

**Draft Equalities Policy**

<b>Report of:</b> <i>Caroline J Bull, Chief Executive</i>	<b>WARDS AFFECTED</b>
<b>Report Author:</b> <i>Janet Banfield, Strategy and Review Business Manager Tel no. 01865 252692 Email: jbanfield@oxford.gov.uk</i>	<b>ALL</b>
<b>Lead Member Responsible:</b> <i>Dan Paskins, Social Inclusion</i>	
<b>Scrutiny Committee Responsibility:</b> <i>Community</i>	
<b>Key Decision:</b> <i>No</i>	

**SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

**This report outlines the progress made towards achieving level 1 of the Equalities Standard by March 2005, provides a draft Equalities Policy for Executive Board's information and comment, and provides the Equalities Action Plan, which outlines what the authority needs to do in order to meet its targets in relation to equalities.**

**The Executive Board is therefore ASKED to:**

- a) Comment on the attached draft Equalities Policy.**
- b) Note the actions on the Equalities Action Plan and the progress made against them to date.**
- c) Approve the attached draft, following amendment to incorporate Executive Board's comments, for consultation both within the Council and outside.**

**Background**

1. The Equalities Standard gives public authorities a statutory duty to promote equality, with the aim of helping authorities to provide fair and accessible services, and to improve equal opportunities in employment and service delivery. The standard is set out over five levels, which are:
  - i. Commitment to a comprehensive Equalities Policy
  - ii. Assessment and consultation
  - iii. Setting equality objectives and targets
  - iv. Information systems and monitoring against targets
  - v. Achieving and reviewing outcomes

2. Failure to comply with the Equalities Standard may leave a local authority at greater risk of legal action, for example an employment tribunal with potentially costly outcomes, resulting from allegations of unequal treatment. The 2004 CPA report noted that the Council was not yet compliant with the Equalities Standard, and the achievement of Level 1 of the standard by March 2005 and Level 2 by December 2006 are listed on the improvement plan as priority actions.

### **Progress to date**

3. An Equalities Steering Group\* has been established to drive the work on meeting the Equality Standard, and the Group has developed an action plan that outlines the steps that are required. This also details progress to date on each item, and is attached as Appendix 1.
4. In order to achieve Level 1 by March 2005, the Council needs to adopt and commit to an Equalities Policy. The Equalities Steering Group has written a draft policy, which is attached for your consideration. It is intended that, once amended to incorporate executive Board's comments, this draft will form the basis of consultation with council staff and external stakeholders and the public in order to ensure that the policy reflects the views of all parties. Following this period of consultation, a final draft of the policy will be presented to the Executive Board with a recommendation that it be endorsed and referred to Council to be adopted as part of the Policy Framework.
5. The draft policy is attached as Appendix 2, and the Equalities Steering Group would welcome all comments and thoughts on this policy.

### **Recommendations**

6. The recommendations arising from this report are that:
  - Executive Board notes the actions listed on the action plan and the progress achieved so far.
  - Executive board comments on the draft policy document so that it can be amended prior to consultation.
  - Executive Board approves this draft (subject to amendments as required by EB) as the basis for consultation

### **Footnotes**

\* The steering group consist of:

- Cllrs Susanna Pressel and Jim Campbell
- Chief Executive
- Business Managers for Human Resources, Built Environment, Neighbourhood Renewal and Strategy and Review;
- Access Officer (BE), Diversity Co-ordinator (S&R), Equalities Advisor (NR) and Senior HR Officer (HR)

THIS REPORT HAS BEEN SEEN AND APPROVED BY Equalities Steering Group Legal and Democratic Services – Lindsay Cane Financial and Asset Management – Alan Flockton Portfolio Holder for social inclusion – Cllr Paskins
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Background papers: None