

Cherwell District Council

Executive

6 July 2015

<p>Annual Equalities Report for 2014/2015</p>
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Report of Head of Transformation

This report is public

Purpose of report

To review the performance of the Equalities Annual Work Programme and to agree the planned work programme following the Achieving Standard under the Equality Framework for Local Government.

1.0 Recommendations

The meeting is recommended:

- 1.1 To consider the evidence and information contained within this report.
- 1.2 To agree the equalities action plan for 2015/16 noting the areas of good practice upon which it builds and the areas for development that it addresses.
- 1.3 To agree the 3 year rolling plan of Equality Impact Assessments.

2.0 Introduction

- 2.1 This report presents Cherwell District Council's equalities annual performance, refreshed Action Plan and three year rolling Equality Impact Assessment Plan. The Equality Scorecard performance report sets out the organisation's strengths and areas for development which forms part of the Council's approach to equalities which seeks to ensure excellent customer service, fair access to local services and support to vulnerable people is part of all we do.
- 2.2 Executive first reviewed an equalities assessment during 2010/2011 and took the decision not to go for an external peer assessment. However, the Council remains committed to equalities and reports its performance on a quarterly basis against its equalities plan, via equality impact assessments and annual reporting to Executive.

3.0 Report Details

- 3.1 The Equality Performance Scorecards are prepared by the Corporate Policy Officer.
- 3.2 Executive is asked to ensure that the general approach taken to equalities is relevant and meets the Council's wider objectives.
- 3.2 A summary of equalities strengths and areas for development is included in the table below:

Equalities and Customer Access	
Performance Strengths	Areas for Development
<p>Connecting Community Events – Within the Brighter Future project Cherwell District Council provides innovative Community Engagement and Consultation events called 'Connecting Communities'.</p>	<p>During 2014/2015 Cherwell District Council planned to engage more effectively with local 'Hard to Reach' groups. Currently we consult with the Faith and Disabled communities in isolation but have seen a decline in attendance at 'Forum' meetings. During 2015/2016 the Corporate Policy Officer and the Consultation & Engagement Officer will develop an effective, combined consultative approach to ensure we are consulting and engaging with all age groups, genders, sexual orientations, faiths, nationalities and people with disabilities.</p>
<p>During 2014/2015 Cherwell District Council supported a new scheme to be launched in Banbury aimed at making the town a safer environment for vulnerable people. 'Safe Places' is a national scheme and launched in Cherwell on the 5th December 2014. Alongside the Council, local shops, businesses and facilities such as libraries, museums and leisure centres signed up to provide a safe place if someone is feeling lost, worried or threatened. The project aims to help vulnerable groups of people, such as elderly people with dementia, or people with learning disabilities and mental health needs.</p> <p>It is planned for 2015/2016 to see this scheme roll out into Kidlington with some interest also being shown within the Bicester area.</p>	<p>Fair and Aware Training was seen as a strength and also an area of development towards the end of 2014/15.</p> <p>Internal Fair and Aware Training is no longer delivered as training. New employees have access to the e-learning website equality module (which is more of an introduction) but if government legislation was to be amended there is no facility to amend this introduction module.</p> <p>The Corporate Policy Officer will engage with the newly appointed Learning & Development Business Partner to ensure this risk is reduced during 2015/2016.</p>

3.3 The Council aims to ensure its approach to equalities is meaningful and locally relevant. Its work draws on the findings of the Equality Scorecards and is pulled together into a single action plan. The refreshed action plan for 2015/16 is attached as appendix 1. 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 the government framework
- Review achieving standard to research and develop the 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

3.4 In addition to the annual report and the equalities action plan the Council also has a rolling plan of equality impact assessments. These assessments are undertaken when policies or services are subject to change that may have an impact on one or more groups of service users. The Council is keen to ensure it understands the impact of any changes and that no specific groups are disadvantaged. To support the process of impact assessment the Council consults with stakeholders including the voluntary sector, the disability and faith forums.

4.0 Conclusion and Reasons for Recommendations

4.1 Cherwell District Council has made significant progress delivering against the equalities agenda in recent years and has continued during 2014/2015 and continues to adopt a proportionate approach to equality performance with meaningful and relevant Corporate Action Plans to support this work.

- 4.2 The updated action plan demonstrates how the Council will continue to deliver its equalities objectives over the coming year. Progress will be reported via the performance management framework on a quarterly basis.
- 4.3 The three year impact assessment rolling plan also provides assurance that the Council is mindful of policy change and seeks to understand and address the impacts of service and policy change where appropriate.

5.0 Consultation

No specific consultation on this report is required.

6.0 Alternative Options and Reasons for Rejection

- 5.1 The following alternative options have been identified and rejected for the reasons as set out below.

Option 1: To note the report

Option 2: To request additional information on items within this report

7.0 Implications

Financial and Resource Implications

- 7.1 There are no financial implications

Comments checked by:

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Legal Implications

- 7.2 The Council is legally obliged to comply with the public sector equality duty under the Equality Act 2010 legislation.

Comments checked by:

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Risk Implications

- 7.3 All risks are logged and monitored on the Corporate Risk Register and reported quarterly to the Audit Committee, any risks related to this area would be escalated as necessary.

Comments checked by:

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8.0 Decision Information

Wards Affected

All

Links to Corporate Plan and Policy Framework

Corporate Plan and Equality Framework for local Government

Lead Councillor

Councillor Wood

Leader of the Council and Executive Member for Policy and Partnerships

Document Information

Appendix No	Title
Appendix 1	Corporate Equality Action Plan 2015 - 2018
Appendix 2	Equality Impact Assessment 3 Year Rolling Plan
Appendix 3	Equality Scorecard Reports
Background Papers	
None	
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