

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

**Report to Scrutiny Board (Safer and Stronger Communities)**

**Date: 26th June 2012**

**Subject: Equality Improvement Priorities 2011- 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 type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" 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 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 were 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**

4. Members are asked to:
  - note the contents of the report
  - consider equality outcomes in performance reports relevant to their Board

## **1 Purpose of this report**

- 1.1 This report brings to Scrutiny Board the new Equality Improvement Priorities 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.

## **3 Main issues**

- 3.1 The Equality Act 2010 provides a new cross-cutting legislative framework and introduced a 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
- 3.2 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

- 3.3 To meet our legal duties the Equality Improvement Priorities in Appendix 1 have been produced. The Equality Improvement priorities outline how the council will improve outcomes for different people across the city.
- 3.4 Closer alignment with the Vision for Leeds, the City Priority Plan and the Council Business Plan was built into the development of the approach and has resulted in a more integrated approach to equality in the council's strategic planning framework. The equality outcomes were 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.
- 3.5 These have been considered and approved by Executive Board who agreed that they would also be circulated to Area Committees so that all Members are aware of our Equality and Diversity Policy and Improvement Priorities.
- 3.6 Following the Executive Board meeting a further discussion on the Equality Improvement priorities took place with the Member Champions Group. This is a cross party group which has been set up to support and promote the development of the equality agenda for elected members. They have a particular focus on developing corporate policy approaches to equality and diversity including having an overview of the performance management of the equality priorities for the city.
- 3.7 The Member Champions Group also proposed that the Improvement Priorities were circulated to each Scrutiny Board and that equality progress and regular reports against relevant indicators were presented to Scrutiny Boards.
- 3.8 The early approval of the council's Equality Improvement Priorities meant we met the target date set out in equality legislation and also allowed us to finalise the progress reporting arrangements. Although it was agreed that progress against the equality analysis, objectives, activities and measures would be reported through the new Performance Management Framework, which has been agreed for the City Priority Plan and the Council Business Plan, some additional work was required to ensure that separate processes were not developed. In addition it was agreed that an annual report will be produced and published as we will have to show compliance with the Equality Duty, at least annually.
- 3.9 As a result of this the circulation of the Equality Improvement priorities to Area Committee's and Scrutiny Boards was pushed back to the first cycle of meetings in 2012/13. This was to allow for further work that was identified to ensure that a pragmatic approach for reporting progress was developed to avoid duplication of work and synchronised the reporting cycles.
- 3.10 Annual progress will now be reported through the State of the City Report and the Equality and Diversity Position Statement and an annual update on equality and diversity and progress against priorities is to be included within the Business Plan and City Priority Plan performance report.

3.11 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.

## **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 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 was considered throughout the development of the new strategic planning framework. This 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.

4.2.3 The council's Equality Improvement Priorities have been developed to ensure we meet our legal duties in the Equality Act 2010.

### **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**

4.4.2 There are no resource implications arising from this report.

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

4.5.3 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.

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

## **4.6 Risk Management**

4.6.1 The risks to the council if it did not have a published approach to equality and diversity 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**

6.2 Scrutiny Board is recommended to

- Note the contents of this report;
- Consider equality outcomes in performance reports relevant to their Board

## **7 Background documents<sup>1</sup>**

7.1 Vision for Leeds 2011 to 2030

7.2 City Priority Plan 2011 to 2015

7.3 Council Business Plan 2011 to 2015

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<sup>1</sup> The background documents listed in this section are available for inspection on request for a period of four years following the date of the relevant meeting. Accordingly this list does not include documents containing exempt or confidential information, or any published works. Requests to inspect any background documents should be submitted to the report author.