

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Equalities Self Assessment

13 September 2011

Report of Chief Executive and Corporate Strategy and Performance Manager

PURPOSE OF REPORT

To review the completion of the annual Self Assessment undertaken by the Council against the Achieving Standard under the Equality Framework for Local Government.

This report is public

Recommendations

The meeting is recommended to:

- (1) Consider the evidence and information submitted in the Council's Self Assessment against the Achieving Standard under the Equality Framework for Local Government.
- (2) Refer the Self Assessment to the Executive for approval.

Introduction

- 1.1 This report presents Cherwell District Council's equalities self assessment. This document is updated annually and sets out the organisation's strengths and areas for development. The self assessment forms part of the Council's approach to equalities which seeks to ensure that excellent customer service, fair access to local services and support to vulnerable people is part of all we do.
- 1.2 In 2010/11 Executive reviewed the first equalities assessment and took the decision not to go for an external peer assessment due to the costs associated with the process at a time of increased financial constraints. However, the Council remains committed to equalities and reports its performance on a quarterly basis against its equalities plan, through the annual self assessment and via equalities impact assessments.

Details

- 2.1 This evidence based self-assessment of the council's equalities performance has been prepared by the Equality Corporate Steering Group. This is an officer only group and it is essential that the assessment is subject to an independent review and challenge by members of the Council.
- 2.2 Such an objective review is essential if we are to ensure that we have self assessed Cherwell DC at the correct level and to highlight areas of weakness to allow continued improvement within Corporate Equalities. Furthermore the committee is asked to ensure that the general approach taken to equalities is relevant and meets the Council's wider objectives.
- 2.3 The Council aims to ensure its approach to equalities is meaningful and locally relevant. It is grounded in a clear understanding of the district and the corporate equality plan is based on five objectives, each supported by a number of local priorities:
- 1. Fair Access and Customer Satisfaction**
 - To ensure Cherwell District Council and our Partners treat the public fairly regardless of their background or way of life
 - To improve our services to the older generation within the Cherwell district
 - To ensure all our services both internal and external are accessible to all Equality Groups at a high standard
 - 2. Tackling Inequality and Deprivation**
 - To break the cycle of deprivation within the district (Brighter Futures in Banbury Programme)
 - 3. Building Strong and Cohesive Communities**
 - Promote integration between communities and groups through the use of sport, leisure, cultural activities and opportunities for community involvement
 - 4. Positive Engagement and Understanding**
 - To continue to increase engagement and work with young people within the district
 - Increase Cherwell's knowledge and understanding of the wider community to ensure we fulfil all residents' needs within our services
 - Raise internal awareness of diversity within our community
 - 5. Demonstrating Our Commitment to Equality**
 - Review and publicise all documentation in line with government framework
 - Review achieving standard to research and develop improvement programme
 - Ensure staff and services promote and embed equality into their work
 - All EIA's and Equality documents to be reviewed by the Corporate Equality and Diversity Steering Group
- 2.4 The Self Assessment document is attached at Appendix 1.

Conclusion

- 3.1 Cherwell District Council has made significant progress delivering against the equalities agenda in recent years. The Council's approach has been redesigned to streamline processes and to focus on local priorities including improving access to services, delivering excellent customer service and working with groups who may need additional support from across the district.
- 3.2 The self assessment identifies areas of strength and key developmental priorities and the Council remains committed to ensuring its performance with regards to equalities and customer access is reported via the quarterly performance management review.

Implications

Financial:	None Comments checked by Karen Curtin, Head of Finance 01295 221551
Legal:	The 2010 Equalities act places a number of duties upon local authorities, including the duty to undertake impact assessments with regards to policy and service decisions. Comments checked by Nigel Bell, Interim Monitoring Officer 01295 221687
Risk Management:	The author of this report is responsible for the performance and risk management framework. The risk associated with failure to comply with Equalities legislation are three fold, legal issues, reputational issues and the failure to deliver good quality and accessible services. The work the council undertakes with regards to equalities aims to mitigate these risks and the self assessment is an important part of this process. Claire Taylor, Corporate Strategy and Performance Manager, 01295 221563.

Wards Affected

All

Corporate Plan Themes

All

Executive Lead

Councillor Wood
Leader of the Council and Executive Member for Policy and Partnerships

Document Information

Appendix No	Title
Appendix 1	Equalities Self Assessment
Background Papers	
Cherwell District Council Equalities Policy and Scheme	
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