

2. Inclusion and Equalities Scrutiny Review.

Working Group Members: Councillors M Weisz (Chair), M Paling, P Hughes, M Lawrence, H Wheeler, B Andrews, N Brookes, S Ainley, S Tomlinson.

2.1 Conclusions and Recommendations

Recommendations

- 1. Simplify and standardise the format for the Equality Objectives published on the Council website.**
- 2. An annual review of the progress of the Equality Objectives should be undertaken as part of a monitoring process.**

Members acknowledged that the publication of the Equality Objectives met the requirements of the Equality Duty but considered the layout to be confusing, untidy and unclear for members of the public who were not used to information presented in this format. The inclusion of a named accountable manager and lead director was seen as unnecessary. Some of the objectives include both a target and action, others do not. Where targets are identified baselines are not always identified. The inclusion of tables and graphs of differing sizes and design, although containing interesting and pertinent information further complicated the presentation. Members concluded a much simpler clearer, format which standardises the different objectives and clearly demonstrates the action and target with a time line would be much more meaningful.

Members were also concerned that information about progress towards achieving the objectives should be available to demonstrate compliance with the Equality Duty. As new objectives can be published at any point during the following four years it was important to regularly monitor those objectives that had been originally published to meet the April 2012 deadline. Publication of the objectives should enable members of the public and staff to assess the performance and progress of the authority towards meeting the objectives and a concise performance report summarising work undertaken should be published at least annually, if not six monthly.

Recommendation

- 3. Develop a process to indicate how equality and inclusion considerations/implications are taken into account when new policies are being developed.**

Members felt that the lack of an Equality Impact Assessment could lead to unforeseen detrimental consequences for some groups. They felt that it was important to ensure that the impact on all the people with protected characteristics was assessed and this should be undertaken during the decision making process. Whilst Members appreciated that where impact assessment is undertaken as part of service design this not always visible to members of the public due to sensitivities, they concluded that a clear indication that protected groups had been considered during the decision making process should be available. The method used when undertaking this assessment should be standardised across all departments, be transparent, documented and explain any necessary adjustments that have been made to moderate any possible outcomes.

Recommendations

- 4. Ensure the cultural breakdown of the borough identified through the census data is considered when identifying service need.**
- 5. Develop mechanisms to target applications from minority groups by broadening the list of agencies that receive notification of vacancies.**

After considering the current list of cultural organisations that receive information Members concluded that the list was very City based and needed to be refreshed. The use of internet employment sites could be considered to increase dissemination and reach individuals and groups not currently included.

Recommendation

- 6. Consider how job adverts and application forms can be improved to make potential applicants aware of the Council's policy that jobs are open to job share.**

Members were concerned that applicants may not be aware that job applications can be made on a job share basis and this should be made much clearer particularly in job adverts.

Recommendation

- 7. Revise the Equality and Diversity basic awareness training for new employees and develop a process to refresh this information for existing employees on a regular basis. Techniques for delivering this could include briefings or the use of interactive soft wear.**

- 8. Undertake initiatives to promote awareness and understanding of diverse groups for existing employees by the use of themed displays and events.**
- 9. Remind staff of the need to use clear English on any printed material that is in the public domain.**

Members considered it essential that members of staff understand equality legislation and that it was important for the authority to demonstrate that they work to prevent discrimination, victimisation and harassment both in the community and within the workforce. Members were concerned about the poor return rate of the Equalities workbook. They agreed that should this method of training be continued, in services where completion rates are low, managers should be reminded that it is a requirement for new staff to complete the workbook. Members felt that other methods of informing staff about equality issues should be considered to determine if they would be more effective and that equalities awareness should not be a one off event but should be on-going. Consideration should be given to using interactive software which may yield more participation in the training and a higher level of completion.

Recommendation

- 10 Proactively work to counter negative perceptions about diverse groups in the community.**
- 11 Promote positive examples of community/multicultural action by publishing news stories/photo opportunities via the Gedling Borough web pages, Staff Intranet and Contact magazine.**
- 12 Consider what can be done at the Arnold and Gedling Shows to celebrate our diversity.**

It was considered important that all residents of Gedling feel they belong whether they have lived in the borough for many years, recently moved in or fell within the groups included in the protected categories. Members considered it important to support and advance community cohesion, work to promote different groups of people to get on together and celebrate diversity amongst residents. They felt the authority has a role in promoting tolerance and good relationships and this could be strengthened further to include develop strong positive relationships in the community between people from different backgrounds.

Recommendation

- 13 Create a link from the GBC web pages to the database the Council for Voluntary Services is currently developing which will catalogue voluntary and community groups.**

Members felt that by linking to this database the authority would be able disseminate information more widely to groups and individuals to enable them to engage with and have access to other voluntary organisations. This may possibly remove duplication and possibly negate the need for travel to other areas.

Recommendation

- 14 Evidence of applicants meeting equality criteria should be requested when applications for grant aid funding are considered. Monitoring should be undertaken to ensure that grant aid funding is allocated to a wide range of diverse groups.**

Members considered that equality and diversity issues should be built into criteria when grant aid applications are considered, not only the equality policies of the applicant, but it should also ensure that the grant aid application process is accessible and funding is allocated more fairly across a range of groups.

Grant aid could be used to support and encourage groups to be started in Gedling for individuals who have previously had to travel into the City for the service, and also to build the capacity of those organisations that currently exist to develop their services further.