LANCASTER CITY COUNCIL

Promoting City, Coast & Countryside

CORPORATE EQUALITY PLAN [DRAFT]

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CORPORATE EQUALITY PLAN

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CORPORATE EQUALITY PLAN

1. Introduction

This document will help the Council achieve the aims and objectives that are set out within the Equal Opportunities Policy.

The Corporate Equality Plan (CEP) sets out how Lancaster City Council will promote Equality and Diversity and achieve any key objectives that have been set.

Implementation of the equality objectives will be addressed within each Service's business plans. Services will be expected to link their equality action plans and targets to the corporate objectives.

The Service's equality plans will clearly identify the people responsible for the carrying out the actions as well as identifying the owners of the actions with clear identifiable timescales.

Service plans will state who their stakeholders are and how they will consult with the stakeholders. The Service plans will identify how they will monitor the progress of the equality plans and how the plans will be evaluated.

The Corporate Equality and Diversity Officers Working Group will monitor the progress of the Service's equality action plans.

The Corporate Equality Plan will be reviewed every three years from the date of publication.

2. Our vision

Our district wide aim is that by:

'Promoting city, coast and countryside, we will achieve lasting opportunities for all in a safe and healthy district that's proud of its natural and cultural assets.'

In Morecambe this means a seaside town recognised as vital and vibrant in an exceptional natural setting with a sustainable economy and a stable resident community.

In Lancaster this means being recognised as a nationally and internationally important University city with an envied quality of life, rich heritage, strong economic opportunity and social cohesion.

In our Rural Areas this means a sustainable quality of life that protects communities and precious landscapes while providing the economic opportunity to flourish.

3. Our Values

Our Core Values are:

<u>Putting the Needs of the Public First</u>
We will treat everyone respectfully and professionally and provide services that respond to changing needs.

Community Leadership and Partnership
We will bring the community together to deal with the major issues facing our district and work with our Partners to deliver real improvement.

Improving Services
We will constantly seek to improve the services that we provide to the community.

To improve the quality of life for children and young people
We will adopt the five outcomes from Every Child Matters as guiding principles in the design and delivery of our services to young people in the district.

Equality of Opportunity
We are committed to providing services that recognise different needs within our community and aim to reduce inequalities.

Open, Responsive and Accountable Government and Sound Decision Making
We want transparent decision-making, public consultation, two-way communication and public involvement so our services meet the needs of our citizens.

Sustainable Development
We consider the long-term impact of our decisions on the environmental, social and economic makeup of our district.

Sound Financial Management
We are committed to effective, efficient and prudent management of the Council's financial affairs.

Good employment Practice
We are committed to high standards of employment practice.

4. Legislation and standards

The Council has legal responsibilities under the following equalities legislation:

- Equal Pay Act, 1970
- Sex Discrimination Act, 1975 (updated 1986) (Amendment) Regulations 2007
- Race Relations Act, 1976 and its amendments 2000
- Disability Discrimination Act, 2005
- Human Rights Act, 1998
- Employment Equality (Religion or Belief) Regulations 2003
- Employment Equality Sexual Orientation) Regulations 2003
- Employment Equality (Age) Regulations 2006
- Equality Act 2006 (Part 2 introduced protection against discrimination on grounds of religion or belief in the provision of goods, facilities or services, etc.)
- Equality Act (Sexual Orientation) Regulations 2007

Through European Directives, Lancaster City Council has a responsibility to promote equal opportunities in employment on grounds of race, sexual orientation, religion and age.

The Race Relations Amendment Act 2000 requires all public agencies to publish a Race Equality Scheme. Lancaster City Council published the Race Equality policy in 2001.

On the 4th December 2006, the Disability Discrimination Act 2005 required all public agencies to publish a Disability Equality Scheme.

In 2002 the Government introduced an equality standard against which all local authorities must report annually.

5. Key Equality Target

The Council has set a target to achieve level 2 of the Equality Standard for Local Government by November 2007. The Council aims to achieve level 3 by the 31st March 2010.

6. The Council's Corporate Equality and Diversity Statement

The Council is committed to equal opportunities and has stated:

'Lancaster City Council aims to be an Equal Opportunities organisation and has a legal and ethical responsibility to act fairly, as an employer, and in the provision and delivery of its services and in its duty to promote the social, economic and environmental well-being in the communities of the District. This means that the Council will do everything possible to ensure that every client, customer, job applicant and employee has equal access to employment opportunities or the Council's services and is treated with dignity and respect.'

Lancaster City Council aims to provide equality of opportunity and equal access for all. The Council, in both its employment practices and in the delivery of its services recognises the diversity of the people and communities in the District and is committed to:

- Ensuring that clients, customers, job applicants and employees do not receive less favourable treatment on the grounds of race, colour, religion, nationality, gender, marital status, sexual orientation, disability or age.
- Tackling areas of potential discrimination to ensure services, employment arrangements and employee training and development opportunities are offered equitably and appropriately.
- Ensuring that all appropriate steps are taken to ensure that representation of minority groups within the workforce is maximised.
- Sustaining progress on the implementation of equal opportunities.
- Consulting with service users, employees, community groups and partner organisations about the development and implementation of equality objectives.
- Carrying out service audits and maintaining and improving monitoring arrangements designed to identify areas for development of action plans to bring about equality of opportunity.
- Securing the support of internal and external partners and contractors for its equality objectives.
- Complying with the Equality Standard for Local Government within the Council and other agreed external measurement models, including the requirements of the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000, to develop its equality plans and in order to demonstrate continuous improvement.

7. Lancaster City Council's Equality and Diversity Policy

The policy sets out the Council's commitment to the promotion of equalities through its role as employer, service provider / purchaser and community leader.

The Equality and Diversity Policy is available on the jobs section of the internet for potential applicants to view, a statement is included in the guidance that is sent to prospective candidates and new starters review the policy as part of their induction.

The Council runs a quarterly induction day that incorporates a section on Equality and Diversity. The Council holds a number of training courses to promote equality and diversity within the organisation and this helps to enhance equality of treatment and access in service delivery.

The Council ensures that wherever possible all public buildings and premises owned or held by the Council has access for use by all sections of the community.

8. The Council as community leader in promoting equality and diversity

The Local Government Act 2000 gave local authorities a key duty to promote the social, economic and environmental well being of the Community. In partnership with stakeholders, this will be achieved through the Community Strategy. The overall aim of the Community Strategy is to enhance the economic, social and environmental well being of our area, based on the aspirations and needs of our varied communities.

The objectives of our Community Strategy are to:

- Encourage and engage our local communities in Lancaster, Morecambe and the surrounding areas to express their hopes, needs and principles.
- Focus and shape the activities of the Council, other public sector organisations and those in the voluntary, community and private sectors to meet those community needs and priorities.
- Co-ordinate the strategies and actions of the member organisation by making better use of resources, improving efficiency and sharing expertise.

There are five principles that underpin the strategic objectives. They are inter-related and represent a desire to include as many people as we can in the richness of life in our district:

- Equity
- Accessibility
- Participation
- Inclusivity
- Reducing Health Inequalities

The Council aims to support sustainable development and ensuring everyone has the opportunity to achieve their full potential through education, information, participation, good health and rewarding employment. The Council is committed to developing a united community where there is a common vision, diversity is positively valued and everyone has equal access to life opportunities.

9. Equality, diversity and partnership

The Council has entered into a number of partnerships to ‘join up’ and improve service delivery to all our citizens. These include such areas as young people, health, education, regeneration, crime and safety.

The Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) brings together representatives of the public, business, education, voluntary and community sectors.

10. Council structures to support the equality and diversity agenda

The Council is composed of 60 Councillors elected every four years and they meet together as the Council. The Council appoints the Leader and Cabinet members and agrees representation on the Council Committees, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and

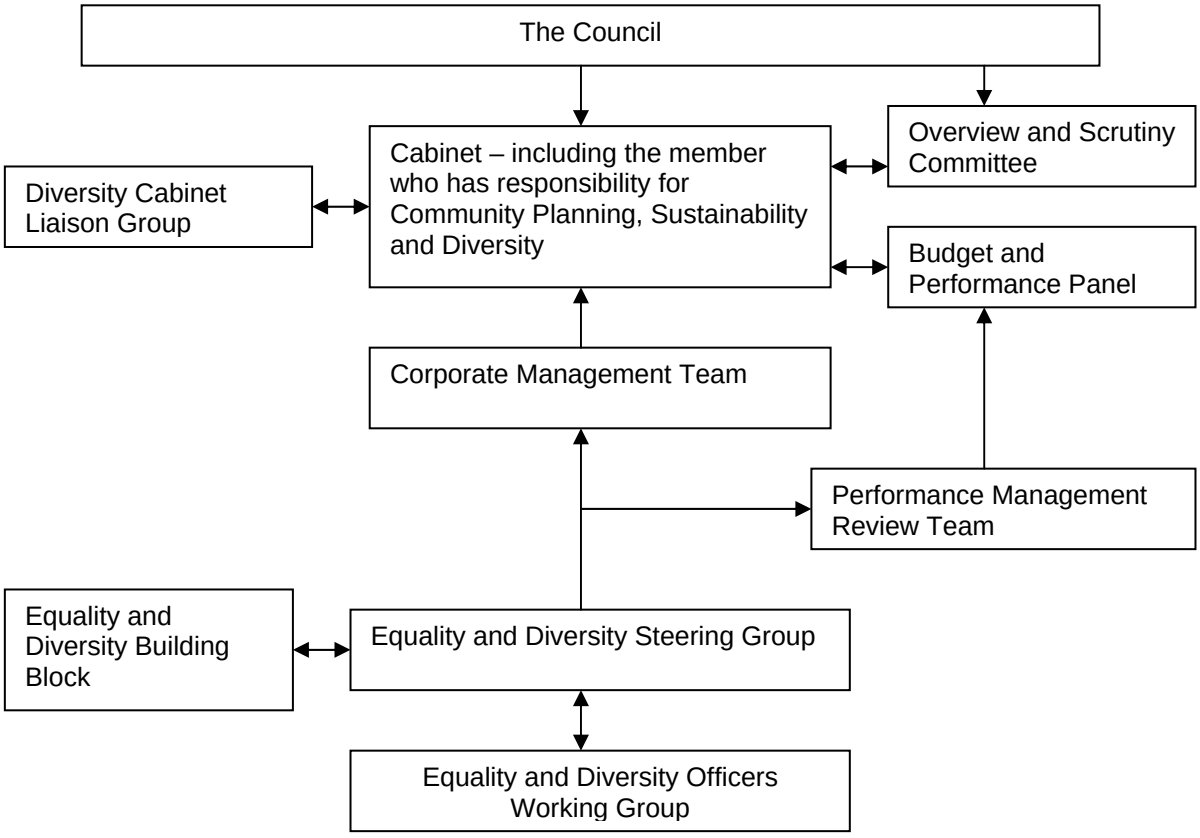
Budget and Performance Panel. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee monitors the decisions made by Cabinet and can recommend that Cabinet reconsider decisions.

A member of the Cabinet has responsibility for Community Planning, Sustainability and Diversity. The Cabinet makes day to day decisions in line with the Council's overall policies and budgets.
The Council is a member of the Equality and Diversity Building Block. This group brings together representatives from local employers and voluntary organisations. The Cabinet member with responsibility for Community Planning, Sustainability and Diversity sits on this group.

The Council has an Equality and Diversity Steering Group that is chaired by the Chief Executive. The group develops the Corporate approach to equality and diversity and monitors the progress of Services against key objectives. The group updates the corporate management team as and when required.

The Council has set up the Equality and Diversity Officers Working Group; which also includes all members of the Equality and Diversity Steering Group. The purpose of the group is to ensure a corporate approach to equality and diversity, to share good practice and to report back on the progress made against the agreed objectives.

A performance management review team meets quarterly to review the progress of Equality and Diversity as a key objective for the Council. This is then reported at the Budget and Performance Panel.



11. Performance and Best Value: mechanisms for equality mainstreaming

Best Value is about making continuous improvements to the services used by people who live in the district. Best Value reviews are a key way of delivering this by taking a fundamental look at our services and finding better ways of working internally and with our

partners to make a significant improvement to our services. The council believes that the most effective way of mainstreaming equality and diversity into the core business of the council is through the best value programme.

To help Lancaster City Council continually improve services there needs to be a process to help manage change and project management is seen as the tool to help us do this. Lancaster City Council's approach to managing projects (LAMP) will further mainstream equality and diversity within the organisation. The LAMP approach ensures that all projects have a business case that includes an Equality Impact Assessment. LAMP will also be used to manage any changes or introduce new policies and processes associated with equality and diversity.

12. The Equality Standard

The Equality Standard for local government gives local authorities a framework to ensure that equalities is mainstreamed in all aspects of the Council's business as service provider, employer and community leader.

The Equality Standard was introduced as a performance indicator in 2002/03. Authorities are required to report annually the level of the standard that they have achieved.

13. Race Equality Scheme

In 2001 Lancaster City Council carried out a review of the strategic management of race equality, the Council's Race Equality Scheme incorporates the findings of this review. The Scheme sets out how the Council will meet its specific responsibilities under the Race Relations Amendment Act 2002. The action plan for the scheme will run in parallel with and complement the Corporate Equalities Plan.

14. Disability Equality Scheme

The Council has developed a Disability Equality Scheme that became effective from the 4th December 2006. The Scheme sets out how the Council will meet its specific responsibilities under the Disability Discrimination Act 1995.

15. Gender Equality Scheme

The Council has developed a Gender Equality Scheme that sets out how the Council will meet its specific responsibilities.

16. Equality Impact Assessment

An Equality Impact Assessment is the process of systematically analysing a proposed policy or strategy, to identify what effect, or likely effect will follow from the implementation of the policy for different groups in the community. Equality Impact Assessments are concerned with anticipating and identifying the equality consequences of particular policy initiatives and ensuring that as far as possible any negative consequences for a particular group or sector of the community are eliminated, minimised or counterbalanced by other measures.

The Council will develop guidelines for staff to carry out equality impact assessments. These are required to enable staff to carry out the Council's duty under equality legislation.

17. Employment and Training

The Council seeks to ensure that our workforce is representative of the district's economically active population. This is carried out via fair recruitment procedures and specific action e.g. encouraging applications from young people.

It is intended that all employees have a regular review of their work at which their performance and development needs will be discussed. This will be carried out via a variety of means including the Employee Development and Performance Appraisal process (EDPA).

The Council's aim is that all employees have an equitable opportunity of undertaking learning and development opportunities. The responsibility for ensuring this happens is both corporate and locally within the Services.

The Council has a number of specific targets for employment related activities. We will monitor activity against these targets and evaluate the application of our employment policies and procedures to ensure that they are being fairly applied. Monthly reports and an annual employment profile will be published.

The Council will seek to provide equal pay for equal work by continuing to apply Fair Pay objectively and introducing a fit for purpose pay structure. We will continue to work towards achieving single status for all employees.

We have comprehensive policies and procedures that govern the employment relationship. Relevant training and advice will support managers in order that they may understand and be equipped to carry out their responsibilities.

18. Consultation

The Council uses a range of consultation strategies with its staff and the public. The Council has a formal Negotiation and Consultation procedure but uses other mechanisms such as a staff opinion survey every two years, focus groups and speakeasy.

The Council uses a range of mechanisms to consult with local residents. These range from Consultation Finder that is an on-line database, to open meetings, focus groups and user / resident surveys.

Consultation with stakeholders is a key part of best value reviews. The Council has a number of systems in place to assist with consultation, to evaluate the results of consultation across all reviews and report back to the stakeholders.

The results of all consultation undertaken using all these mechanisms and including specific consultation with equalities groups, will be used to inform the review of our functions, performance management and policy development.

19. Monitoring and Complaints

The responsibility for the regular monitoring of progress in meeting our duties under the relevant legislation and statutory guidance will lie with the Equalities Steering Group supported by staff across the Council.

Progress on implementation and compliance will be reported to Cabinet and the Personnel Committee who will hold officers accountable for the delivery on the action plan and timetable. The Equalities Steering Group will identify key equality indicators that will be reported to the Committees.

Progress on implementation and compliance will also be monitored at the Performance Management Review meetings for Human Resources.

Any proposals to develop or change policies will be required to include an equality impact assessment. All reports contain a section to outline the consultation outcomes and a section to describe any impact on diversity.

The Council is committed to delivering quality services and has set standards by which complaints should be investigated.

20. Publicising plans, activities and reporting progress

Progress on implementing the Corporate Equality Plan, Race Equality Scheme, Disability Equality Scheme and Gender Equality Scheme will be reported annually to the performance management review team, Cabinet, Personnel Committee and Joint Consultative Committee.

Relevant information will be posted on the Councils internal and external website. Hard copies of the document will be made available on request.

The Corporate Equality Plan will be reviewed after 3 years from the date of publication.

21. Ensuring Public Access to information

The Council has an accessible information policy with systems and resources set up to ensure information is available in other languages and formats on request.

Where required we provide interpreters in order to communicate with service users.

22. Action Plan and timetable

Lancaster City Council has set a realistic target of achieving level2 by 31st March 2008 and level 3 of the Local Government Equality Standard by 31st March 2010. At each level there are four areas for consideration, which require a number of corporate objectives and actions. Below are the objectives required to help the council achieve level three and these will be integrated into the corporate and service business planning process.

Leadership and corporate commitment
The council will ensure that equality and diversity is seen as a priority in all policy development and planning. It will also ensure that employees, service users, partners, contractors and organisations that come into contact with the Council are aware of its equality and diversity policy and service action plans.

<u>Action</u>

Level 2

- Create a report template for developing information and monitoring systems.
- Review the mechanisms that are in place to respond to harassment on the grounds of race, disability and gender.

Level 3

- Ensure all services set targets based on the equality objectives.
- Establish mechanisms for ensuring equality targets are met by suppliers through contract management.
- Ensure Services are reporting on relevant performance indicators relating to equality and these are incorporated in the Equality action plans.
- Ensure the Corporate Equalities Group review progress of the Corporate Equality Plan and Service action plans.
- Ensure a structure is in place to ensure member and senior officer commitment of the action plans.

Consultation, community development and scrutiny
The Council is committed to consulting with local residents in a variety of ways in order to involve local citizens in policy and service review, development and change. It recognises the importance of encouraging the involvement of all communities of interest in all aspects of the life of the District.

Action

Level 2

- Ensure the Corporate Equality Action Plan is circulated to relevant stakeholders and is available in a range of languages and formats on request.
- Ensure the Community Strategy's equality content is consistent with the equality plans.
- Establish consultation including meetings with designated community, staff and stakeholder groups on all aspects of the equality policy.
- Consult with members, employee representatives and services on all aspects of Corporate Equality Plan.
- To ensure every Service has consulted with community, staff and stakeholder groups on its equality impact and service delivery.
- To ensure that every service has engaged with equality self-assessment, scrutiny and audit on its service delivery.
- The Council will promote the equality policy and objectives in any 'partnership' arrangements.

Level 3

- Ensure all service level and employment action objectives and targets are available for consultation and scrutiny by the public.
- Ensure there is full and systematic consultation process with designated community, staff and stakeholder groups.
- To ensure that consultation takes place on how to involve designated community, staff and stakeholder groups with scrutiny procedures.
- To fully integrate the Corporate Equality Plan into the Community Strategy.

Service Delivery and Customer Care
The Council will ensure equity in service delivery.

Action

Level 2

- Ensure each Service carries out relevant impact needs assessments resulting in equality objectives and targets. That the review incorporates procurement, contracted services and partnership arrangements.
- To ensure that each service establishes monitoring and information systems for equality.

Level 3

- Ensure that each Service complies with the various equality procedures, policies and plans.
- To ensure that Service planning addresses the issues of barriers, accessibility and reasonable adjustment.
- To ensure that Services allocate resources and establish structures to ensure equality targets are implemented.
- To review and adapt as necessary the information and monitoring systems.
- To ensure that contracts require agencies delivering services on behalf of the Council deliver an effective and appropriate service, fairly and without unlawful

discrimination. To establish a mechanism to monitor how agencies are adhering to the contract.

Employment and Training
The Council will seek to ensure that our workforce is representative of the District's economically active population. This will be carried out via fair recruitment procedures and employment policies. We will ensure employees have an equitable opportunity of undertaking learning and development activities.

Action

Level 2

- Conduct an employment equality assessment of the local labour market area.
- Review recruitment policies and employment procedures including all relevant documentation to ensure that they are consistent with current legislation.
- Review the information and monitoring systems.
- Ensure training supports the Corporate equality plan and service objectives.

Level 3

- Set employment equality targets for recruitment; staff retention and workforce profiles.
- Complete equal pay review.
- Ensure managers are aware of how to implement the equality standard with contractors and partners, providing training when necessary.
- Ensure all staff involved in recruitment understands the equality standard.
- Build equality objectives and targets into management appraisal mechanisms.