
A CORPORATE EQUALITIES PLAN AND REVIEW DOCUMENT

**Responsible Cabinet Member(s) - Councillor Don Bristow,
Resource Management Portfolio
Responsible Director(s) - Barry Keel, Chief Executive**

Purpose of Report

1. To seek endorsement of the new Corporate Equalities Plan and Review Document (attached as an appendix).

Summary

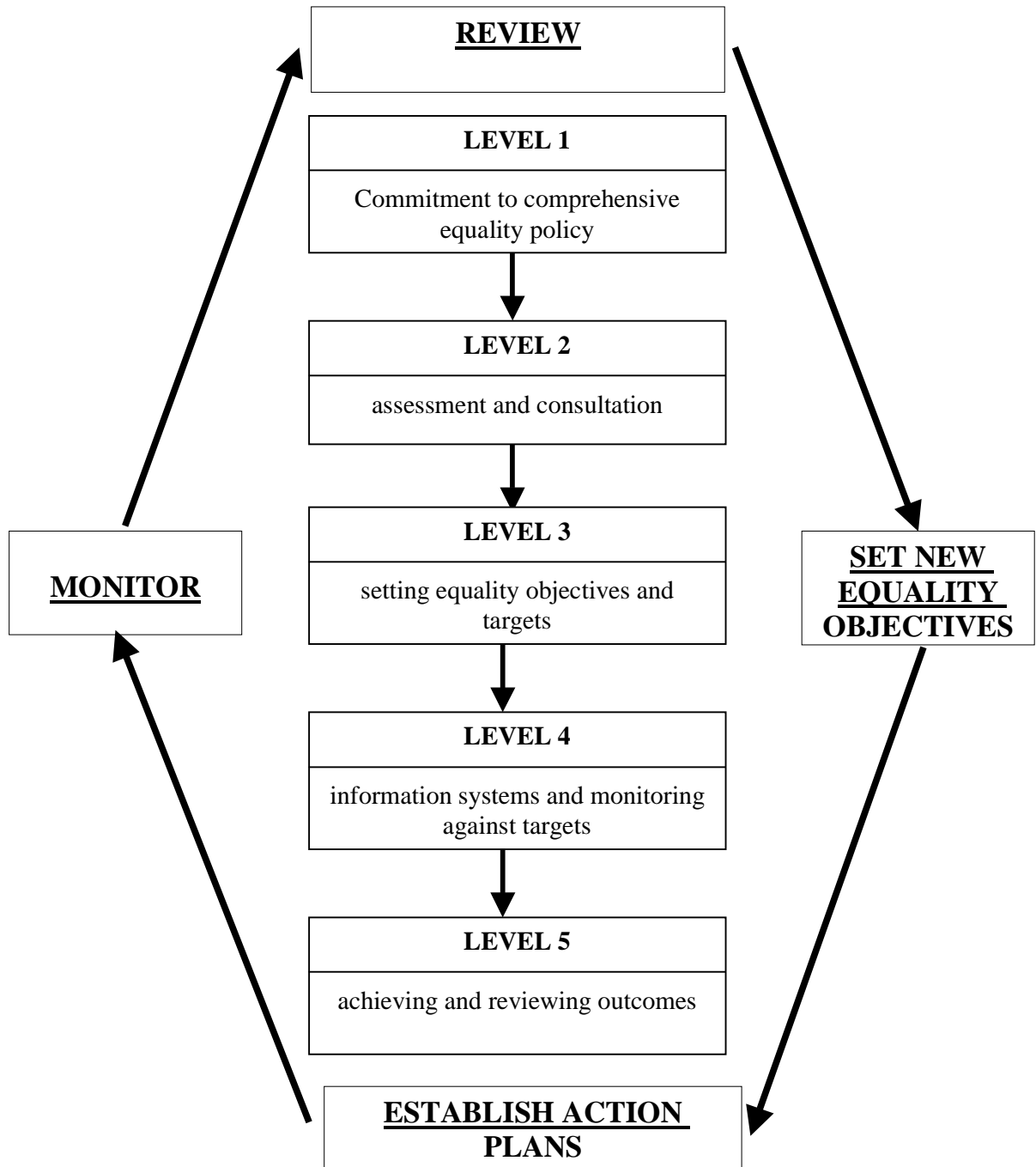
2. The Council is reminded about the outline of the five stage process of the Equality Standard for Local Government.
3. Attainment of this standard constitutes the attainment of our target performance for BVPI 2a. Work in this area links clearly to the Council's other work in equalities, diversity, 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 2 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 two of the Equality Standard entails improving performance in assessment and consultation. To achieve level two of the standard an authority will need to demonstrate that it:
 - (a) has engaged in equalities policy impact and needs/requirements assessment;
 - (b) has engaged in consultation with the designated community, staff and partners/stakeholder groups;
 - (c) has engaged in the development of information and monitoring systems;
 - (d) is engaged in an equality action planning process for employment, pay and service delivery;
 - (e) is developing a system of self-assessment, scrutiny and audit.
8. The Corporate Equalities Plan and Review Document sets out detailed proof of the Council's attainment of level two. It explains the Council's commitment to the equalities agenda and how this fits into the wider social inclusion agenda. Furthermore, the document explains our plans for the future, including specific details about a "theory of change" model that will be developed with the implementation of the forthcoming Social Inclusion Strategy for Darlington.

Legal Implications

9. 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.

Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998

10. 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

11. The issues contained within this report are required to be considered by Council. They have already been considered by the Cabinet at their meeting on 30th March 2004.

Conclusion

12. 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

13. Council are requested to :-

- (a) endorse the contents of the Corporate Equalities Plan and Review document;
- (b) approve the development of subsequent Corporate Equalities Plan and Review documents as the most effective mechanism for reporting and planning for improvements in performance against the Equality Standard for Local Government.

Reasons

14. The recommendations are supported by the following reason: level 2 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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