

Scrutiny Board

14 June 2016

Report title	Progress Report – Equalities Champion	
Cabinet member with lead responsibility	Councillor Milkinder Jaspal – Cabinet Member for Governance	
Wards affected	All	
Accountable director	Kevin O’Keefe – Director of Governance	
Originating service	Democracy	
Accountable employee(s)	Arif Sain	Head of Equalities and Diversity
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Report to be/has been considered by	N/a	

Recommendations for action:

1. The Scrutiny Board is asked to note and comment on the report

1.0 Summary

1.1 Key Achievements/Activities

- Reviewed and agreed the progress report on the Council's Equality Objectives Action Plan 2012 – 2016. Also approved new equality objectives for 2016 – 2018.
- On the 9 May 2016, the Council assessed itself as having reached 'Developing' status of the Equality Framework for Local Government.
- In addition, it also launched and signed up to the British Deaf Association's British Sign Language Charter to improve access and the rights of Deaf people.
- Attended Wolverhampton's LGBT Pride Indoor Event on 3 October 2015.
- Helped launched International Day Against Homophobia February 2016 and International Women's Week March 2016.
- The Council has revised its Equality Analysis processes to ensure that it is meaningful and robust.
- Championed the recent Equality Framework review and agreed plans to support the Council to reach 'Developing and 'Achieving' status.
- The Council has established new internal reporting structures which include directorate based equality groups that report into a strategic equality group.
- Reported to the Scrutiny Review Group on my role as a Champion for Equalities, Chair of the Equalities Project Board and the Corporate Equalities Steering Group.
- Attended meetings with the Equality & Diversity Forum, the Over 50's Group.
- Liaised with members of members of Wolverhampton Youth Council and Women of Wolverhampton.
- I have also worked with Wolverhampton Homes.

2.0 Background

- 2.1 Scrutiny has a key role to play in relation to equalities. Relatively new equalities duties mean that a public body's work in the field of equality is now as much statutory as many of these functions more traditionally accepted as local authority areas of responsibility. These statutory duties extend across the Council's functions and define the way we must work when we are making decisions on new policies or reviewing existing ones.
- 2.2 The Council has embarked on a new journey to reach 'Achieving' status of the Equality Framework for Local Government. The Council is aiming to reach 'Achieving' status of the Equality Framework by March 2017. The framework provides plans to support local authorities to develop and embed good equality and diversity practice; make a positive impact on our communities and help the Council to develop a highly skilled, diverse and inclusive workforce. Gaining an LGA Equality Award will help the Council to demonstrate to its service users and the wider community that equality really is at the heart of everything it does and the services it delivers.

There are three levels of accreditation, Developing, Achieving and Excellence.

- 2.3 In many instances these equality duties can be critically addressed by using equality analysis as a key part of service and policy design. As Equalities Champion, I have encouraged the use of this approach as a way of developing the best services and also protecting the Council from expensive legal challenge. I have also supported the review of this process which has led to the development of new equality analysis framework.
- 2.4 We need robust structures to help us to achieve positive change of equalities issues. To ensure that equality and diversity issues are embedded across the organisation the Council have developed a new Strategic Equality Group (SEG) which will be chaired by the Council's Corporate Equality Champion, Kevin O'Keefe. Three new Directorate Equality Groups have also been established which are chaired by Service Directors who will report into the SEG. However, this will only take us part of the journey. It is important that we urge Members, in their everyday work with the policy development process at WCC, to assist the Council's progress on equalities by paying close attention to reports, and particularly the equalities implications of these reports.
- 2.5 We are developing four staff equality forums covering all nine protected characteristic groups. It is hoped that this could be one of the measures required to support the Council identify objectives which will help us to identify barriers to recruitment and progression and develop actions that will tackle some of these issues.

3.0 Financial implications

- 3.1 There are no financial implications associated with the recommendation in this report as Scrutiny Board is requested to note the key achievements and activities outlined.
[GE/07062016/D]

4.0 Legal implications

- 4.1 The achievement of 'Developing' status of the Equality Framework will further support the Council in meeting it's duties under the Equality Act 2010.
[RB/07062016/M]

5.0 Equalities implications

- 5.1 The achievement of 'Developing' and 'Achieving' status of the Equality Framework will support the Council to develop and embed good equality and diversity practice and create a more diverse and inclusive workforce. The equalities implications for the authority are implicit in this report.

6.0 Environmental implications

- 6.1 There are no direct or indirect environmental implications.

7.0 Human resources implications

7.1 There are no human resource implications.

8.0 Corporate landlord implications

8.1 There are no corporate landlord implications.

9.0 Schedule of background papers

9.1 Non-applicable.