

# Scrutiny Committee report

Report of Head of Corporate Strategy

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## AGENDA ITEM 6

## Annual equality and diversity update

### Purpose of Report

1. This report provides the annual update of progress on the council's equality and diversity work. It outlines the progress the council has made in delivering its Corporate Equality Action Plan (CEAP) during 2011/12, to ensure that we are providing accessible services and employment opportunities to everyone in line with current legislation and the Equality Framework for Local Government (EFLG).
2. The committee is asked to note the progress made.

### Strategic Objectives

3. Our work on equality and diversity underpins all of our strategic objectives. It makes a specific contribution to providing excellent delivery of key services, through seeking to provide an excellent customer experience that takes account of customer views to ensure inclusion for all. Also to building the local economy through the work we do in the built environment to improve access for older people, people with disabilities and parents and carers.

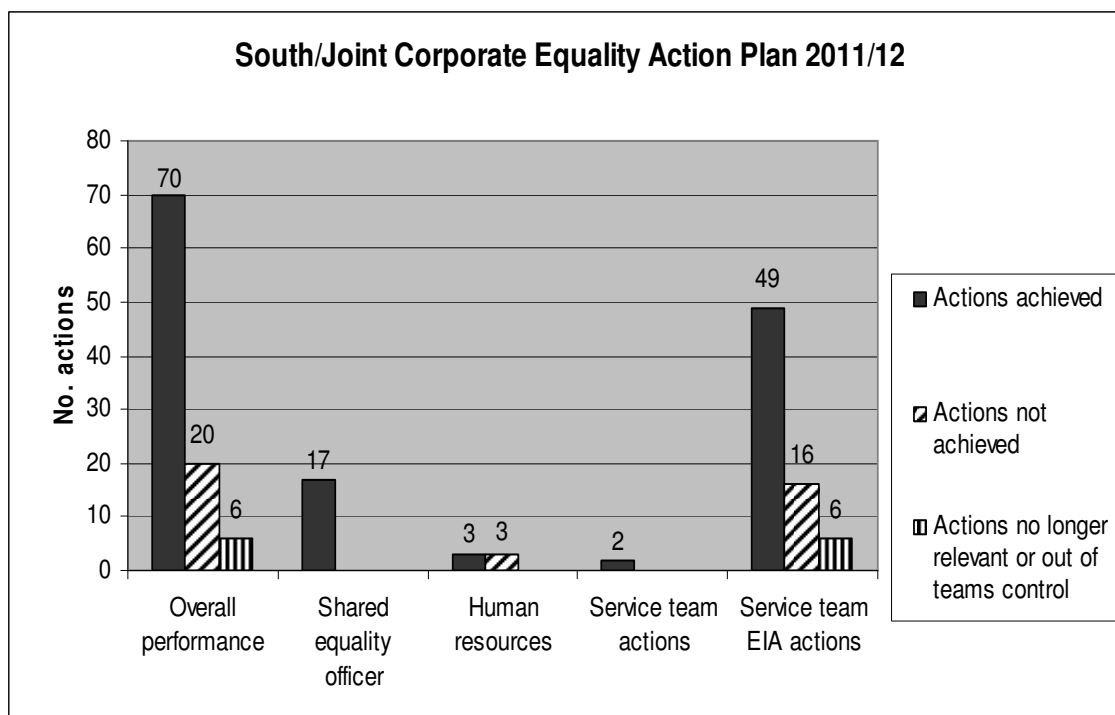
### Background

4. The CEAP is an ongoing improvement plan that is reviewed and updated every year to take account of the changing needs of our residents, staff, councillors and partners. It aims to deliver the commitments within our Corporate Equality Policy and the Equality Framework for Local Government (EFLG).

5. It also brings together the main activities we need to carry out in order to meet our legal duties. In summary, current legislation requires us to:
  - eliminate any potential for unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Equality Act 2010
  - advance equality of opportunity in service delivery and employment between people who share a protected characteristic<sup>1</sup> and those who do not
  - foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not<sup>2</sup>.

## OVERALL PERFORMANCE IN DELIVERING THE 2011/12 CEAP

6. We have made good progress during 2011/12 towards the completion of our CEAP. The following table shows the overall performance across the council, the performance of the shared equalities officer, HR and service team equality impact assessment (EIAs) actions.



7. A copy of the plan, annotated with progress notes is available as a background paper and key achievements during the year are outlined below.

## MEETING THE SPECIFIC DUTIES OF THE EQUALITY ACT 2010

8. In order to ensure the council met the specific duties of the Equality Act we:
  - developed and published our equality objectives and Corporate Equality Action Plan which was approved in March 2012

<sup>1</sup> A “protected characteristic” under the Act colour, race, nationality, ethnic or national origin, disability, age, sex, gender reassignment, sexual orientation, religion, belief, marriage or civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity

<sup>2</sup> Bullets two and three do not apply to marriage and civil partnership

- updated and published sufficient information on the council's website to demonstrate our compliance, i.e. Corporate Equality Policy, Equality in Employment and Dignity at Work policies, EIAs, and equality in employment indicators report.

## **Equality objectives measures - baseline data**

9. The council set a number of measures to report against annually to demonstrate how we are meeting the general duties of the Equality Act. Appendix one sets out the baseline data for 2011/12.

## **ADVANCING EQUALITY OF OPPORTUNITY IN SERVICE DELIVERY**

10. During 2011/12 the council has focussed on meeting the needs of our ageing population, people with disabilities and their carers as they often face the biggest barriers to accessing services within the built environment.
11. We began a programme of access audits on council owned or leased buildings in South Oxfordshire, in order to ensure we continue to meet our legal duties to make reasonable adjustments for people with disabilities.
12. We began work on converting the paddling pool in Riverside Park Wallingford into a full interactive children's water feature for toddlers up to 12 year olds. This will increase access for children with disabilities (particularly wheel chair users) as it is on a single level, has safety surfacing and no standing water.
13. We have been working with developers to encourage the provision of a shop mobility scheme in Didcot and continued to engage with Didcot Access Group to support this initiative.

## **Working with Didcot Access Group**

14. The council has been working with the Didcot Access Group to:
  - seek their feedback on the requirements for a shop mobility scheme in phase two of the Orchard Centre
  - gain feedback on Great Western Park to ensure it meets the needs of people with disabilities and older people and removes the barriers these groups face, a number of improvements have been taken on board or are being considered as a result (see appendix one)
  - draft an access audit for the Broadway in Didcot to support the Portas Pilot bid which the group will carry out during the summer 2012.

## **Internal audit of service team equality work**

15. During the year internal audit carried out a review of service team equality work and reported satisfactory assurance. The audit looked at staff knowledge and training, compliance with the EFLG, that EIA actions are incorporated into service planning and carried out, and that suitable monitoring arrangements are in place between our contractors and the council to ensure that equality and diversity elements of the contract are delivered.

## Equality impact assessments

16. One of the ways we ensure that we have due regard to our public sector equality duties is through EIAs. Teams use EIAs to develop action plans to help address any barriers to accessing services<sup>3</sup>, advance equality of opportunity and consider the need to foster good relations between different groups of people. Action plans are monitored corporately as part of teams' performance management.

17. During 2011/12 we completed 13 EIAs<sup>4</sup>, including the budget proposals.

18. Teams made good progress during the year in completing their EIA action plans, some of the actions delivered are:

- usability testing of the SODC website and Choice Based Lettings website with members of the disability equality panel; improvements to both websites are being made as a result
- the benefits service attended an Age UK information fare in South Oxfordshire
- GLL Nexus have reviewed their publicity and promotion to improve the profile of their leisure schemes that provides reduced price access for targeted groups<sup>5</sup> and develop the use of the cards
- signage access audits of all eight leisure facilities
- more variety for older children was included in the Easter and summer holiday programmes including; kayaking, boxing, golf, sailing and horse riding.
- funding was secured to deliver a range of projects in south Oxfordshire for 14 – 25 year olds over the next year including Zumba for 16-19 year olds
- we updated the annual election canvas strategy to reflect the outcomes of the EIA, added the alternative formats strap line to the canvas form, and provided guidance to elections staff and canvassers relating to transgender residents completing canvas forms
- added Google translate and translation information to the website and online applications can now be accessed using the browsealoud facility
- a number of teams have promoted their services to ethnic minority residents through the Embrace key messages sheet.

## Mainstreaming equality

19. Making equality part of everything we do is key to advancing equality of opportunity and removing the potential for discrimination. We have included equality considerations in Individual Cabinet Member Decision papers and a number of

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<sup>3</sup> Due to race, disability, gender, gender reassignment, sexual orientation, religion or belief, age, pregnancy and maternity, marriage or civil partnership or rural isolation

<sup>4</sup> EIAs – 6 (joint) and 7 equality impact checks on policies and changes to service (4 south, 3 joint)

<sup>5</sup> people on particular benefits including older and younger people, people with disabilities

projects e.g. South Stoke village shop planning application, Great Western Park public art strategy, and the property management system.

20. Service teams help the council to meet our public sector duties through their day to day work, for example:

- The South and Vale community safety partnership funded projects during the year such as; Didcot Train Youth Project, a domestic abuse outreach worker and a small repairs service for vulnerable people such as the elderly, people with disabilities and domestic abuse victims.
- 'Active Women' launched in October 2011 encouraging more women in Oxfordshire to take part in athletics, badminton, tennis, netball, football and gymnastics by removing barriers such as lack of childcare, inconvenience, no 'buddy' to play with and expense. Examples of sessions run include born to run jogging sessions in Crowmarsh Gifford and netball in Berinsfield.
- Go Active has run a number of sessions that are targeted at the over 50's e.g. Tai Chi, Zumba Gold and some of the more gentle Nordic Walking sessions.

### **Using equality data to improve outcomes or support decisions**

21. The following provides examples of how service teams have or will be using equality data and consultation feedback in their decisions:

- Community safety will be carrying out further consultation with representatives of disabled people in south Oxfordshire to better understand the factors that impact on their feeling of safety and identify any appropriate actions.
- Information gained from the citizens panel surveys has been used to guide future activity programmes e.g. high demand for walking, yoga etc.
- Great Western Park consultation with young people influenced the layout of the park and the type of facilities included e.g. a specific play area for young people to congregate.
- The planning service consulted the South Disability Equality panel on Thame Cattle Market – Sainsbury's major development application and replacement community building. Their recommendations will assist with the revision of any future application.
- The waste team revised the councils' bin policy to allow officers, in consultation with the portfolio holder, some flexibility in what bins residents can have according to customer needs.

### **ADVANCING EQUALITY OF OPPORTUNITY IN EMPLOYMENT**

22. During 2011/12 the council has delivered equality and diversity training to staff and councillors, including specific training for planning and building control staff. The training is designed to increase understanding of equality to help people better meet the needs of all our customer's.

23. This year we have provided work experience placements for three young people with disabilities; this is an area we are keen to develop further during 2012/13.
24. We have been successful in retaining the 'two ticks' disability symbol. The review concluded that the council had demonstrated their commitment to equality through their recruitment and learning and development processes.

## **SUPPORTING PROJECTS TO TACKLE HATE CRIME AND FOSTER GOOD RELATIONS**

### **Oxfordshire HALT**

25. We continue to work with HALT (a multi agency partnership which aims to challenge and eliminate all forms of homophobia, biphobia and transphobia and offer support to victims of such abuse). In the past year, the council has supported the partnership by:
- taking part in a homophobic hate crime seminar
  - managing the annual survey we carry out at Oxford Pride.

### **Review of Embrace**

26. During the year we carried out a review of the Embrace partnership<sup>6</sup>. When the partnership began, organisations were beginning to develop their responses to the emerging race equality agenda. Since then a lot of progress has been made by the partnership and more widely on race equality.
27. In light of the achievements and the reduction in resources available the partnership<sup>7</sup> will no longer meet regularly. Instead we will work with the Embrace partners where appropriate to maintain and improve community relations in Southern Oxfordshire and continue to produce a quarterly key messages sheet for ethnic minority groups.

### **Fostering good relations**

28. The Young people's Xchange teamed up with Age UK Oxfordshire to pass on their computer experience to people over 50. The six week course was held at the council offices in Crowmarsh and was free to attend. Pupils from Didcot Girls and Langtree schools supported two of the sessions in their holidays.
29. The council is now supporting Age UK to set up classes in schools in south Oxfordshire. Classes will begin in September at St Birinus School in Didcot with students from the school volunteering to help at the sessions.

### **Promoting religious festivals**

30. The Equality Act places a duty on the council to foster good relations between people of different racial groups. Increasing understanding of cultures within the

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<sup>6</sup> review available as a back ground document

<sup>7</sup> Loss of CADO, OEHR, NHS Oxfordshire, Community safety officer, one equality officer

community can help to achieve this. We have promoted some religious festivals in the council's reception, on the website and in the Embrace key messages sheet.

## **Conclusion**

31. The council has made good progress in advancing equality of opportunity, supporting projects to tackle discrimination, harassment and in fostering good relations. The committee is asked to note the progress made.

## **Background Papers**

- Corporate Equality Improvement Plan
- Embrace partnership review.

# Appendix 1

## EQUALITY OBJECTIVE MEASURES – 2011/12 BASELINE DATA

Equality Objectives	Equality objective measures	Result
1. Provide equality of access to services and our employment opportunities	<b>South Customer satisfaction data</b> a) the council does a good job for people like me b) the council treats all parts of the district fairly	Residents survey base size 1,100 a) 64% <sup>8</sup> b) 41% <sup>9</sup>
	Publication of annual equality in employment indicators	Achieved
2. Support projects to tackle hate crime and foster good relations between different groups of people in South Oxfordshire and the Vale	Levels of reported Hate Crime reported to the police and Mantra system	81 hate crimes reported to the police (south and vale – TVP don't distinguish between two districts) increase of 11 per cent on 2010/11  None to Mantra
	<b>South Customer satisfaction data</b> 'to what extent do you agree or disagree that your local area is a place where people from different backgrounds get on well together'	Residents survey base size 1,100 78 per cent agree that their local area is a place where people from different backgrounds get on well together.  Results do not vary between different equality groups
3. Seek to improve access to major new developments and town centres in South Oxfordshire, including Phase II Orchard Centre Didcot for people with disabilities, carers and older people (South only)	Monitor all relevant planning applications the Disability Equality Panel, or other access groups are consulted on and improvements put in place to increase access	<b>Great Western Park</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provision of accessible bus stop shelters agreed</li> <li>• Planning condition - ground floor thresholds must be flush and no speed humps</li> <li>• Sports Pavilion – provision of accessible toilet</li> <li>• Didcot access group also gave feedback which has been passed to developers and where relevant will be part of detailed planning applications</li> </ul>

<sup>8</sup> No variation men and women, those aged 60+ feel more positive (66% - 69%) compared to those aged 16-24 (57%) , ethnic minority groups feel more positive (67% -100%), people with disabilities slightly more positive 67%

<sup>9</sup> No variation by equality group – respondents living in Henley and rural areas are much less likely to agree