

# Executive

## Equality Performance Review & Self Assessment

6 September 2010

### Report of Chief Executive and Corporate Strategy and Performance Manager

#### PURPOSE OF REPORT

To provide an overview of our achievements relating to our equalities work during 2009/2010 and report the results in relation to the internal self assessment which has been completed under the Equality Framework for Local Government (EFLG) 'Achieving' standard.

This report is public
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#### Recommendations

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The Executive is recommended:

- (1) To note the progress in delivering the Corporate Equalities Action Plan and the Corporate Equalities Improvement Project.
- (2) To agree the completed 'Achieving' Equality Self Assessment'
- (3) To agree to continue with the equalities work programme for 2010/2011
- (4) To not seek external accreditation of our performance under the equalities standard for local government at this time and take the costs of this inspection as an efficiency saving.

#### Executive Summary

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##### Introduction

- 1.1 This Executive Report provides an update and overview of firstly our continued success in relation to the delivery of the equalities work programme for 2010/2011. It also includes a detailed self assessment in relation to the Equality Framework for Local Government (EFLG) 'Achieving' accreditation standards (Appendix A).
- 1.2 During 2009 a new and more challenging Equality Framework for Local Government (EFLG) was introduced. Under the old regime there were five levels of performance. The new scheme has three levels 'Developing', 'Achieving' or 'Excellent'.

Research into the new framework and some comparisons with other authorities for each of the 3 performance levels has been completed against the assessment guidance. This suggests that authorities meeting the old level 3 standard (Cherwell's current self assessment) should be able to demonstrate 'Achieving' status under the new standard's criteria:

- Knowing your community: equality mapping
- Place shaping, leadership, partnership and organisational commitment
- Community engagement and satisfaction
- Responsive services and customer care
- Modern and Diverse Workforce

## **Proposals**

- 1.3 This report outlines key proposals for the Executive to consider. These proposals will help us to demonstrate our continued commitment and achievement in relation to the equalities work programme which improves outcomes for the local community and demonstrate our continued commitment to review for efficiency savings.
- 1.4 To agree the completed Equality Self Assessment'. This assessment has been completed across all departments within the Council along with the Equality Steering Group. This assessment has acted as a health check on our equalities work and will help focus our objectives throughout our 2010/2012 work programme as outlined in the Corporate Equality Action Plan
- 1.5 Policy change since the election including the removal of the Comprehensive Area Assessment and the proposed reduction of externally driven performance management frameworks. Given the Equality Framework for local Government has a cost of £4300 it is proposed that we do not seek formal external accreditation and take the cost of inspection as an efficiency. The Council remains fully committed to the equality work programme demonstrated via the Corporate Equality Action Plan and Corporate Improvement Plan Project. The self assessment has been completed in line with the Equality Framework for Local Government standard and can be used to benchmark ourselves against similar local authorities.

## **Conclusion**

- 1.6 By completing the Equality Framework for local Government 'Achieving' Self Assessment we have been able to build a comprehensive picture of the success of our equalities work programme over the last year which will ensure we focus and streamline our future objectives which will benefit all of our local communities.
- 1.7 We are confident that we have a structured and robust work programme which will continue to ensure that Cherwell District Council is ensuring fair access to all its services.
- 1.8 The cost of the external inspection would have been met by the Corporate Strategy, Performance and Partnerships Team and will now act as an efficiency saving.

## **Background Information**

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- 2.1 In April 2009 Executive requested that Officers prepare a self assessment. In March 2010 Executive reviewed the Equality Performance and plans for improvement and agreed the Council would be in a position to request a Peer Challenge under the 'Achieving' standard to take place in November 2010.
- 2.2 As a result of this the Council has undertaken a self assessment exercise of its equality performance. During June and July 2010 we have been gathering evidence against the 'Achieving' criteria to ensure we meet the Equality Framework for Local Government standard.
- 2.3 The Council has underpinned its performance by introducing a new performance monitoring approach with the introduction of the Equality Scorecard in April 2010. The 2009/2010 end of year report and quarterly reports demonstrate Cherwell's Corporate Equality Action Plan is progressing well and objectives are on target.
- 2.4 Appendix A presents the Equality Self Assessment under the Equality Framework for Local Government and the evidence used to underpin this. Currently we believe the Council achieves this standard. This also outlines some areas of improvement outlined in the Corporate Equality Plan. Particular areas of strength includes improved customer access, understanding the needs of the community, effective consultation performance and areas of significant performance relate to the older community, the disabled community, strong engagement from local partners and a robust corporate training programme which focuses on customer service and access.

## **Key Issues for Consideration/Reasons for Decision and Options**

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- 3.1 This report provides an in-depth review of Cherwell District Council's performance in relation equality that has been established through the completion of the Self Assessment against the 'Achieving' Standard under the Equality Framework for Local Government and it considers the overall assessment of the Councils performance, including the performance of key services the Council provides and highlights the areas in which our future objectives must focus.
- 3.2 Executive may wish to consider if an external assessment will demonstrate further commitment to the Equalities Agenda. However at this time the Self Assessment indicates a track record of improving performance.

The following options have been identified. The approach in the recommendations is believed to be the best way forward

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| <b>Option One</b> | Agree recommendations as outlined above   |
| <b>Option Two</b> | Executive to request that an external inspection to take place in November 2010 using the Self Assessment attached. |

## Consultations

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### Equality Steering Group

The Steering Group have assisted gathering operational evidence for the Self Assessment.

The Group have consulted on the final self assessment report and the recommendation to not seek an external inspection this year

## Implications

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### Financial:

Report recommends an efficiency saving of £4300 plus expenses.

Comments checked by Karen Curtain, Head of Finance 01295 221551

### Legal:

The Self Assessment demonstrates how the Council meets its statutory responsibility under the Equality Framework for Local Government.

Comments checked by Liz Howlett, Head of Legal and Democratic 01295 221686

### Risk Management:

Small risk to Council's reputation by not seeking external accreditation. This risk is mitigated through our own Equality Scorecard.

Comments checked by Rosemary Watts, Risk and Insurance Manager 01295 221566

### Equalities

No specific operational impacts arising from this report however if the recommendations are accepted the council will not have external accreditation for its equality 2010/2011 work.

Comments checked by Claire Taylor, Corporate Strategy and Performance Manager, 01295 250652

## Wards Affected

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All

## Corporate Plan Themes

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All –Accessible Value for Money Council

## Executive Portfolio

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Councillor Wood, Leader of the Council  
Portfolio Holder for Corporate Policy

## Document Information

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Appendix No	Title
Appendix A	Cherwell District Council Equalities Self Assessment

<b>Background Papers</b>	
None	
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