



meeting

**CORPORATE STRATEGY AND COORDINATION SELECT
COMMITTEE**

date

22 NOVEMBER 2004

agenda item number

REPORT OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE

THE EQUALITY AGENDA FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT
Equality Impact Assessments

1. Purpose of this report

- 1.1** To inform members of how the County Council has moved forward in equality and diversity in service delivery and employment; and
To present the latest draft of the Equality Impact Assessment process and set a date for formal implementation ie attaching Impact Assessments to all Cabinet and Committee reports that involve changes to services.

There will be an accompanying presentation by Maggie Else, Corporate Equality Officer.

2. Background

2.1 External assessment

In January 1999 the Council adopted the Commission for Race Equality (now LGA) Equality Standard, to comply with Best Value Corporate Health Indicator BV002. This required that an equality audit of all services and practices be carried out and the level achieved (on a scale of 1–5, 5 being highest), be submitted to the Audit Commission. The Corporate Equality Group comprising of officers and trade unions assessed the results at Level 1 and this was confirmed by external auditors in March 2001.

A series of equality action plans, both corporate and departmental, linked to the business planning process were written; the actions were implemented and carefully monitored and the Council achieved Level 2 in March 2003. This was confirmed by internal pressure testing in May 2003 and verified by an external Audit Commission audit in June 2003.

The target of Level 3 in October 2004 has not been met. However, internal Pressure Testing on 22 November, a mock external inspection in early 2005

and the subsequent extra effort put into priority areas should ensure that Level 3 can be declared to the Audit Commission in the spring 2005. The target for Level 5 remains as October 2007.

2.2 Legislation

One of the main requirements of the Race Relations Amendment Act (RRAA) 2001 was to publish a Race Equality Scheme (RES) to show how public bodies will meet the general and specific duties of the Act. The Council's RES is closely linked to the Corporate Equality Action Plan (attached – Appendix 1) and both are public documents. They were published on the NCC internet site in May 2002.

All aspects of existing and forthcoming equality legislation are included in equality planning. Other significant legislation is the Anti Discrimination in Employment Legislation that became law on 1 December 2003 which covers sexual orientation, race, religion, belief and disability. In April 2006 this legislation will be extended to include age. In 1995 the Disability Discrimination Amendment Bill will become law, requiring the publication of a Disability Equality Scheme (DES) for 2006 – 2009.

The Council's requirements and obligations of all existing and forthcoming legislation are already included in equality action planning and managers have been informed of their new responsibilities.

3. Information and Advice

- 3.1** The previous report to Corporate Strategy and Coordination Select Committee on 17 November 2003 outlined the main areas Corporate Equality Group (CEG) are working on and some of these still apply eg equality and diversity training for all staff, equality clauses in all contracts and the role of translation and interpretation services.
- 3.2** Councillor Pulk and several officers attended an LGA conference in London on 13 October 2003 – *The Duty to Promote Race Equality in Local Government - the Race Relations Amendment Act – one year on*. The main area under discussion was the requirement to carry out and publish Impact Assessments on all Council services, functions and policies. It was agreed at the 17 November 2003 committee that a programme of completing and publishing impact assessments would be implemented and managed by CEG and that impact assessments would be an essential requirement of all relevant Cabinet and Committee reports.
- 3.3** A CEG working group with representatives from all departments has been working on finalising and piloting the process and an electronic version of the Impact Assessment form, linked to the consultation database, is now being developed by IT services. To tie in with the learning and development strategy and to give Members and employees further opportunity to be briefed about the Impact Assessment process, Impact Assessments will be attached to all relevant Cabinet and Committee reports from 4 April 2005.

4. Statutory and Policy Implications

This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of finance, equal opportunities, personnel, crime and disorder and those using the service. Where such implications are material, they have been brought out in the text of the report.





5. Recommendations

It is recommended that the Committee:

- i) asks questions and makes comments on the report and the accompanying presentation;
- ii) considers the implications of the equality and diversity agenda for the County Council;
- iii) recommends to the County Council that Equality Impact Assessments should be attached to all appropriate Cabinet and Committee reports from 4 April 2005.

ROGER LATHAM
Chief Executive

6. Background Papers Available for Inspection

-  Race Equality Scheme www.notinghamshire.gov.uk/raceequalityscheme
-  Corporate and Departmental Equality Plans
-  Corporate Strategy and Coordination Select Committee Report
17 November 2003
-  Impact Assessments documentation

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