

REPORT TO ENGAGEMENT P.D.G.

REPORT OF: Teena Twelves: Corporate Head, Sustainable Communities

REPORT NO: CHSC0018

DATE: Engagement PDG September 10

TITLE:	Equalities Monitoring Form + Information Leaflet	
KEY DECISION OR POLICY FRAMEWORK PROPOSAL:	N/A	
PORTFOLIO HOLDER: NAME AND DESIGNATION:	Cllr Frances Cartwright Member Champion Equality & Diversity	
CONTACT OFFICER:	Elaine Claridge (Equalities Project Officer) 01476 406299 e.claridge@southkesteven.gov.uk	
INITIAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT:	Carried out and Referred to in paragraph (7) below:	Full impact assessment Required:
Equality and Diversity	N/A	
FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT:	This report is publicly available via the Local Democracy link on the Council's website: www.southkesteven.gov.uk	
BACKGROUND PAPERS	Corporate Equality Scheme 2009 – 2012 (adopted April 2009)	

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That Engagement PDG considers the use of the New Equalities Monitoring Form by all Council Services
2. That this form replaces the Original Equalities Monitoring Form in use since 2004
3. That Engagement PDG considers the Equalities Monitoring Information leaflet to accompany the monitoring form

2. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT/DECISION REQUIRED

Equalities Monitoring Form

Since the original equalities monitoring form was set up the Government has introduced the Equality Bill 2009. This bill is currently going through the committee stage and is expected to receive Royal Assent in the spring of 2010, with the majority of the bill coming into force in the Autumn 2010. This bill will place new statutory duties on public bodies in addition to those which already exist. The new duties will include the duty to promote equality in respect of Religion/belief, Sexual Orientation and towards people who are Transgender.

In order to ensure that the Council is delivering appropriate and fully accessible services to all groups of people within our diverse communities it is necessary for us to understand the demographic makeup of our customers and to be able to measure how different groups experience service delivery and what their level of satisfaction with our services is. The information we gather using equalities monitoring will

- help us improve service delivery by ensuring services are needs led
- help us to conduct robust Equality Impact Assessments (EIA)
- identify any unmet needs or gaps within our services e.g accessibility for people with learning difficulties.

The results of EIAs will also be used to inform our policies, procedures, service and budget planning.

SKDC, together with all the other councils in Lincolnshire, is working towards the “achieving” level of the new Equality Framework for local government. In order to reach this level it is necessary that we know the makeup of our communities and that we can demonstrate how we are actively consulting with “hard to reach” communities to ensure that everyone has a voice in local government.

Equalities Monitoring Information Leaflet

Some of the information we are requesting is often seen as sensitive by some people therefore, the Equalities Monitoring Information Leaflet has been designed to inform our customers why we are asking them to complete the monitoring form and how we intend to use the information from them. For example, the information that we collect will be analysed to see how our services are used and who by. It is essential to help us check that our policies, services and culture are meeting the needs of the community. Monitoring our services will help us to understand which groups are using our services and see if levels of satisfaction are the same for all groups. It also tells us if we are reaching under-represented groups and if the services we provide are relevant to their needs and provided fairly.

3. DETAILS OF REPORT (SUMMARY – USE APPENDICES FOR DETAILED INFORMATION)

The Lincolnshire councils are working together on the equalities agenda and towards Comprehensive Area Assessment. The proposed comprehensive Equalities monitoring form will bring SKDC’s monitoring in line with all the other local authorities in Lincolnshire and the County Council and will help us to share information, understand how service delivery is similar to or different from those of other Councils in the area, and also enable us to share some of the costs of meeting statutory requirements e.g. by providing and arranging joint training on equalities.

If enacted, the provisions of the current Equality Bill 2009 will place significant extra statutory duties on public bodies to promote equality for 8 groups of people, therefore unless we begin to gather the necessary data on strands such as religion/belief and sexual orientation we will not be able to carry out robust and meaningful Equality Impact Assessments which are a statutory requirement and take into account all community groups.

The results of the monitoring will enable us to identify issues such as under/over use of services and if/ where accessibility is a problem for certain sections of the SKDCs

diverse communities. Knowing who our customers are and what their needs are will provide specific evidence for Service Managers to develop their service plans, write policies and plan their budgets more effectively by targeting resources where they are most needed.

A recent survey which has been carried out by all Councils in Lincolnshire to obtain information on equalities and diversity has shown that people are prepared to answer questions such as those on the proposed monitoring form. It will be important to handle the matter with sensitivity, and staff will be given training and support to enable them to collect the information. Also, it should be noted that providing equalities information is never obligatory – it is always a matter for the discretion of the individual whether to answer any or all of the questions put to them.

4. OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

Continuing with the original monitoring form:

This option has been rejected as the original monitoring form is not comprehensive and does not take into account the new equalities legislation or provide SKDC with a uniform approach to equalities monitoring in line with the other Lincolnshire District Councils and Lincolnshire County Council.

Not producing an information leaflet:

This option has been rejected. By providing residents with information about why we conduct equalities monitoring and how we use the information we can hopefully allay any fears/reservations that people have as to why we are asking for these details and promote a better and more meaningful response.

5. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

Monitoring Form: As this will be replacing the form currently in use, there will be no additional resource implications that are not already covered in service budgets.

Information Leaflet: This leaflet will be produced in house and so costs will be kept to a minimum. It is estimated that costs would be 20p per copy (for a colour version). Each service area would be able to order copies in appropriate batches as and when needed.

6. RISK AND MITIGATION (INCLUDING HEALTH AND SAFETY AND DATA QUALITY)

If the Council does not make sure our equalities monitoring is comprehensive and uniform across all services we will be unable to determine the effect of our service delivery on all community groups and whether there are any unmet needs. By knowing where and who our diverse communities are we will be able to target our increasingly scarce resources more appropriately and effectively.

In order to work together with the other public authorities for Comprehensive Area Assessment it is helpful that we adopt an approach to equalities monitoring which is

consistent with the other local authorities in Lincolnshire.

7. ISSUES ARISING FROM EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Not Applicable.

8. CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

Not Applicable.

9. COMMENTS OF SECTION 151 OFFICER

I have no specific financial comments to make in respect of this report. Any financial implications arising from the proposal will be met from existing resources.

10. COMMENTS OF MONITORING OFFICER

As noted in the report if enacted the provisions of the Equality Bill 2009 will place significant extra statutory duties on public bodies to promote equality across 8 equality groups. In preparation for the introduction of the Bill it is important that this authority puts measures in place to meet the needs of the Bill. It is appropriate that a uniform approach to equalities monitoring, in line with other Lincolnshire District Councils and Lincolnshire County Council in order to work together for comprehensive area assessment, is adopted.

The information sought will be sensitive personal data for the purposes of the Data Protection Act (DPA) and should be handled in line with the requirements of the DPA.

11. COMMENTS OF OTHER RELEVANT SERVICE MANAGER

The monitoring form and leaflet have been put before and approved by the Corporate Equalities Steering Group i.e. Management Team.

12. APPENDICES: