

**Report of Assistant Chief Executive (Customer Access and Performance)**

**Report to Executive Board**

**Date: 14<sup>th</sup> December 2011**

**Subject: Equality Improvement Priorities 2011 to 2015**

Are specific electoral Wards affected? If relevant, name(s) of Ward(s):	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Are there implications for equality and diversity and cohesion and integration?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Is the decision eligible for Call-In?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? If relevant, Access to Information Procedure Rule number: Appendix number:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No

**Summary of main issues**

1. The Equality Improvement Priorities 2011 to 2015 have been produced to ensure that the council meets its legal duties under the Equality Act 2010.
2. Closer alignment with the Vision for Leeds, the City Priority Plan and the Council Business Plan has been built into the development of the priorities and provides the foundations for a move towards a city wide approach to equality.
3. In addition, the council's Equality and Diversity Policy has been revised and updated to reflect the new legal framework.

**Recommendations**

1. Executive Board is recommended to:
  - Note the contents of this report;
  - Agree and approve the Equality Improvement Priorities 2011 to 2015;
  - Agree and approve the revised Equality and Diversity Policy; and
  - Note the proposal to circulate this report to Area Committees so that all Members are aware of our Equality and Diversity Policy and Improvement Priorities.

## **1 Purpose of this report**

- 1.1 This report brings to Executive Board the new Equality Improvement Priorities 2011 to 2015 and the revised Equality and Diversity Policy.
- 1.2 This new approach sets out the council's continued commitment to equality. It outlines the council's equality objectives, identifies how progress will be measured and how we will continue to improve and further embed the equality agenda.
- 1.3 This work will be developed further over the next two years with a view to move towards a city wide partnership approach to equality. This reflects the ambitions outlined in the City Priority Plan to have key improvement priorities for the city as well as the council.

## **2 Background information**

- 2.1 Leeds City Council has a leading role in the city to promote equality and value diversity. There is considerable work that has taken place to make equality an integral part of our work and in particular in how we deliver services, how we employ people, how we work with our partners and how we make decisions.
- 2.2 Work to date has included strengthening and enhancing equality considerations in the policy, planning and performance management framework, the scrutiny process, employment policies and procedures, service planning and the regulatory framework.
- 2.3 Equality considerations are now an integral part of the decision making process and considerable work has taken place on embedding equality into all aspects of work using the Equality Framework for Local Government. In recognition of these achievements the council undertook a diversity peer assessment in May 2011 and were awarded 'excellent' status against the Equality Framework for Local Government. 'Excellent' is the highest possible rating.
- 2.4 Leeds is the largest authority to be awarded the status, which has only been achieved by a handful of other local councils. Leeds was praised for its passionate staff and their commitment to delivering high quality public services. Leadership was also praised and the assessors concluded that the council's approach to the equality agenda was 'inspirational' and 'innovative'.

## **3 Main issues**

- 3.1 The council needs to continue to put equality into practice whilst taking into account new legislative requirements, the changing landscape in which we work and the current and future financial challenges that local authorities face. This needs to build on the work outlined above that has already taken place.

- 3.2 The Equality Act 2010 provides a new cross-cutting legislative framework
- to protect the rights of individuals and advance equality of opportunity for all;
  - to update, simplify and strengthen the previous legislation; and
  - to deliver a simple, modern and accessible framework of discrimination law which protects individuals from unfair treatment and promotes a fair and more equal society.
- 3.3 The Equality Act 2010 brings with it a new general public sector duty that requires public bodies to:
- eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct prohibited under the Equality Act
  - advance equality of opportunity between different groups
  - foster good relations between different groups
- 3.4 The new legislative framework has also introduced specific duties to:
- publish accessible information outlining the equality analysis which has taken place to inform equality objectives
  - engage with people who have an interest in furthering the aims of the general equality duty
  - demonstrate progress against equality objectives for both employment and service delivery
- 3.5 The Equality Improvement Priorities in Appendix 1 outline how we will improve outcomes for different people across the city and meet the specific duty to set and publish equality objectives by the target date of 31<sup>st</sup> January 2012.
- 3.6 Closer alignment with the Vision for Leeds, the City Priority Plan and the Council Business Plan has been built into the development of the approach. This has resulted in a more integrated approach to equality in the council's strategic planning. The equality outcomes have been developed alongside the key priorities for the city as outlined in the City Priority Plan and action plans, and are based on an analysis of the equality perspective.
- 3.7 Progress against the equality analysis, objectives, activities and measures will be reported through the new Performance Management Framework, which has been agreed for the City Priority Plan and the Council Business Plan. An annual report will be produced and published as we will have to show compliance with the Equality Duty, at least annually. This annual report will highlight the progress that has been made in embedding the equality agenda in everything we do, from recruiting and employing staff to delivering our services.
- 3.8 Additional equality information will also be published on the Council's website, which will help us to demonstrate legal compliance. This will include:
- Consultation and Involvement in Developing Equality Objectives
  - Equality Analysis and Objectives 2011 – 2015

- Equality and Diversity Policy 2011 - 2015
- Approach to Embedding Equality 2011 - 2015

3.9 In addition the council's Equality and Diversity Policy in Appendix 2 has also been updated to reflect the new legal framework. The key aim of the policy is to ensure that we continue to work towards strengthening our approach to equality and as a council we recognise that:

“An equal society protects and promotes equal, real freedom and substantive opportunity to live in the ways people value and would choose, so that everyone can flourish. An equal society recognises different people's different needs, situations and goals and removes the barriers that limit what people can do and can be”

## **4 Corporate Considerations**

### **4.1 Consultation and Engagement**

4.1.1 During 2010 a review took place which resulted in a number of changes to the city and council planning and partnership framework. In particular, a whole system approach has been sought which ensures the partnership structures, strategic plans and performance management arrangements all dovetail into an effective system for delivering real change across the city.

4.1.2 The Equality Improvement Priorities 2011 to 2015 is part of the city's revised planning framework and is integral to it.

4.1.3 Extensive consultation and involvement was undertaken in the development of the city's revised planning framework and the outcome of this has been used to shape and influence the council's equality objectives.

### **4.2 Equality and Diversity / Cohesion and Integration**

4.2.1 Equality and diversity has been considered throughout the development of the new strategic planning framework. This has included checking that due regard has been given to equality through the use of equality related evidence in needs assessments, outcomes from consultation and engagement activities, which include:

- The 'What if Leeds...? Campaign'
- The spending challenge consultation
- Equality assurance and impact assessment on the approach to strategic planning

4.2.2 Tackling inequality was a key issue identified through the consultation.

### **4.3 Council Policies and City Priorities**

4.3.1 The proposed work will help to shape and deliver future equality priorities contained in and delivered through the Vision for Leeds and the City Priority Plan 2011 to 2015 and help the council to demonstrate how it is addressing the needs of the cities diverse communities.

#### **4.4 Resources and Value for Money**

4.4.1 There are no resource implications arising from this report.

#### **4.5 Legal Implications, Access to Information and Call In**

4.5.1 The development of the new approach to improving equality and diversity and setting equality objectives will reinforce the council's commitment to equality and help us meet our legal duties.

4.5.2 This report does not contain any confidential or exempted information and is subject to call in.

#### **4.6 Risk Management**

4.6.1 The risks to the council if the approach to equality and diversity is not approved would be the failure to meet equality duties outlined in the Equality Act 2010.

### **5 Conclusions**

5.1 The development of the Equality Improvement Priorities 2011 to 2015 will help the council to achieve its ambition to be the best City in the UK and ensure that as a city work takes place to reduce disadvantage, discrimination and inequalities of opportunity.

### **6 Recommendations**

6.1 Executive Board is recommended to

- Note the contents of this report;
- Agree and approve the Equality Improvement Priorities 2011 to 2015;
- Agree and approve the revised Equality and Diversity Policy;
- Note the proposal to circulate this report to Area Committees so that all Members are aware of our Equality and Diversity Policy and Improvement Priorities.

### **7 Background documents**

7.1 Vision for Leeds 2011 to 2030

7.2 City Priority Plan 2011 to 2015

7.3 Council Business Plan 2011 to 2015