

CABINET	AGENDA ITEM No. 7
26th MARCH 2012	PUBLIC REPORT

Cabinet Member(s) responsible:	Cllr Irene Walsh, Cabinet Member for Community Cohesion and Safety	
Contact Officer(s):	Paul Phillipson	Tel. 01733 453556

EQUALITY OBJECTIVES FOR PETERBOROUGH CITY COUNCIL

R E C O M M E N D A T I O N S	
FROM : Paul Phillipson, Executive Director - Operations	Deadline date : Objectives to be published by 6 April 2012
<p>That Cabinet approves and agrees to publish the three equality objectives recommended by the Equality and Diversity Steering Group, namely:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) To undertake a full review of strategic functions, policies and procedures across the authority, to ensure legislative compliance and best practice is embedded within our systems; b) To establish Corporate Governance and Partnership arrangements that ensure the Equality Duty is delivered; c) To establish a Quality Assurance Process that meets the recognised standards for assessing the Equality impact of our internal processes and policies and those relating to our service delivery. <p>Further detail of each objective is set out in paragraph 3.5 below.</p>	

1. ORIGIN OF REPORT

- 1.1 This report is submitted to Cabinet following the implementation of the Equality Act 2010, under which the Council is obliged to agree and publish its equality objectives by no later than 6 April 2012.
- 1.2 Cabinet previously considered a draft Single Equality Scheme at its meeting on 7 November 2011. This set out how the Council would meet its statutory obligations and included an action plan setting out the timetable for doing so. Cabinet Members debated the scheme indicating their support for the principles of it, but Members were concerned that some of the data used to compile the report was not up to date and therefore could not fully approve the report as it stood without it being updated, so resolved to request the Single Equality Scheme be submitted to the next meeting of Cabinet for approval following the inclusion of updated statistical data.
- 1.3 Since the November Cabinet meeting a significant amount of work has been done on Equalities and Diversity across the authority and partner agencies. Although legislation no longer requires us to produce a Single Equality Scheme, we are required by law to publish one or more objectives on how we intend to meet the Equality Duty. In spite of the lesser legal requirements, we have, however, committed to deliver a more ambitious and wide-ranging programme of work, which will ensure our Equality and Diversity work is embedded in a meaningful, valuable way, across Peterborough City Council, our partners and local

communities. To achieve this we will concentrate on delivering specific objectives which will be core to all the activity undertaken across the authority. These objectives will be delivered through an action plan, developed in partnership with agencies representing protected groups over the next two years.

2. PURPOSE AND REASON FOR REPORT

The purpose of this report is to allow Cabinet to consider and agree Equality Objectives for the Council for the next 2 years as required by section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 and The Equality Act 2010 (Statutory Duties) Regulations 2011.

- 2.2 This report is for Cabinet to consider under its Terms of Reference No. 3.2.3 – To take a leading role in promoting the economic, environmental and social wellbeing of the area.

3. TIMESCALE

Is this a Major Policy Item/Statutory Plan?	NO	If Yes, date for relevant Cabinet Meeting	
---	-----------	---	--

4. EQUALITY OBJECTIVES FOR PUBLICATION

- 4.1 Peterborough City Council is required to comply with statutory duties under:

- Section 149 of The Equality Act 2010 (The Public Sector Equality Duty)
- The Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties) Regulations 2011

Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 is referred to as the ‘Public Sector Equality Duty’ and is the overarching requirement of the duty. The duty recognises that meeting different needs includes taking steps to take account of disabled people’s disabilities, describes fostering good relations as tackling prejudice and promoting understanding between people from different groups, and explains that compliance with the general equality duty may involve treating some people more favourably than others.

- 4.2 The Public Sector Equality Duty requires Peterborough City Council, in the exercise of its 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 with a protected characteristic and those who do not;
- Foster good relations between people with a protected characteristic and those who do not.

- 4.3 The duty to advance equality of opportunity involves, in particular, having due regard to the need to:

- Remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by people due to their protected characteristics (see appendix one for full definition of protected characteristics);
- Take steps to meet the needs of people with certain protected characteristics where these are different from the needs of other people; and
- Encourage people with certain protected characteristics to participate in public life or in other activities where their participation is disproportionately low.

- 4.4 The Equality Act 2010 Regulations 2011 referred to as 'Specific Duties' are intended to help performance of the general equality duty. These regulations require the Council to:
- Publish information to demonstrate its compliance with the general equality duty by 31st January 2012
 - Publish one or more objectives that it believes it needs to achieve to further any of the aims of the general equality duty. This must be done no later than 6th April 2012 and at least every four years after that. These objectives must be specific and measurable.

4.5 The Council is now required to publish **one or more objectives** to further the aims of the general equality duty. The Equality and Diversity Steering Group have agreed the following **three objectives** for Cabinet to consider for publication –

4.5.1 To undertake a full review of strategic functions, policies and procedures across the authority, to ensure legislative compliance and best practice is embedded within our systems.

Aims:

- To consider what causes particular groups to need protected status
- To evaluate the systems and processes that we have developed within the authority to address those points
- To consider if we have addressed those issues equally for all groups and across all services or recreated inequalities

4.5.2 To establish Corporate Governance and Partnership arrangements that ensure the Equality Duty is delivered.

Aims:

- To develop appropriate mechanisms to support the delivery of our Equality Duty
- To identify officers who will champion compliance across service divisions
- To understand how to influence delivery of the Equality Duty across partners

4.5.3 Establish a Quality Assurance Process that meets the recognised standards for assessing the Equality impact of our internal processes and policies and those relating to our service delivery.

Aims:

- To establish a monitoring group to oversee compliance and quality
- To establish baseline requirements for effective benchmarking
- To establish review processes

5. CONSULTATION

5.1 Consultation on the **three objectives** has been carried out with the Equality and Diversity Steering Partnership, Cohesion Board and Diversity Forum.

5.2 Some of those members have carried out further consultation within their own organisations and given feedback through the groups. The Council also intends to widen its consultation with communities across Peterborough specifically targeting those protected characteristic groups who are currently under-represented in our consultation structures i.e. Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender.

6. ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES

- 6.1 By undertaking a review of strategic functions, policies and procedures across the authority as outlined in objective one, the Council will establish a clear baseline of its current position in terms of equality, eliminating discrimination and establishing good relations. This objective will provide an opportunity to review the needs of the authority in terms of delivering equality, and also provide evidence of issues to be addressed.
- 6.2 The second objective, which requires the Council to establish corporate governance and partnership arrangements to deliver the Equality Duty, will ensure all staff and partners are obliged to deliver the Equality Duty. This will establish fair and transparent systems and improve relations between and within communities.
- 6.3 The final objective requires the establishment of a robust Quality Assurance Process in line with recognised Equality standards. This will enable continual, updated and accurate information on delivery of the Equality Duty. This will provide evidence that the authority is meeting its statutory requirements and that all its services are accessible and meet the needs of all the communities of Peterborough.

7. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

The Council is required by Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 Public sector equality duty, and the Equality Act 2010 (Statutory Duties) Regulations 2011 to publish one or more objectives that it believes need to be achieved to further the aims of the General Equality Duty. This must be done no later than 6th April 2012 and at least every four years after that.

8. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- i) Not to agree any equality objectives. This has been rejected as an option as it would put the authority in breach of its statutory duties.
- ii) To agree different objectives. This has been rejected as it is considered that the recommended objectives are the most appropriate at this time. Furthermore to reconsider alternatives now would result in a shorter time for consultation and put the authority at risk of failing to publish our objectives within the legal timeframe required.
- iii) To publish the objectives as part of a larger document similar to the draft Single Equality Scheme presented to Cabinet in November 2011. This has been rejected because there is no longer any requirement to have a single equality scheme, and it is considered more appropriate to concentrate on publishing and working towards achieving the specific objectives of the authority.

9. IMPLICATIONS

Subject to the three objectives being approved by Cabinet the following areas of work will be pursued –

- Training and development for staff on the importance of Equality issues
- Establish a timescale to deliver change
- Produce a detailed action plan incorporating wide ranging consultation exercises
- Set up Reporting Procedures
- Agreement of Governance processes

All legal implications are dealt with in the body of the report, and there are no specific financial implications from this report.

10. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Used to prepare this report, in accordance with the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985)
None.