



meeting	DEPARTMENTAL BRIEFING (COMMUNITIES)		
date	Tuesday, 14 October 2008	agenda item number	4
from:	Acting Corporate Director Communities		

EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IN THE COMMUNITIES DEPARTMENT

Purpose of the Report

1. To inform Members of progress with achieving Local Government Equality Standards.
2. To inform Members of good practice in service delivery to ensure that all members of the public have easy access to our services.

Background

1. The County Council is working towards the Local Government Equality Standards which has 5 levels covering all aspects of policy-making, service delivery and employment. The Authority is currently at Level 2 which means that it has demonstrated commitment to Equalities and is engaging in equality impact assessments and consultation.
2. Level 3 requires the Authority to have a programme of equality impact assessments in place and to start to identify and implement actions which make a difference to equality groups. It also requires the Authority to monitor its workforce and set employment targets to reflect the Local Labour Market. This means increasing the numbers of people we employ from Black and Ethnic Minority communities and increasing the numbers of disabled people we employ.
3. The Authority was assessed against Level 3 of the Standards in September 2007. Unfortunately, the assessors decided to defer their decision because of the high level of change the Authority was going through at the time owing to the reorganisation of the Council and National Job Evaluation.
4. Next year, the Local Government Equality Standards are being replaced by a new Equality Framework which will have 3 levels to attain: they are emerging, achieving and excellent. The Authority will enter this Framework as an 'emerging' authority but will be aiming to progress to an 'achieving' authority in the autumn of next year.
5. An important part of the assessment will be to ensure that all our services are easily accessible to all members of the public. The

Communities Department has a programme of equality impact assessments in place where all our services, policies and schemes are being checked to make sure they do not discriminate. 43 equality impact assessments have been completed to date and most demonstrate that we are already doing lots of positive things. The reviews have also highlighted areas where we can do things better and steps are being taken to make improvements.

RECOMMENDED

Members are asked to note this report.

Steve Calvert
Acting Corporate Director Communities