



Policy and Resources Committee – 12 March 2012

Equality Objective 2012-16

Purpose of report

This report seeks Member approval for the proposed Equality Objective for East Northamptonshire Council over the period 2012-16, as required under the Equality Act 2010.

Attachment(s)

Appendix 1: Equality Impact Assessment

1.0 Background

1.1 The public sector equality duty (the equality duty) is made up of a general equality duty which is supported by specific duties. The general equality duty requires public authorities, in the exercise of their functions, to have due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Act
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and people who do not share it
- Foster good relations between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not share it

1.2 The protected characteristics covered by the Equality Duty are;

- Age
- Disability
- Gender reassignment
- Marriage and civil partnership
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Race
- Religion or belief
- Sex
- Sexual orientation

1.3 Public authorities must:

- Prepare and publish one or more objectives they think they should achieve to do any of the things mentioned in the aims of the general equality duty (see paragraph 1.1) by 6 April 2012, and at least every four years thereafter
- Ensure that those objectives are specific and measurable
- Publish those objectives in such a manner that they are accessible to the public

2.0 Proposed equality objective

2.1 An equality objective is an aim to address the biggest and most pressing equality issue facing the protected characteristics that an organisation provides services for

and employs.

- 2.2 A review of the Council's key policies was undertaken to establish what Members already considered to be important outcomes for the Council in relation to equality issues.
- 2.3 Alongside this, the Council met its legal requirement under the Equality Act 2010 to publish information to show its compliance with the Equality Duty by 31 January 2012 (the *East Northamptonshire Story 2012*). This information included:
- Information relating to employees who share protected characteristics
 - Information relating to people who are affected by its policies and practices who share protected characteristics (for example, service users)
- 2.4 This revealed that although no issues had arisen in relation to either service delivery or staff regarding equality matters, there were gaps in the data gathered on service users and staff which is needed to help improve service delivery and inform decision-making. Without addressing these gaps, there is a danger that we do not have a clear understanding of the needs of our residents, service users, and staff, which could lead to dissatisfaction with the Council as a service provider and employer and a mis-direction of resources. Respondents to any such information gathering exercise would always have the option not to answer any questions they would prefer to leave blank.
- 2.5 With this in mind, it is proposed that the equality objective for East Northamptonshire Council (with a review date of no later than 6 April 2016) is:
- Ensure we have understanding of and regard to equality issues from the customer's perspective in our decision-making
- 2.6 The following actions will help to achieve this objective:
- Provide training for Members and Officers around equality legislation
 - Collect information regarding the protected characteristics of our service users, where appropriate and relevant to the improved design and delivery of services
 - Collect information regarding the protected characteristics of our staff, where appropriate and relevant to our role as an employer
 - Analyse and use the protected characteristic information to inform equality impact assessments
 - Identify community groups and local organisations who may be able to help us assess the impacts of our policies and the way we deliver services
 - Revise the policy development and decision-making process to ensure that equality impact assessments are carried out in good time to be considered at the point of decision-making at Committee stage and to feed into the development of policies and strategies

3.0 Equality and Diversity Implications

- 3.1 An initial Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) has been carried out and found that the implications for all equality groups would be positive. The EIA is appended to this report.

4.0 Legal Implications

- 4.1 The Council must publish one or more equality objectives by 6 April 2012 in order to

meet its legal duties under:

- Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 (the public sector equality duty), and
- The Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties) Regulations 2011

4.2 The Equality and Human Rights Commission has statutory powers to enforce the general and specific duties, ranging from issuing a compliance notice to applying for a judicial review.

5.0 Risk Management

5.1 The risk register includes a risk in the Resources & Organisational Development area of 'non-compliance with equalities legislation' (Risk 494). The purpose of publishing the equality objective, and undertaking the associated actions, is to ensure this risk is anticipated and mitigated.

6.0 Financial Implications

6.1 There are no financial implications arising from the proposals, although there could be financial implications relating to potential legal challenges if the objective is not agreed by the deadline.

7.0 Corporate Outcomes

7.1 The Corporate Outcomes the equality objective seeks to deliver are:

- Effective Management
- High Quality Service Delivery
- Strong Community Leadership
- Knowledge of Customers and Communities
- Employees and Members with the Right Knowledge, Skills and Behaviours

8.0 Recommendation

8.1 The Committee is recommended to approve the proposed equality objective set out in paragraph 2.5

(Reason: to meet the duties of the Equality Act 2010)

Legal	Power: Equality Act 2010				
	Other considerations:				
Background Papers: East Northamptonshire Story 2012					
Person Originating Report: Emma Gadsby, Policy & Performance Manager					
Date: 17 February 2012					
CFO		MO		CX	

(Committee Report Normal Rev. 22)



EIA Initial Screening Form – policy

1. Name of Policy:	Equality objective
2. Name and Job title / role of person completing Initial Screening:	Emma Gadsby, Policy & Performance Manager
3. What is the main purpose of the Policy?	<p>To meet the specific duties of the Equality Act 2010 which requires public authorities to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prepare and publish one or more objectives they think they should achieve to do any of the things mentioned in the general equality duty, by 6 April 2012, and at least every four years thereafter • Ensure that those objectives are specific measurable • Publish those objectives in such a manner that they are accessible to the public
4. Who is the Policy aimed at?	The objective is intended to be a goal for East Northamptonshire Council staff to achieve, with the outcomes being beneficial to service users and staff.
5. How is the success of the Policy measured?	An action plan will be developed to monitor achievements over four years (the life of this particular objective)
6. Are equality monitoring systems for the Policy in place?	Although monitoring systems for the objective itself will not be in place, two of the main actions to achieve it involve improving the monitoring systems currently in place.

7. Use the following table to indicate using a ✓:

- a) Where you think that the Policy could have a positive impact on any of the groups or contribute to promoting equality of opportunity or improving relations within equality groups.
- b) Where you think that the Policy could have a negative impact on any of the equality groups i.e. it could disadvantage them.
- c) Where you think that the Policy could have a neutral impact on any of the equality group i.e. no impact

Equality Group	Positive Impact	Negative Impact	Neutral Impact	Reason
Gender:				The objective is intended to deliver a positive outcome for all equality groups
Women/Girls	✓			
Men/Boys	✓			
Transgender people	✓			
Sexual Orientation:				
Lesbians, gay men and bisexuals	✓			
Race/Ethnicity:				
White British people	✓			
White non-British people (including Irish people)	✓			
Asian or Asian British people	✓			
Black or Black British people	✓			
People of mixed heritage	✓			
Chinese people	✓			
Travellers (Gypsy/Roma/Irish heritage)	✓			
People from other ethnic groups	✓			
People who do not have English as their first language	✓			

Equality Group	Positive Impact	Negative Impact	Neutral Impact	Reason
Disability:				See above
Physical impairment, e.g mobility issues which mean using a wheelchair or crutches.	✓			
Sensory impairment, e.g blind/having a serious visual impairment, deaf/having a serious hearing impairment.	✓			
Mental health condition, e.g depression or schizophrenia	✓			
Learning disability/difficulty, e.g. Down's syndrome or dyslexia, or cognitive impairment such as autistic spectrum disorder	✓			
Long-standing illness or health condition, e.g. cancer, HIV. Diabetes, chronic heart disease or epilepsy	✓			
Other health problems or impairments (<i>please specify if appropriate</i>)				
Age:				
Older People (60+)	✓			
Children and Young People (see guidance for definition)	✓			
Religion/Belief:				
Christian	✓			
Buddhist	✓			
Hindu	✓			
Jewish	✓			
Muslim	✓			
Sikh	✓			
Other religion (including holding no belief)	✓			

Equality Group	Positive Impact	Negative Impact	Neutral Impact	Reason
Other Potentially Affected Groups				See above
Rural Isolation - People who live in rural areas e.g isolated geographically, lack of internet access	✓			
Socio-economic Exclusion – e.g. people who are on benefits, have low educational attainment, single parents, people living in poor quality housing, people who have poor access to services, the unemployed or any combination of these and the other protected strands	✓			
Any other potentially affected groups (<i>please specify</i>)				
8. If you have indicated that there is a negative impact on any group: N/A				
a) Is that impact against legislation?	Yes	No		
b) What is the level of impact?	High	Low		
9. Could you minimise or remove any negative impact that is of low significance?	How?			
10. Could you improve a positive impact of the Policy?	Once developed, the action plan will be monitored and if further improvements can be made, this will be addressed during the life of this particular objective.			
11. If there is no evidence that the Policy promotes equality of opportunity or improved relations, could it be adapted so that it does?	N/A			
Head of Service signature				
Date of Initial Screening:				



Equality Impact Assessment Action Plan

Action identified	Key activity	How will we know this has been achieved? (measures, milestones and dates)	Officer responsible	Quarterly progress update
TO BE COMPLETED BY 6 APRIL 2012				

Planned date for next EIA exercise	
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