
ARGYLL AND BUTE COUNCIL STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT TEAM
CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S UNIT/POLICY AND STRATEGY 20 MAY 2008

EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY HALF-YEARLY REPORT TO 31 MARCH 2008

1. SUMMARY

This report covers actions relating to the Equality and Diversity Scheme, published on 6 December 2006, the Race Equality Scheme that was in place before this date, the Gender Equality Scheme published in June 2007, and on Equality Impact Assessments that have been completed. The reporting period covers 1 October 2007 – 31 March 2008.

2. RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that SMT notes the actions to date and continues to encourage services to be proactive in pursuing equality in the design and delivery of services. SMT is also asked to note that the Equality and Diversity Scheme will be revised to align the various equality duties and produce a single action plan.

3. UPDATE FOLLOWING SMT MEETING 6 NOVEMBER 2007

SMT requested a review of actions and any gaps in the process with a report back at the end of March 2008.

3.1 Equality Impact Assessments

The Equality and Diversity Action Plan includes a programme of Equality Impact Assessments. Internal Audit has agreed to monitor the number of Equality Impact Assessments that have been undertaken.

3.2 Strategic Board

SMT asked the Strategic Board Customer First and Public Sector Reform to:

- Consider ways to ensure that all employees have an understanding of the values that underpin equality
- Consider adopting a policy in relation to using inclusive language across all equality strands
- Consider how to take forward necessary actions, given the limited resources available in Policy and Strategy.

The Strategic Board has not yet met to consider this. A report will be taken to the Strategic Board at the next available meeting.

4. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY SCHEME ACTION PLANS

Services are continuing to monitor customer satisfaction through survey forms which include age, gender, disability and ethnic origin. A low response to these has been received and therefore it is not possible to draw any conclusions from the responses. Employee training in equality matters is continuing. Managers need to ensure that all employees receive training in equality matters.

5. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENTS

Equality Impact Assessments (EqIA) continue to be carried out. The table attached (Appendix 1) shows the completed assessments for the report period and those planned to be carried out in the next 6 months.

As a result of carrying out EqIA, some improvements have been made or are planned. For example, in Operational Services training needs have been identified for employees at all levels and this will take place during the next report period; in Planning and Performance individual work plans now include equality matters; the employee forum Equality Matters has met to consider communications and property, and taken appropriate action.

Further training sessions on how to use the Equality Impact Assessment will be held later in the year.

6. ALIGNMENT OF EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY SCHEME

The last Equality Update to SMT (6 November 2007) included a plan to revise the Scheme by 1 April 2008 to align the action plans to the same timetable and make reporting easier. Due to unforeseen priorities this revision has not been carried out. The review will be completed this year instead.

The new single Commission for Equality and Human Rights was set up on 1 October 2007 and has produced a single Equality and Diversity Scheme. The Commission has recommended that single equality schemes can be produced as long as actions are “levelled up” so that all equality strands meet the highest requirements of any one equality strand.

When the revised Equality Scheme is produced, actions will be put onto the performance management system, Pyramid.

7. CONCLUSION

Progress is being made in carrying out the equality action plan and this should continue. The Equality and Diversity Scheme and Action Plans will be revised to align the various equality duties and ensure links to the Corporate Plan.

For further details, contact:

Jennifer Swanson, Policy Officer (Strategy), Chief Executive's Unit
jennifer.swanson@argyll-bute.gov.uk Tel. 01546 604298