

REPORT TO CABINET

REPORT OF: CORPORATE MANAGER, HUMAN RESOURCES
AND ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

REPORT NO: HR & OD 75

DATE: 7 February 2005

TITLE:	REVIEW OF COUNCIL'S GENERIC EQUALITIES SCHEME
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COUNCIL AIMS/PORTFOLIO HOLDER NAME AND DESIGNATION:	Councillor Linda Neal Leader
CORPORATE PRIORITY:	Equality and Diversity
CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS:	Reporting of racial incidents
FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT IMPLICATIONS:	
BACKGROUND PAPERS:	Generic Equality Scheme The Equality Standard for Local Government – Audit and Self- Assessment The Duty to promote Race Equality – A guide for Public Authorities – Commission for Race Equality

1. I ask that the Cabinet consider the Generic Equality Scheme noting that it has been pre-scrutinised. After consideration, I request the Cabinet to recommend this or a similar scheme to the Council for approval.

BACKGROUND

2. The Council has a statutory duty to publish a Race Equality Scheme. In March 2003, it chose to incorporate its Race Equality Scheme within a Generic Equality Scheme covering gender, people with a disability, race, religious belief and age. The Council is required to review the scheme at least every three years.
3. A completely new scheme is presented with this Report. Over and above the statutory duty of the Council to regularly review its Equality Scheme (minimum every three years), there are a number of other reasons why a comprehensive review is appropriate at this time. These include:-
 - (1) Diversity is a Category B priority.
 - (2) In order to comply with our legal responsibilities the scheme requires significant development particularly in relation to assessing impact of individual Council functions.
 - (3) Many people perceive that the demographic composition of our local population is rapidly changing. The Council needs to prepare by mainstreaming the issue of race equality into policy development and consultation processes.
 - (4) There has been some change in legislation since the last scheme was published.
 - (5) The Council has identified access to services as a Category A priority. This has great significance to groups such as those with a disability or those whose first language is not English etc.
4. In preparing this revised scheme I have concentrated upon the issues of race. Although we have chosen to produce a generic scheme there are very specific duties concerning race with which the Council is legally required to comply. Some of these are not covered in the current scheme.
5. The underlying purpose of a Generic Equality Scheme is to set out a framework for the development of equality and diversity issues in a systematic way. Though the need for this has been driven by the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 the systematic approach is very appropriate to all equality and diversity issues.

OUTCOME OF SCRUTINY

6. The scheme was subject to pre-scrutiny by the Communications & Engagement DSP. The recommendations of that panel were:-
 - (1) To adopt the new Generic Equality Scheme

- (2) That Best Value targets relating to diversity should not be treated as a final objective but, when achieved, the Council should continue working on achieving further improvements in this area
- (3) To give further consideration to how itinerant travellers are addressed in the Action Plan
- (4) To inform the general public on the Generic Equality Scheme via the Local Area Assemblies.

C J Sharp
Corporate Manager
Human Resources and Organisational Development
January 2005