
A CORPORATE EQUALITIES REVIEW AND PLAN DOCUMENT

**Responsible Cabinet Member -Councillor Williams – The Leader
Responsible Director – Ada Burns, Chief Executive**

Purpose of Report

1. To seek endorsement of the Council's second Corporate Equalities Review and Plan document (attached as an appendix).

Summary

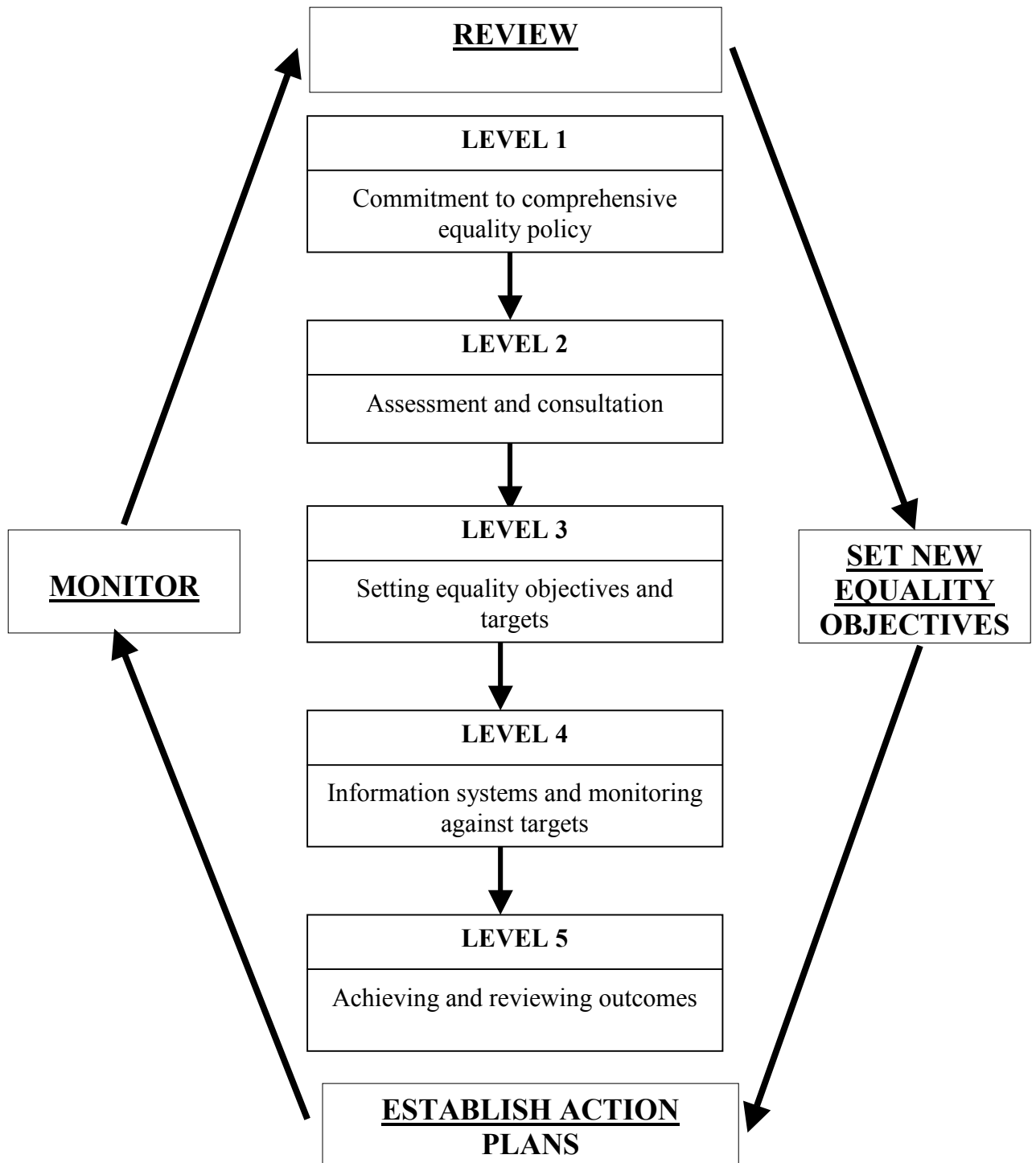
2. The Council is reminded about the outline of the five stage process of the Equality Standard for Local Government.
3. Attainment of this standard constitutes the attainment of our target performance for BVPI 2a. Work in this area links clearly to the Council's other work in equalities, diversity, community cohesion and the broad social inclusion agenda.
4. Endorsement of the attached document is the final stage in the Council's journey towards securing level 3 of the Equality Standard.
5. The contents of the document are summarised.

Information and Analysis

6. The Standard recognises the importance of providing equal access to local government services and employment, and fair treatment for staff and customers. It is a tool to provide a way of ensuring that the equalities agenda is mainstreamed across departments and services.

The Equality Standard - how it works

Continuous Improvement through Equality Management



7. Specifically, level three of the Equality Standard entails improving performance in assessment and consultation. To achieve level three of the Standard an authority will need to demonstrate that:
 - (a) it has completed a full and systematic consultation process with designated community, staff and stakeholder groups;
 - (b) it has set equality objectives for employment, pay and service delivery based on impact and needs/requirement assessment and consultation;
 - (c) equality objectives have been translated into action plans with specific targets;
 - (d) it is developing information and monitoring systems that allow it to assess progress in achieving targets;
 - (e) action on achieving targets has started.

Executive Summary

8. The Corporate Equalities Review and Plan (CERP) shows how Darlington Borough Council is putting into place actions that support its commitment to equality for all. It contains the Council's review of its equalities performance and a timetable showing how quickly its performance will improve in the future.
9. After this executive summary, the CERP contains nine sections. Section:
 - (a) **one** explains why the Council needs to produce a CERP;
 - (b) **two** sets out the Council's equalities policy;
 - (c) **three** explains what the Equality Standard for Local Government is and sets out some aspects of equalities law with which the Council has to comply;
 - (d) **four** describes the Council's commitment to leading and managing our equalities work properly. It also describes the role of equalities in both our partnerships and in the processes that we go through to buy goods and services;
 - (e) **five** shows how we have looked at equalities issues in relation to every major service that the Council provides and explains how we will achieve improvements;
 - (f) **six** shows what we have achieved in relation to employment and training issues;
 - (g) **seven** is a major section which sets out the Council's new race equality scheme. This scheme is partly a response to the requirements of race equality legislation, which means that the Council must set out clearly what it will do to:
 - eliminate unlawful discrimination
 - promote equality of opportunity
 - promote good race relations between people of different racial groups;

- (h) **eight** shows why the Council thinks that it has achieved level three of the Equality Standard for Local Government;
 - (i) **nine** shows how we are consulting with people about our equalities work and how the Council is checking that the work we are committed to is actually being done;
 - (j) **ten** summarises our plans for the future.
10. The document will be available to view in full at www.darlington.gov.uk from 1st November 2005.
11. Importantly, the document also amends other Council policies and practice.
12. It contains the Council's revised and updated equalities policy, which has now been fully expanded to cover issues relating to race equality. This policy has been developed in consultation with Darlington and County Durham Race Equality Council and Joint Consultative Committee. The equalities policy complements Race Equality Scheme 2, which the document also contains. Scheme 2 summarises Council performance during the first scheme, in line with our statutory reporting duty. It exceeds our statutory duty by building on the first Race Equality Scheme to commit the organisation to actions resulting from the recent round of equalities impact assessments in the areas of race, culture and nationality.
13. The third change relates to the development of a Code of Practice for Equalities in Procurement. This offers managers guidance on how the Council's commitment to the equalities agenda should be embedded in procurement processes and contracting arrangements.

External Challenge

14. Doug Feery Associates have won a contract to deliver the "Putting the Quality into Equality" project in Darlington. Doug himself is a practising barrister specialising in equalities law. His team is given added credibility with the inclusion of one of the authors of the Equality Standard for Local Government. The aims of the project are to provide an external challenge to the Council's equalities work and to provide remedial assistance in areas requiring improvement. Their diagnostic report shows that the Council's attainment of level 3 of the Standard is conditional upon the achievement of a number of actions:
- (a) Develop Systems to achieve stronger corporate accountability and greater consistency in the systems for self-assessment and INRA.
 - (b) Ensure that service managers improve their understanding of how to use equality INRA as a way of constructing equality objectives and performance indicators.
 - (c) Continue with the Integration of performance management structures with the requirements of the Equality Standard to ensure that equality objectives are fully mainstreamed.
 - (d) Ensure that more rigorous and analytical self-assessment is used within performance management and the systems of corporate accountability (identified in (a), above, are

applied).

- (e) Ensure that monitoring systems are established to collect data and measure progress against objectives and PI's. Give some consideration to developing local Performance Indicators linked to service drivers within respective operational plans.

Legal Implications

- 15. This report has been considered by the Borough Solicitor for legal implications in accordance with the Council's approved procedures. There are no issues which the Borough Solicitor considers need to be brought to the specific attention of Members, other than those highlighted in the report.

Outcome of Consultation

- 16. Consultation on the development of equalities work in Darlington has been carried out by Renaissance. They contacted each of the thirteen groups that the Council has found most difficult to engage with in the past. The results of this are summarised on pages 184 to 186 of the Corporate Equalities Review and Plan 2005/06 as appended to the report.

Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998

- 17. The contents of this report have been considered in the context of the requirements placed on the Council by Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, namely, the duty on the Council to exercise its functions with due regard to the likely effect of the exercise of those functions on, and the need to do all that it reasonably can to prevent, crime and disorder in its area. It is not considered that the contents of this report have any such effect.

Council Policy Framework

- 18. Some issues contained within this report represent changes to Council policy.

Decision Deadline

- 19. For the purpose of the 'call-in' procedure this does not represent an urgent matter.

Conclusion

- 20. It is appropriate for the Council to deliver improvements in its equalities performance in the context of a strategic approach to the whole social inclusion agenda. The best way of doing this is to charge the Social Inclusion Implementation Group with the task of producing subsequent Corporate Equalities Plan and Review documents as required. The frequency of publishing this document is likely to be every eighteen months in line with our ambitions to reach level five of the Equality Standard for Local Government by March 2009.

Recommendation

- 21. It is recommended that:

- (a) Cabinet endorse the contents of the second Corporate Equalities Plan and Review;

- (b) Cabinet note the contents of the report of Doug Feery Associates and agree to receive a future report detailing the achievement of any outstanding actions.

Reasons

22. The recommendations are supported by the following reason: level 3 of the Equality Standard for Local Government cannot be attained without member approval of the Corporate Equalities Plan and Review Document.

Lorraine O'Donnell
Head of Policy

Background Papers

Relevant legislation listed in report, Darlington Borough Council's Best Value Performance Plan.

David Plews : Extension 2023
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