

FOR PUBLICATION

LOCAL GOVERNMENT EQUALITIES FRAMEWORK – SELF ASSESSMENT **(S230)**

MEETING: 1. CABINET
2. EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR CUSTOMERS AND COMMUNITIES

DATE: 1. 06/05/14
2. 28/04/14

REPORT BY: POLICY MANAGER

WARD: ALL

COMMUNITY FORUM: ALL

BACKGROUND PAPERS FOR PUBLIC REPORTS:

- Peer Challenge report – achieving level
 - Narrative and self assessment – achieving level
 - Full self assessment – excellent level
- Documents are available from the Policy section – Town Hall room 1.13
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1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1 To self assess the Council's achievements against the Local Government Equalities Framework – excellent level.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 That the Council continues to progress towards the excellent level of the Local Government Equality Framework via self assessment.

2.2 That the Council re-assesses the position against the framework in 2015/16.

3.0 BACKGROUND

3.1 In February 2011 the Council was peer assessed against the Local Government Equality Framework achieving level. The Council was successful in meeting the criteria for the achieving level and started to move towards the highest level of the framework – excellent.

3.2 In March 2012 the Local Government Association re-launched the Local Government Equality Framework taking into account the requirements of the Equality Act 2010. This new framework is a much tougher test with extended criteria requirements for all levels.

3.3 Since 2012/13 the Council has sought to consolidate performance at the now tougher achieving levels as well as make progress towards the excellent level.

4.0 **PROGRESS TOWARDS THE EXCELLENT LEVEL**

4.1 The Equality Performance Management Group which includes representatives from all service areas have now completed the excellent level self assessment for the Council.

4.2 The excellent level of the framework is split into 28 different performance areas. Appendix A shows how the Council is currently performing against each performance criteria and the progress made since the last assessment in 2012/13. In 2012/13 the Council met or exceeded over 75% the criteria in 18 of the 28 performance areas. The latest self assessment identifies that over 75% of the criteria was met or exceeded in 26 of the 28 performance areas.

4.3 During 2013/14 several key programmes have contributed to meeting the criteria including:

- Are You Being Served and STAR Survey public satisfaction surveys and associated benchmarking
- Chesterfield Equality and Diversity Forum – taking a more pro-active approach in lobbying, improving accessibility of services and developing partnership based educational and promotional events
- Equality leadership – A range of successful activities during 2013/14 promoting the Council as a strong equalities advocate and leader
- The launch of Community Assemblies and community development activities
- Employee engagement initiatives have been strengthened significantly with best practice developed in Housing, Business Transformation and Leisure being utilised in other service areas. The commitment to undertake an annual employee surveys and a robust action plan are also a significant step.
- Learning, development and growing our own talent have taken significant strides during 2013/14 with the success of the project academy and launch of leadership training and mentoring.

4.4 Despite reaching above 75% compliance in all but two areas there are significant challenges in maintaining this performance in future years given the current and future financial difficulties the Council faces. In other areas

of the framework such as Communications the pressure is always on to respond to technology and social changes e.g. social media, website development etc. these areas often require significant human resources and financial investment just to maintain current performance levels.

5.0 **NEXT STEPS**

- 5.1 Gap analysis has been undertaken during the self assessment programme. A number of areas have been identified where improvement is needed to fully meet the excellent level criteria; however it is recognised that in the short term scope for progress is limited, due in part to the current financial challenges facing the Council. Discussions are currently taking place around the most effective way to address a number of challenging issues including the Council's employee demographic profile, contract negotiation regarding equalities impact, communication and technology in the medium term.
- 5.2 The key issue for 2014/15 will be maintaining this strong performance. Activities such as the Equality and Diversity training programme, EIA clinics and awareness raising events all contribute to this agenda. It is recommended that the Council complete the self assessment programme again in 2015/16.

6.0 **CONSIDERATIONS**

- 6.1 Risk Management – The Government have confirmed that the Equality Act will be reviewed again during 2015/16. During this period there may be significant changes in Equality legislative requirements.
- 6.2 Equalities – By working towards the excellent level of the local Government Equality Framework the Council is continuing to demonstrate its commitment to Equality, Diversity and Social Inclusion by going above and beyond minimum legal standards.
- 6.3 Overview and Scrutiny – The draft self assessment was discussed at the Customers, Community and Organisational Development Scrutiny Committee on the 10th April. The Committee thanked all the officers and members involved in Equality and Diversity achievements during the year and acknowledged the challenges during 2014/15 in maintaining the progress made.

7.0 **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 7.1 That the Council continues to progress towards the excellent level of the Local Government Equality Framework via self assessment.

7.2 That the Council re-assesses the position against the framework in 2015/16.

8.0 **REASON FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

8.1 To deliver our commitment to Equality, Diversity and Social Inclusion and improve knowledge and understanding these issues.

D. REDDISH
POLICY MANAGER

Further information on this matter can be obtained from Donna Reddish (Extension 5307).

Officer recommendation supported/not supported/modified as below or Executive Members' recommendation/comments if no Officer recommendation.

S.L. Blank.

Signed

Executive Member

Date 28. 4.14

Consultee Lead Member/Support Member comments (if applicable)