

Equality Standard Level 2 Self Assessment – Havant Borough Council

Background

Throughout 2006 and 2007 Havant Borough Council has been working towards achieving Level 2 of the Equality Standard for Local Government. This Standard is a framework for Local Government bodies to enable them to embed Equalities legislation in all its functions – Employment, Procurement, Provision of goods, services and facilities (including those services we provide through our contractors), policy formulation and decision making.

The main objectives for achieving Level 2 are listed below:

Assessment and Community Engagement

To achieve Level 2 of the Standard an authority will need to demonstrate:

- **That it has developed systems for self-assessment, scrutiny and audit as the basis for continuous improvement**
- **That it has engaged in equality impact assessment**
- **That it has undertaken self-assessment across the authority**
- **That it has involved designated community, staff and stakeholder groups in service planning**
- **That it has engaged in the development of information and monitoring systems**
- **That it has engaged in an equality action planning process for employment, pay and service delivery**

Methodology

During 2006 a “Comprehensive Equality Action Plan” was devised by the Equality Standard Project Team (Officers from across the Councils services) Incorporating each of the points above and also the 6 Equality strands protected by legislation (age, disability, gender, race and religion or belief).

This action plan can be found as an appendix to this document.

After consultation with the Equality Project Assurance Team (PAT)¹, a list of ‘evidence to be scrutinised’ was agreed and this was duly investigated by the PAT on Nov 28th 1430 – 1630 at Havant Borough Council (HBC). This exercise enabled the Council to self assess and achieve Level 2 of the Equality Standard. The following evidence was scrutinised:

Action 7 Establish clear procurement guidance to ensure suppliers work in accordance with Equality Standard principles

The Procurement Manager gave a summary of the new guidance (circulated prior to the meeting) written for the Council. The new guidance incorporates Equalities Legislation, both through employment and the provision of goods, services and facilities. The new Procurement Guidance ensures that those organisations and individuals the Council does its business with adhere to the

¹ this team scrutinises the work of the Equality Standard Project Team and has senior Council managers and external members such as Citizens Advice Bureaux and Havant Community Council of Community Service

principles contained within Havant Borough Council's Corporate Equality Policy and they are also required to demonstrate that they comply with Equalities Legislation and also is in accordance with the Equality Standard Principles.

Action 16 Develop a corporate framework for equality consultation and guidance on consultation methods to be adopted within the authority

The Market Research and Consultation Officer gave a summary of the work: there is a corporate consultation toolkit that includes a section on harder to reach communities and is currently being updated to include formally the 6 equality strands (by Feb 08). A directory of voluntary and community groups based in the Borough has been produced to assist people in finding representation and the current Citizens Panel (the Councils dedicated consultation panel made up of residents across the Borough) is also being completely overhauled to refresh its membership as gaps had been identified in particular segments of the community, particularly younger people and those on lower incomes.

A standardised equal opportunities monitoring form for the Council is currently being finalised and the Hampshire Race and Equality Network were to be approached with a view to standardising monitoring County Wide.

Action 3 Publish draft Comprehensive Equality Action Plan for consultation and engagement with community partners (covering race, gender, disability, sexual orientation religion or belief and age)

The Strategic Partnerships Adviser gave an explanation of the process undertaken to produce the action plan (including the Minutes of the Executive Management Team's decision to approve the plan – incorporating all 6 equality strands. The consultation process was also explained – this happened in January and February 2007 and involved the Citizens panel, staff and the wider communities with access to the world wide internet (placed on the Intranet and the HBC Website) this consultation took place alongside the Disability Equality Scheme.

Action 10 Annual Report on progress to EMT and Members published on website

The Strategic Partnerships Advisor & Equalities shared a copy of the Members Briefing Presentation held on 16th October 2006 – to the team, which fully outlined the role of the Equality Standard and how it fitted into work at HBC (including statistics of the population by Ward).

The Equalities and Access Officer showed an extract of the Executive Management Team minutes (meeting held on 30th Oct 2007) where a full update of the Action Plan had been produced and presented.

It was also explained that the Action plan was updated bi monthly on the Website and Intranet (for staff).

Action 47 Ensure all employment procedures are consistent with current legislation and Employment Codes of Practice

The HR & Learning Adviser tabled the Review Programme for all HR policies, much work has already been started and a draft Recruitment Policy has been

produced. Completion of the review is expected during 2008. The ambitious project will lead HBC well into Level 3 of the Standard.

Action 37- 46 Undertake Equalities awareness training for the whole organisation and Service Partners

The HR & Learning Adviser tabled a copy of the Corporate Equality and Diversity Learning Plan, which has already begun and thoroughly covers the organisation and includes Service Partners (contractors). Consultants have been procured to deliver this training for Councillors, Executive Management Team, Service Team Leaders and Equality Champions. This external facilitation will be complete by Jan 16th 2008 and Champions will then deliver relevant awareness raising sessions across each service area. The aim of using Champions is to build the organisations capacity for a sustainable and ongoing Learning programme for the future.

Action 68 Equality Impact Assessment: Recruitment and employment

The HR & Learning Adviser tabled this Equality Impact Assessment and reaffirmed the Actions above (action 47). Highlighted areas for improvement from the Impact assessment (regarding race, religion or belief, age and disability): Raising Cultural awareness: welcome posters in different languages have been put on walls in main reception areas, a multi faith calendar has been produced and added to the website for those planning meetings/events to ensure a more inclusive way of working. Links have been established for alternative format arrangements (including language). The disability 2 ticks scheme is being brought back to the top of the agenda and new age discrimination legislation has been included into the new HR policies and procedures.

Action 54 Equality Impact Assessment: Homelessness

The Housing Services Manager tabled this document and explained that monitoring of service users (customers) is a weakness certainly in terms of matching people to properties (disability). This issue is currently being looked at corporately (see above action 3) However the new "choice based" Letting Scheme due to be introduced in 2008 will allow residents to bid for appropriate properties and will provide equal access and choice to housing available. This will be monitored to ensure that it does reverse the identified weakness.

Action 62 Equality Impact Assessment: Grants to voluntary and community organisations

The Community Regeneration Manager tabled this document and explained that current Service Level Agreements (contracts) have been running for some time and are close to review. The aim of the new Agreements will be more "outcome focussed". There is one highlighted contract where a grant is given to an organisation whose main focus is single sex (Rape Crisis), however there is also some provision for men through information and support). The assessment also ensured that a new assisted form filling service can be offered and also literature is also available in alternative formats.

Action 8 Develop HBC website & establish links to other useful websites incorporated with Action 21 Ensure all Equality documentation is accessible to all community groups and stakeholders

The Equalities and Access Officer updated the group about the new web site features that include "browse aloud", larger font, accessible keys, full web translation into certain European languages and also details of how to contact the Council in 7 minority languages.

The HBC community newspaper Serving You now includes information of how to obtain alternative formats and periodically has specific Equality and Diversity updates.

The Equality and Diversity web pages have been updated throughout the year and include all Equality Schemes and the Action Plan - also links to useful and relevant other websites, agencies and organisations are included in this area.

Presentations and feedback sessions had been held regarding the Gender Equality Scheme (Community Boards) and the Disability Equality Scheme (HBC Disability Access Group and other key stakeholders) since this Officer came into post in April 2007.

Action 18 Develop links with a wide range of community groups to assist with corporate policy formulation and implementation

The Equalities and Access Officer explained that a meeting had taken place in Emsworth 5th October with key agencies and community representatives with an aim to finding out more and sharing information about Black and Minority Ethnic groups including migrant workers. Havant Borough Council proposed that this group be encouraged to meet more often and invite more community group representatives with an aim to become a new diversity steering group for the Borough. Objectives will include partnership working and to be the strategic lead on matters of diversity, to help inform priorities of the Havant Community Partnership and to investigate a central resource for collating and sharing monitoring statistics/point of contact for BME communities and help build a community profile.

The existing Access Group has recently been reviewed, with terms of reference and objectives set by its disabled members and the name has been changed to HBC Disability Access Group. This group assists with planning and policy and target setting (involvement and consultation).

Outcomes of the Self Assessment

After all the evidence had been reviewed the Equality Assurance Team unanimously voted in favour of the achievement of Level 2 of the Equality Standard by Havant Borough Council.

Appendix

Comprehensive Equality Action Plan

If you require more information about this document or if you require this document in an alternative format/language please contact:

Customer Services 023 92 474174 or email

customer.services@havant.gov.uk