

Report for Resolution

Report to Executive
18 March 2009
Report of Director of Transformation
Subject Equality Standard Level 2

6

Purpose

This report updates Executive on progress made toward achieving Level 2 of the Equality Standard

Recommendations

The Executive is asked to:

- note progress made to achieve level 2 of the Equality Standard
- formally endorse the self assessment that have achieved compliance with the Level 2 standard
- note the changes in the standard from 2009
- agree a revised corporate target to attain the new “achieving” status by March 2011.

Financial Consequences

The financial consequences of this report are none. However, we will need to carry out a full assessment of the resource implications of achieving the new “achieving” status by March 2011. Any resulting financial implications will need to be considered as part of future budget proposals.

Risk Assessment

Diversity Impact Assessments include an element of risk assessment. Failure to achieve Level 2 may both affect our reputation and attract negative feedback when the council is audited.

Strategic Priority and Outcome/Service Priorities

The report helps to meet the strategic priority “Opportunities for all – communities to be able to access the wide range of services in the city provided by the Council”.

Executive Member: Councillor Waters - Corporate Resources and Governance

Ward: All wards

Contact Officers

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Background Documents

None

Report

Background

1. The Equality Standard framework has been in existence since 2002. The framework provides authorities with an opportunity to self assess their progress on statutory equalities duties. Norwich City Council has had a long standing target to achieve level 2 of this standard. This report updates Executive on the actions recently completed, or about to complete, which we propose will enable us to self assess that we have successfully reached level 2.
2. For information, as at the end of 2006 / 07 the following percentage of local authorities in the East of England were at:
 - Level 1 (lowest) – 36%
 - Level 2 – 44%
 - Level 3 – 20%
 - Level 4 – 0%
 - Level 5 (highest) – 0%

This clearly places the City Council at currently below average performance. However, this report is now recommending that following a range of recent actions we can claim to be at Level 2, which will move us into a category which is comparable with many other local authorities in the region.

3. The Equalities Standard framework is changing from 1 April 2009 and Executive are asked to note current progress against this new standard, consider some of the issues about attaining the new “achieving” level and agree to target reaching this level by 31 March 2011.

Progress against Level 2

4. A detailed list of the actions required to achieve level 2 is appended as Annex A. Executive will note good progress against all of these measures.
5. The main outstanding item is a refresh of the Disability Equality Scheme. However, work on this is well advanced. It is currently being consulted upon using a number of events organised in conjunction with the Norfolk Coalition of Disabled People. Once these events have concluded, the draft scheme will be submitted for sign off. It is anticipated that the draft will be prepared for late March 2009, to be followed by final publication.
6. The revised Disability Equality Scheme will need member approval, and it is proposed that the portfolio holder consider the initial draft of the scheme as part of the preparation for formal declaration of level 2. The revised scheme would then be taken to Executive for formal approval.
7. Additional reporting requirements have been put in place to better monitor the completion of impact assessments when considering new or existing policies or procedural changes.

Changes to the Equality Standard, and action needed

8. The Equalities Standard is changing with effect from 1 April 2009. Annex B shows the new standard and assesses our progress against the new duties required to attain the new “achieving” Status (formerly level 3).
9. In order to attain the “achieving” status a number of actions are required which vary from our current practice. For example:
 - Collection of customer information – since September 2008 customers are regularly asked to provide information, if it is not already held, on their age, gender, ethnic origin and whether they consider themselves as having a disability. This is designed to enable services to monitor use (or otherwise) of services across our population and are an essential part of developing impact assessments. ‘The achieving’ level will require us to collect as standard practice information on the other “equality strands”; namely sexual orientation and religion / belief. It is proposed to consider a programme to develop this process to start from April 2010.
 - The Single Equalities Bill is likely to propose that discrete equality schemes across a range of issues (gender and race for example) be streamlined into a single equality scheme to encompass all aspects of diversity and equality. It is proposed to target implementation of this for April 2010 as a milestone in attaining “achieving” status.
10. Subject to Executive approving officers’ views that Level 2 of the current Equalities Standard, Executive has been achieved, Executive is asked to approve a revised target of meeting the new “achieving” standard by March 2011.

EQUALITY STANDARD LEVEL 2 SELF ASSESSMENT MARCH 2009		
Leadership and Corporate Commitment	completed	Evidence
2.1.1 Publish draft Corporate Equality Scheme to deliver the authority's Comprehensive Equality Policy and statutory equality schemes	Yes	A Comprehensive Diversity Strategy is in place. There are completed Race and Gender Equality Schemes published on the website. The Disability Equality scheme is currently under consultation, final draft due on 31 March 2009.
2.1.2 Produce a risk assessment of local authority services, activities and procedures and develop a prioritised programme of equality impact assessments.	Yes	Stage 1 Tests of Relevance undertaken with three year time table of existing policies. Stage 2 Initial screenings begun. This process will be monitored by the Performance Management Improvement Board, and the assessments will be quality checked by the Sponsorship Equalities Group.
2.1.3 Publish an action plan for the extension of equality impact assessment to sexual orientation, religion or belief and age by March 2008	Yes	Already included in DIA
2.1.4 Demonstrate corporate engagement in the equality impact assessment process	Yes	DIA training undertaken in November 2007 and January 2008. Diversity Champions identified amongst teams. Test for Relevance and Initial Screenings reviewed by sponsorship equalities group. Three year timetable published. Diversity champion workshop undertaken Feb 2009. Detailed guidance available for service managers on the intranet, including impact assessment, diversity monitoring and consultation toolkits.
2.1.5 Develop a corporate mechanism for assessing the development of service level equality objectives and targets	Yes	All impact assessment completions to be monitored by the PMIB, and quality checking by the Sponsorship Equalities group. Service plans require equalities objectives outlined and all committee reports include or will include equalities questions.
2.1.6 Create a corporate structure for overseeing development of information and monitoring systems	Yes	Diversity Monitoring reports run centrally by the Service Improvement team with generic and specific data reports available. First generic reports run December 2008. Project initiated mapping all diversity monitoring across the organisation, both computer and paper based.
2.1.7 Develop a corporate framework for equality consultation and guidance on consultation methods to be adopted within the authority	Yes	Corporate Consultation Strategy and toolkit available for application in equalities assessments. Consultation working group responsible for overseeing consultations. New community engagement strategy also drafted as part of overall involvement strategy. New Equalities Forum to be set up with community stakeholders.

Community Engagement and Accountability		Evidence
2.2.1 Ensure that draft Corporate Equality Scheme has been circulated to designated community, staff and stakeholder groups with consultation timetable and is published in an appropriate range of languages and formats	Yes	Copy of corporate diversity strategy and action plans distributed and accessible via website. New consultation timetable being devised.
2.2.2 Review equality content of all community strategies (LAAs etc)	Yes	Norfolk Local Area Agreement include an initial equality impact assessment and checklist, and is carrying out consultations for refreshes. LSP Governance Framework includes guidance on undertaking impact assessments. Community engagement strategy and consultation strategies all equalities checked. Sustainable community strategy includes objectives regarding stronger communities.
2.2.3 Involve designated community, staff and stakeholder groups and the wider community on corporate policy	Yes	Completed corporate stakeholder analysis. Community Engagement Strategy, Consultation Strategy soon to be implemented. Scrutiny of impact assessments at various levels. All progress reported on internally and informal feedback to stakeholders through networks.
2.2.4 Involve members, employee representatives, department and service managers on impact assessments and all aspects of the Corporate Equality Scheme/Comprehensive Diversity Strategy	Yes	Consultation strategy and toolkit available for all service managers undertaking impact assessments. Diversity Champions identified. Trade union involvement in consultation and development process as appropriate. Corporate Equalities forum with community stakeholders to be set up to scrutinise impact assessments, NNREC acted as critical friend to quality check impact assessment. Sponsorship Equalities group also quality checks assessments. All committee reports to CMT and members to include equalities checking.
2.2.5 Each department and service area to involve designated community, staff and stakeholder groups on its equality impact assessments and its service delivery	Yes	Diversity Champions identified. Consultation strategy and toolkit available for all service managers undertaking impact assessments. Community Engagement strategy drafted, with community engagement team involvement in setting up the Equalities Forum. Comprehensive corporate approach to consultation and stakeholder involvement.
2.2.6 Each department and service area to engage community stakeholders through scrutiny of service delivery	Yes	Comprehensive guidance and support given to service managers and departments on undertaking impact assessments including consultation toolkit, and the development of a community engagement strategy and equalities forum. New customer complaints, comments and compliments system set up. Service plans require evidence of progress made in identifying equalities objectives.

2.2.7 Seek to ensure that the corporate equality policy and objectives are incorporated in partnership and contractual arrangements engaged in by the authority	Yes	Procurement: Review and refresh of major corporate contracts due for completion by 2010. Rolling programme of quarterly reviews by procurement diversity champion. Tender documents, plans and strategies reviewed Oct 2008, and impact assessment of procedures. Partnerships: Inclusion of assessment toolkit in governance framework.
Service Delivery and Customer Care		
2.3.1 Complete prioritised department and service area impact assessments as a basis for the development of equality objectives and targets	Yes	Tests of relevance undertaken and three year timetable of existing policies complete and published. Draft initial screenings reviewed by Sponsorship equalities group, reviewed by critical friend. 6 initial screening and summaries ready for publication March 2009.
2.3.2 Begin development of department and service area equality objectives and targets	Yes	Service plans currently require the outlining of equalities objectives, initial screenings and tests of relevance demonstrate progress made on developing equalities objectives.
2.3.3 Review of services should include the procurement function and all contracted services and partnership arrangements	Yes	Procurement: Review and refresh of major corporate contracts due for completion by 2010. Rolling programme of quarterly reviews by procurement diversity champion. Tender documents, plans and strategies reviewed Oct 2008, and impact assessment of procedures. Partnerships: Inclusion of assessment toolkit in governance framework.
2.3.4 Each department and service area to establish planning groups for monitoring and information systems	Yes	Diversity monitoring guidance devised and a raised awareness of diversity monitoring requirements. Diversity champions are mapping monitoring in their departments and feeding back to service improvement team in order to rationalise all data and centralise it where appropriate.
2.3.5 Each department and service area to engage with equality self-assessment and scrutiny on its service delivery	Yes	Service Plan include Equality Objectives as part of review. Corporate Equality, Race, gender and disability equality scheme action points reviewed by heads of service committed to undertaking them. Given the size of the council, it is appropriate for the Sponsorship Equalities group to monitor performance through scrutinising equalities objectives.
Employment and Training		Evidence
2.4.1 Develop and adopt fair employment and equal pay policy	Yes	Single Status.
2.4.2 Engage in employment equality assessment of the local labour market	Yes	Statutory monitoring requirement - reflecting the general make up of the workforce, evidence in Race, and Gender Equality Schemes, workforce analysis and people strategy.
2.4.3 Engage in an equal pay review	Yes	Single Status
2.4.4 Adopt a Local Government Workforce Strategy	Yes	People strategy currently up to 2008, workforce plan due for 2009.
2.4.5 Adopt procedures to ensure that publicity for vacancies does not unfairly restrict the range of applicants	Yes	Recruitment methods are regularly reviewed and diverse methods are used such as recruitment fairs and targetted promotions. Two ticks award also achieved.

2.4.6 Produce a standard range of application forms and job descriptions that are clear and explicit	Yes	Review to be undertaken with Single Status.
2.4.7 Review personnel information system for monitoring suitability including supporting the council's statutory monitoring duties	Yes	Staff Survey and Personnel Records. Plans to monitor Sexual Orientation and Religion or belief by 2010.
2.4.8 Develop a programme of equality training to support the Corporate Equality Scheme and departmental service objectives	Yes	E learning programme to be rolled out across teams as well as contact training planned to supplement knowledge. New training plan with 4 tiers of knowledge requirements.
2.4.9 Ensure that the training programme is consistent with the training arrangements in the council's statutory equality schemes	Yes	See above, the sponsorship and project teams has HR representation so consistency is maintained through out.
2.4.10 Make all employment procedures consistent with current legislation and employment Codes of Practice	Yes	All employment procedures consistent with current legislation and employment codes of practice.

REVISED EQUALITY STANDARD ACHIEVING LEVEL

Achieving

	in place & effective	In place but needs improving	currently being established	not in place
Knowing your community - Equality Mapping	1	2	3	4
21. Relevant and appropriate information is gathered using a range of techniques across all equality target groups; to inform policy and strategy and to prioritise			✓	
2.2 Information & data is shared appropriately and as necessary across the authority and with partners in order to achieve equality outcomes.				✓
2.3 Relevant and appropriate information and data is mapped disaggregated and used to assess equality objectives.			✓	
2.4 It is able to identify how their communities are changing and the impact this may have on service priorities.			✓	
Place shaping, Leadership, Partnership and organisational commitment	1	2	3	4
2.5 Clear organisational and partnership equality priorities have been set and are owned and understood by all key stakeholders including the third sector.				✓
2.6 Equality objectives and actions can be found in corporate and strategic plans.			✓	
2.7 Equality and cohesion priorities and objectives are monitored regularly by the political leadership and senior management teams.		✓		
2.8 It has allocated appropriate resources to achieve objectives.			✓	
2.9 It publishes the outcomes of EIA's on a regular basis.				✓
2.10 Overview and scrutiny processes address equality issues.			✓	
2.11 Work is being undertaken to promote equality of opportunity in terms of participation as elected representatives.				✓
Community Engagement and Satisfaction	1	2	3	4
2.12 Local public service priorities have been set alongside national ones which involve local people and their identified needs.			✓	

2.13 Consultation with stakeholders and the third sector is systematically built into EIA's, the self assessment and planning process

✓

Responsive services and customer care

1

2

3

4

2.14 A set of equality objectives/outcomes has been produced at service/unit level to meet the needs of identified equality target groups

✓

2.15 Equality Objectives have been developed within each department/service area based on completed impact assessments and other equality data

✓

2.16 Structures have been established at service/unit level to progress and monitor performance. Equality and cohesion objectives are monitored regularly by portfolio holders and departmental management teams

✓

2.17 Appropriate resources have been allocated to achieve objectives

✓

2.18 Mechanisms are in place to ensure that equality objectives are delivered by contractors through contract management and that they are monitored properly

✓

2.19 The authority ensures that contractors, commissioned services and grant receivers regularly review their services and access to them to ensure they continue to be appropriate and accessible

✓

Modern, diverse and reflective workforce

1

2

3

4

2.20 Workforce strategies address equality issues

✓

2.21 The authority has made significant progress on the equal pay review and reaching agreement with the unions

✓

2.22 It delivers a range of learning and development interventions to support members and officers to deliver equality outcomes.

✓

2.23 Employment objectives have been set based on internal monitoring information, the assessment of the local labour market and barriers

✓

2.24 Adverse trends resulting from the monitoring of employment data is acted upon

✓

2.25 Equality implications of objectives in management and individual appraisals have been considered

✓

2.26 All employment procedures have been impact assessed.

✓