

**DRAFT EQUALITY SCHEME**

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**1. SUMMARY**

This paper outlines a revised approach to meeting the Council's equality duties and recommends that a new Draft Scheme (attached) is circulated for consultation. The new approach includes some actions to be undertaken corporately when previously they were undertaken by individual services.

**2. RECOMMENDATION**

- i. SMT recommends that the draft Equality Scheme (Appendix 1) goes out for consultation
- ii. Executive agrees to the proposed corporate approach
- iii. Executive agrees to monitor the Equality Scheme via a scorecard and where appropriate refer elements to the PPG Social Affairs or PPG Organisational Development
- iv. Executive notes the Advice from the Equality and Human Rights Commission regarding Equality Impact Assessments (App. 2).

**3. DETAIL**

**3.1 Background**

The current Equality and Diversity Scheme incorporated the Schemes for Race, Disability and Gender. Each of these equality duties operates to a different timescale due to the timetables dictated by previous individual equality commissions.

The commissions for Race, Disability and Equal Opportunity have been replaced by a single Commission for Equality and Human Rights that was set up on 1 October 2007. The Commission has produced a single Equality and Diversity Scheme and 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.

The Council's current Equality and Diversity Scheme has been revised to align the action plans that were previously separate. A single Action Plan makes sense as there are actions that have an impact on people in terms of gender and race and disability.

The Single Equality Scheme will also ensure alignment with the Council's Corporate Plan and with Service Plans. Services have

reviewed their actions and updated the Equality Scheme Action Plan accordingly.

### **3.2 New Approach**

Our objectives are to:

- ensure equality in the development and delivery of our services
- to be an equal opportunities employer
- have strong leadership – equality is one of the competencies of the Argyll and Bute Manager
- improve service delivery
- improve community engagement
- focus on outcomes.

The corporate lead for equalities lies with the Chief Executive's Unit. Each Strategic Director has specific responsibility for equalities within their department's area of responsibility. There are actions that are best suited to being carried out corporately, eg translation and interpretation, producing publications in easy read formats. By doing this corporately, we will improve our communication with our customers and also be able to keep track of demand for these services.

Equality training needs to have a corporate approach. The competency training being developed for the Argyll and Bute Manager will include equality. There are actions in the plan for equality training for employees at all levels and elected Members as it is essential that everyone understands their responsibilities in terms of equality. In addition to tutor-led development work, there will be a re-launch of the e-learning resource in April. Both managers and employees will be encouraged, and expected, to work through the e-learning materials. The courses will include:

- Age: Realising the benefits of an age diverse workforce
- Disability Confident: Working with disabled customers and colleagues
- Gender Matters: Creating an inclusive workplace for both women and men
- Religion and Belief: Respecting and accommodating faith and belief in the workplace
- Sexual Orientation: Respecting lesbian, gay and bisexual people in the work place
- The Diversity Challenge: Maximising the potential of our diverse workforce.

We need to improve the way in which we engage with communities. The new CPP Community Engagement strategy will apply to the way in which the Council involves seldom heard groups to help improve

services. This includes disabled people, young, old, people from different ethnic groups, as well as other under-represented groups.

Services are required to carry out Equality Impact Assessments of policies (new and when reviewed), functions and projects, to identify any potential adverse impact and take action to avoid this. An Advice Note produced by the Equality and Human Rights Commission (Appendix 2) outlines two cases to demonstrate the importance of carrying out Equality Impact Assessments. This should be noted.

There is a dual role for communication. The messages about equality need to be communicated internally but we also need to ensure that we communicate effectively with our customers and partners. There are actions in the Equality Scheme to address this.

### **3.2 Consultation about the Equality Scheme**

In addition to going onto the Council's website, the draft Scheme (Appendix 1) will be circulated to Community Planning partners, other organisations and voluntary groups for their feedback. The consultation period will last for at least 6 weeks.

### **3.3 Monitoring the Equality Scheme**

When the revised Equality Scheme is agreed, actions and performance indicators will be included in the performance management system, Pyramid and monitored by the Equality scorecard.

In terms of Elected Members monitoring the Equality Scheme, SMT has recommended that Members monitor the Equality Scheme via a scorecard and where appropriate refer elements to the PPG Social Affairs or PPG Organisational Development.

## **4 CONCLUSION**

This report summarises the new approach of the Single Equality Scheme. The report recommends that the Draft Single Equality Scheme (App. 1) goes out for consultation and asks for an agreed approach to monitoring by Elected Members via one of the Policy and Performance Groups. The Executive is also asked to note the advice from the Equality and Human Rights Commission.

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