

Subject: Overview and Scrutiny Committee comments on the Equality and Diversity Strategy

Summary: This note provides officers with the combined comments of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees (OSCs) during their consideration of the above report during June 2013.

Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee

1. In response to the quiz and the further clarification provided by the Director of Improvement and Corporate Services Members of the Committee discussed the following:-
 - 1.1 The need for the objectives to reflect the importance of fair opportunities and treatment for all.
 - 1.2 That whilst the Council should aim to have a modern and diverse workforce we should ensure that the best possible candidates were employed.
 - 1.3 That the foreword should reflect the need to promote equality of opportunity for some residents in a vulnerable group rather than referring to all of those in a vulnerable group.
2. In addition a Member sought clarification on the consultation toolkit and current structures for consulting with user groups. The Corporate Policy Adviser (equality and diversity) clarified that the consultation toolkit was written by the Consultation Manager and that it provided guidance on methods and techniques for undertaking consultation to ensure that a mix of people were able to provide their views. The Council arranged meetings with hard to reach groups to understand their concerns during periods of consultation. The findings of these discussions were reported to the Executive in an Equality Impact Assessment that also highlighted risks of discrimination and necessary mitigating actions.

RECOMMENDED

That the comments of the Committee be considered by the Director of Improvement and Corporate Services and that the Strategy is supported and Members send any further comments on the content of the draft Strategy to officers.

Customer & Central Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee

1. In response to the quiz and the further clarification provided by the Director of Improvement and Corporate Services Members of the Committee discussed the following:-
 - 1.1 That the Strategy should reflect the need to promote equality and diversity on the Big Society and reference is included in the Strategy to capture this.
 - 1.2 That the Strategy be circulated to all town and parish councils and for Equality and Diversity training to be offered to raise awareness as previously carried out.

2. **RECOMMENDED**

That reference to the Big Society be incorporated into the Equality and Diversity Strategy by the Director of Improvement and Corporate Services.

That the Strategy is supported and the comments of the Committee be considered by the Director of Improvement and Corporate Services.

Social Care, Health and Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee

- 1 In response to the quiz and the further clarification provided by the Director of Improvement and Corporate Services Members of the Committee discussed the following:-
 - 1.1 That the Strategy should reflect the need to promote equality and diversity on the Big Society and reference is included in the Strategy to capture this.
 - 1.2 The need for the Disability Guide for Councillors to be updated and reference made in the guide to Equality and Diversity. Members also commented on the high levels of abuse on disabled people highlighted in the presentation and the Corporate Policy Adviser (Equality and Diversity) confirmed the Community Safety Partnership Executive had picked up on these findings and an improved approach is being discussed.
 - 1.3 Whether complaints received by the public and staff had informed the strategy. The Corporate Policy Adviser explained that complaints although not referred to specifically in the Strategy had informed it and case studies are used in equality training.

2 **RECOMMENDED**

That reference to the Big Society be incorporated into the Equality and Diversity Strategy.

That the strategy is supported and the comments of the Committee be considered by the Director of Improvement and Corporate Services.

Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee

1. In response to the quiz and the further clarification provided by the Director of Improvement and Corporate Services Members of the Committee discussed the following:-
 - 1.1 The importance of Members taking a lead on equality and diversity.
 - 1.2 Whether Council funding was available to support schemes to improve disabled access to buildings. The Corporate Policy Adviser (equality and diversity) commented that whilst funds were not available work was undertaken with planning colleagues to ensure that designs and planning policy guidelines promoted disabled accessibility.
 - 1.3 Whether staff training was provided on cultural awareness. A Councillor referred to a specific incident where distress had been caused to a vulnerable resident as a result of cultural diversity. The

Director of Improvement and Corporate Services commented that training was provided to staff on customer care and the importance of treating all people with respect. The Corporate Policy Adviser (equality and diversity) also commented that specific training was provided to officers in housing due to the nature of their work. The specific case to which the Councillor referred could be used as a case-study in future training for officers.

- 1.4 Workforce information that was available annually relating to Council staff.
 - 1.5 The Council did not engage in positive discrimination as it was unlawful.
 - 1.6 The strategy should refer specifically to the Gypsy and Traveller community. The Committee agreed that specific references to this group should be included in the strategy to ensure that they were supported in a fair manner.
 - 1.7 The process through which complaints could be registered regarding the comments of local MPs on Gypsies and Travellers. The Director of Improvement and Corporate Services commented that the response depended on the nature of the comments of the MP but there was a due process through which any complaints would be taken.
2. In addition the Executive Member requested that his thanks be recorded to those staff engaged in drafting the Gypsy and Traveller Local Plan, who continued to work without prejudice when sites were proposed within the areas in which they resided.

RECOMMENDED

That the strategy is supported and the comments of the Committee be considered by the Director of Improvement and Corporate Services.