

MUNICIPAL YEAR 2013/2014 REPORT NO. 231

MEETING TITLE AND DATE:
Cabinet – 9 April 2014

REPORT OF:
The Chief Executive and
Director of Finance, Resources
and Customer Services

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Agenda – Part: 1

Item: 8

Subject: Fairness for All - Equality and
Diversity Summary Annual Report 2013

Wards: All

Cabinet Members consulted:

Cllr. Doug Taylor and Cllr. Christine Hamilton

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Enfield Council's Equality and Diversity Scheme Summary Annual Report 2013 highlights what the Council has done in the last year, and what we plan to do in the future, to meet the duties placed on all public sector bodies under the Equality Act 2010.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

Cabinet considers and approves the publication of the Equality and Diversity Annual Report attached as an appendix to this report.

3. BACKGROUND

3.1 The Equality Act 2010 -

- aimed to make the law easier to understand and implement by simplifying 116 pieces of existing equality legislation into a single Act
- identified nine protected characteristics that the legislation aims to protect from discrimination - age, disability, gender, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, sexual orientation, religion or belief, and marriage and civil partnership

3.2 The Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) within the Act requires public bodies to consider, and have due regard to, the needs of diverse groups when designing, evaluating and delivering services in order to -

- eliminate discrimination
- advance equality of opportunity and access, and
- foster good relations between different groups in the community.

3.3 The specific duties under the Act require all councils to publish specific and measurable equality objectives. These objectives should be revised at least every four years. In Enfield, the majority of the Council's corporate objectives relate to tackling inequality. As a result, we have adopted these as our equalities objectives, and report on the positive progress against them in our annual report.

3.4 The Government's Red Tape Challenge reviewed the PSED 'to establish whether it is operating as intended'. It reported in September 2013, and decided to postpone a full review until 2016. For that reason, the current legislation still applies.

3.5 On 9th September 2011, the Government published Statutory Instrument 2011 No. 2260 – The Equality Act (Specific Duties) Regulations 2011. These regulations apply to all local authorities in the country. All authorities with more than 150 employees must –

- publish information to demonstrate its compliance with section 149(1) of the Act by 31st January 2012 and at least annually after that.
- publish information relating to persons who share a relevant protected characteristic who are either its employees or other persons affected by its policies and practices
- publish one or more specific and measurable objectives that it thinks should achieve the requirements of the Public Sector Equality Duty. It must then publish objectives subsequently at intervals of not greater than four years

All the information above must be published in such a manner that is accessible to the public, and authorities can publish it within another document if appropriate.

3.6 The Council publishes an Equality and Diversity Scheme Annual Report that updates progress against the Council's equality objectives. 2013 has been a year of significant achievement for the Council as we have made substantial progress in embedding the equality and diversity agenda deeper into how we work. This commitment has been typified by our receiving the honour of gaining accreditation as an 'excellent' authority under the Equality Framework for Local Government – one of only twelve councils in the country to receive this accolade. The awarding of 'excellent' status from the Local Government Association stands as testament to our determination to provide our residents and customers with services that are fair for all.

3.7 In addition to achieving excellence, we continue to deliver, in partnership, a programme of positive activities that benefit all sections

of the local community. A few examples to illustrate our commitment include:

- a comprehensive programme of events to celebrate Black History Month in October 2013. These were well received by audiences and participants and feature as a regular part of the equality programme of activities
- provision of Capacity Building funds for our diverse communities to enable residents to play a fuller and more active role in civic life. The fund provides much needed support to a range of disadvantaged and vulnerable communities so that they are empowered to develop and grow and thereby promote community cohesion across the borough
- Enfield Council continues to support and develop the Youth Engagement Panel and Parent Engagement Panel so that they are better able to provide the support services to young people and their families

The Annual Report attached to this covering report provides further details on the Council's achievements in supporting fairness for all in Enfield.

4. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

No alternative options were considered as this is a statutory obligation.

5. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

The proposed recommendations will ensure that the Council complies with legislation. The recommendations also meet the requirements of the Equality Framework for Local Government for which the Council has been awarded accreditation at the excellent level (one of only 12 authorities nationally).

6. COMMENTS OF THE DIRECTOR OF FINANCE, RESOURCES AND CUSTOMER SERVICES AND OTHER DEPARTMENTS

6.1 Financial Implications

There are no financial implications arising directly from this report – all costs will be met from existing budgets.

6.2 Legal Implications

6.2.1 Legal implications are set out in sector 3 of the report, which sets out in detail what the Council has done and must do in order to comply with the Public Sector and

specific duties of the Equality Act 2010 and the Equality Act (Specific Duties) Regulations 2011.

6.2.2 The Equality Act can be enforced by a Judicial Review of a decision, a civil claim against the Council or a claim in the Employment Tribunal, depending upon the breach.

7. KEY RISKS

Approval of the Annual Report should prevent the risk of non-compliance with the Equality Act 2010.

8. IMPACT ON COUNCIL PRIORITIES

8.1 Fairness for All

Meeting the requirements of the Equality Act 2010 will ensure that the Council is effectively tackling discrimination, and advancing equality of opportunity, for the benefit of all residents of the borough.

8.2 Growth and Sustainability

None.

8.3 Strong Communities

Meeting the requirements of the Equality Act 2010 will ensure that the Council is effectively fostering good relations in the local community for the benefit of all residents of the borough.

9. EQUALITIES IMPACT IMPLICATIONS

An equality impact assessment/analysis of the Council's compliance with the duties of the Equality Act 2010 has been undertaken and has concluded that compliance is likely to have only a positive impact on all groups in the community, as the aim of the new legislation is to combat discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good community relations. However, people who are married or in a civil partnership are only protected from the discrimination element of the duties.

10. PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

Compliance with the legal requirements of the Equality Act 2010 is essential, will contribute to the achievement of the 'excellent' rating in the Equality Framework for Local Government, and help ensure that consideration of equalities issues is embedded across the Council.

11. HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

There are no health and safety implications directly pertaining to this report.

12. HR IMPLICATIONS

The annual report includes information on equalities in relation to staff who work for the Council, and the training they receive in order to provide services fairly to all customers and residents.

13. PUBLIC HEALTH IMPLICATIONS

The Annual Report covers all Council services and activities including public health. Many of the actions included in the report relate to activities designed to reduce public health inequalities through increasing access to services.

Appendix

Fairness for All - Enfield Council's Equality and Diversity Summary Annual Report 2013

Background Papers

Fairness for All - Enfield Council's Equality and Diversity Annual Report 2013