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<b>REPORT TO:</b>	<b>Finance &amp; Management Committee</b>	<b>AGENDA ITEM:</b>	8
<b>DATE OF MEETING:</b>	<b>18<sup>th</sup> March 2004</b>		
<b>REPORT FROM:</b>	<b>Deputy Chief Executive</b>	<b>OPEN</b>	
<b>MEMBERS' CONTACT POINT:</b>	<b>John Porter Ext. 5780</b>	<b>DOC:</b>	
<b>SUBJECT:</b>	<b>The Equality Standard for Local Government</b>	<b>REF:</b>	
<b>WARD(S) AFFECTED:</b>	<b>All</b>	<b>TERMS OF REFERENCE:</b>	<b>FM14</b>

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### **1.0 Recommendation**

- 1.1 That the Committee approves and makes a commitment to the "Equality Standard for Local Government."

### **2.0 Purpose of Report**

- 2.1 The purpose of this report is to seek commitment to, and outline the background and process, which it now needs to take, in order to make progress on the five (5 nr.) levels of "The Equality Standard for Local Government."
- 2.2 To establish a "Values and Attitudes" Advisory Group comprising of representatives from various 'equality and diversity' Interest Groups.

### **3.0 Detail**

#### **Equality Standard for Local Government – Introduction**

- 3.1 The Equality Standard has been jointly produced by the Commission for Racial Equality, Equal Opportunities Commission, Disability Rights Commission, and Employers' Organisation for Local Government, Dialog, and the Local Government Association. The publication recognises the importance of fair and equal treatment in local government services and employment and has been developed as a tool to enable local authorities to mainstream gender, race and disability into council policy and practice at all levels. However, the framework is not restricted to these three areas of potentially unfair discrimination; it can be used for addressing all disadvantaged groups.

- 3.2 The Equality Standard builds on the principles of quality, leadership, and community involvement and is designed to enable local authorities to assess their progress based on five levels:
- (i) commitment to a comprehensive equality policy;
  - (ii) assessment and consultation;
  - (iii) setting equality objectives and targets;
  - (iv) information systems and monitoring against targets; and
  - (v) achieving and reviewing outcomes.
- 3.3 The Equality Standard for Local Government is a new Best Value Performance Indicator. The Council has set a target to achieve Level 1 of the Equality Standard by the 31<sup>st</sup> March 2004. This report is intended to support and achieve this process.
- 3.4 There is an expectation that successful implementation of the Equality Standard will depend on a partnership between the Council and the Community. The process will therefore involve:
- Councillors – for leadership, support, resources, engaging with the community, and scrutiny;
  - Managers, Staff and Trade Unions – for effective implementation, training, challenging existing cultures and traditions, and engaging with the community; and
  - The Community and Voluntary Sector – for working with the equality planning process, participating in scrutiny, and extending knowledge of the Equality Standard within the community

#### **Progress to date**

- 3.1 The formal approval and adoption of the Equality and Diversity Policy Statement was made by this Committee on the 16<sup>th</sup> October 2003. This Policy Statement confirmed the Council's commitment to equality and diversity issues, as an integral part of everything the Council undertakes, based on the principles of equality, leadership and community involvement.
- 3.2 The Council has also started to demonstrate its on-going commitment to equality and diversity issues. Following consultation, this Committee formally adopted a Race Equality Scheme on 11<sup>th</sup> December 2003. Consequently, an action plan has been published.
- 3.3 Councillor Isham has recently been appointed as the Members' *"Equalities and Diversity"* Champion.
- 3.4 An inter-departmental Equal Opportunities and Diversity Action Group (EODAG) [chaired by the Deputy Chief Executive] has recently established. The aim of the EODAG is to take account of the framework provided by the Equality Standard for Local Government, by assisting departments to "mainstream" equalities into service delivery and employment in all aspects of the Council's work

### **Action required**

- 3.5 Various actions under the criteria outlined below, are now required to achieve Level 1 of 'The Equality Standard'
- Leadership & Corporate Commitment
  - Consultation & Community Development and Scrutiny
  - Service Delivery & Customer Care
  - Employment & Training

### **Leadership and Corporate Commitment**

- 3.5 A comprehensive equality policy for the authority covering race, gender and disability has been adopted
- 3.6 A report evaluating consistency of the authority's policies in relation to equality legislation: Race Relations Act (as amended), Sex Discrimination Act (SDA), Equal Pay Act (EPA), Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) and relevant Codes of Practice issued by the three Equality Commissions is to be undertaken
- 3.7 The Council has started the corporate equality planning process by establishing the EODAG. However, a corporate commitment is now required to develop a Corporate Equality Plan (CEP) indicating how equality policy will be implemented.
- 3.8 A project brief for the CEP has been prepared, and is attached at Annexe A
- 3.9 The Council will need to demonstrate that its needs/requirements assessment(s) comply with the Disability Discrimination Act, by specifically committing to the identification and provision of reasonable adjustments, and how the policies will be implemented in the CEP.
- 3.10 The Council will need to demonstrate its commitment to fair employment and an equal pay policy within the CEP.
- 3.11 It is anticipated that additional resources, in particular the new post of Principal Policy Officer, as identified in the restructuring and refocusing exercise will develop the CEP and improve equality practice

### **Consultation and Community Development and Scrutiny**

- 3.12 Community and major stakeholders have been consulted on the Council's Equalities and Diversity Policy Statement and Race Equality Scheme. A similar process now needs to be undertaken in respect of the CEP, and for these documents to be made available in range of appropriate languages and formats through appropriate outlets such as libraries etc.

- 3.13 Service Plans will be developed, in order to take into account of the requirements of the CEP
- 3.14 Service areas will need to demonstrate how they have consulted with the designated community, staff and stakeholder groups on its service delivery
- 3.15 Departments and service areas will need to demonstrate how they intend to engage with self-assessment, scrutiny and audit
- 3.16 The drafting of the Community Strategy must incorporate "equality" as a key theme. This issue will need raising with the South Derbyshire Local Strategic Partnership, even though an element of "equalities" is in place within the LSP's Constitution.
- 3.17 An interdepartmental working group, for the monitoring of racial incidents, as defined and required by Best Value Performance Indicator 174, is to be established. The Working Group will also need to consider the role and requirements of the South Derbyshire Crime & Disorder Partnership in this matter, and extending the scheme to include disability and gender issues.
- 3.18 The Council will need to adopt and approve a revised Staff Harassment and Victimisation Policy

#### **Service Delivery and Customer Care**

- 3.19 Service Plans will need to be revised, in order to demonstrate commitment, and to take any actions to promote equal opportunities, redress any inequality and/or differential impact in all aspects of service delivery, including reviewing service delivery provision in light of the DDA 1995
- 3.20 Service Plans will also need to outline plans for their impact on equality issues. This will be achieved by undertaking a needs/requirements assessment and demonstrating that the assessment complies with the requirements of DDA. Proposals to ensure compliance with future requirements must also be included within Service Plans and a commitment at departmental and service meetings must be demonstrated.
- 3.21 There will be a need to demonstrate how the CEP will incorporate an element that ensures equal access to services into the service planning process
- 3.22 Service Plans will need to establish race, gender and disability equality objectives and to ensure that there are service provisions in place for monitoring purposes
- 3.23 Training programmes are due to be implemented, which will enable staff and Members to meet the needs of all customers with equality and fairness.

#### **Employment and Training**

- 3.24 Recruitment procedures, which use non-discriminatory practices, have already been adopted. In order to incorporate changes in legislation / policy, appropriate sections in the current staff handbook have been clearly defined and are reviewed on a

regular basis. Currently, training plans are drafted and subject to consultation with managers, employees, and Trade Unions. Clear guidance on anti-discriminatory practices within recruitment/training and appraisal are provided to all supervisors and managers.

- 3.25 A Local Labour Market Area (LLMA) assessment, workforce profiling and equal pay review is to be undertaken. The LLMA survey outputs will be used to identify targets
- 3.26 A commitment to formulating a fair employment and equal pay policy with details of intended outcomes is to be undertaken.
- 3.27 A commitment to developing an equal pay and equal employment element of the CEP, that incorporates employment related issues from the RES and the requirements for compliance with the DDA is to be undertaken
- 3.28 Application forms and job descriptions will need to be reviewed and kept up-to-date for recruitment and selection and equal pay purposes. The Council will also need to ensure that both these procedures and the advertising of vacancies does not restrict the range of applicants from currently disadvantaged groups
- 3.29 A commitment, to develop the capacity of management information systems is already in place. This commitment ensures compliance with the Council's ethnic monitoring duty, in producing ethnic, gender, and disability monitoring reports on recruitment, promotion, retention, disciplinary, grievance and turn-over.
- 3.30 A commitment to make all employment procedures consistent with current legislation and all relevant Codes of Practice is in place.
- 3.31 A comprehensive training programme is in place.

#### **4.0 "Values and Attitudes" Advisory Group**

- 4.1 It is proposed to establish a "Values and Attitudes" Advisory Group, comprising of representatives from various 'equality and diversity' Interest Bodies, for example the Derbyshire Association for the Blind, East Midlands Black & Minorities Voluntary Sector Forum etc.
- 4.2 The role of the Advisory Group would be to assist the Authority both in an advisory capacity and to help drive forward the equalities and diversity agenda of the Authority. It is anticipated that when this Group is formed, it would be chaired by Councillor Isham.

#### **5.0 Financial Implications**

- 5.1 None arising from this report
- 5.2 The development and implementing of the CEP, including future progress on the various levels of the Equality Standard may have some financial, capacity and resource implications, which cannot be quantified at this point in time.

## **6.0 Background Papers**

- 6.1 Agenda and consultation papers considered by the Equal Opportunities and Diversity Action Group. (13feb04)