lead to better outcomes for the Authority's diverse communities.

## **8 HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPLICATIONS**

- 8.1 There are no health and safety implications in respect of this report.

## **9 RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 9.1 Members are recommended to:
- a) Endorse the content of this report;
  - b) Consider and comment on the anticipated outcomes;
  - c) Receive further reports as appropriate.

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## **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

The under mentioned Background Papers refer to the subject matter of the above report:

- Single Equality Scheme.
- Corporate Equality Plan.

