

**REPORT TO THE EXECUTIVE MEETING OF 19<sup>th</sup> DECEMBER 2011**

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**Status:** For Decision  
**Title:** Single Equality Scheme 2011 - 2014  
**Originator:** Richard Ellis, Corporate Services Manager  
**Where from:** Management Board  
**Where to next:** Council

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1 Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 To seek approval from the Executive for adoption of the Leicestershire District Councils Equality and Diversity Partnership – Single Equality Scheme 2011 – 2014.

**R 2 Recommendations:**

- 2.1 That members endorse the Partnership Single Equality Scheme as shown at Appendix A and recommend it to Council for adoption.

3 Summary of Reasons for the Recommendations

- 3.1 Prior to the Equality Act 2010 equalities there were different strands of equalities legislation and the Council maintained several different equality and diversity policies. The 2010 Act brings the different strands of equalities legislation together under one Act and introduces a public sector equality duty. It was necessary to review and refresh existing policies and bring them into line with the new legislative requirements.
- 3.2 The Council is part of the Leicestershire Districts Equality and Diversity Partnership and the Partnership Single Equality Scheme has been developed for adoption by all partner authorities.

4 Impact on Communities

- 4.1 The commitments and objectives outlined within the draft scheme when incorporated into service delivery are designed to have a positive impact on local communities

5 Key Facts

- 5.1 The Council has been working to a number of separate equality and diversity policies since 2005. These were developed and implemented as required in

line with previous equality legislation and were the Corporate Equality Policy incorporating the Race Equality Scheme, Disability Equality Scheme and the Gender Equality Scheme.

5.2 With the introduction in October 2010 of the Equality Act 2010 and the public sector equality duty which came into force on the 5<sup>th</sup> April 2011, the previous equality and diversity schemes that the council worked to needed to be reviewed and refreshed to bring them into line with the new legislative requirements.

5.3 The draft scheme addresses all the current nine dimensions of equality:

Age  
Disability,  
Gender/Sex,  
Gender reassignment,  
Marriage and Civil Partnership,  
Maternity and Pregnancy,  
Race/Ethnicity,  
Religion/belief/non belief,  
Sexual orientation.

5.4 Members should note that although there is no longer a specific requirement within current equality legislation to have a separate and distinct equality and diversity scheme/policy in place, there is a requirement for a local authority to prepare and publish its equality objectives and commitments by 6<sup>th</sup> April 2012, and at least every four years thereafter.

5.5 Members will be aware that the Council is a member of the Leicestershire District Councils Equality and Diversity Partnership (“Partnership”) and as such many of the equality objectives for delivery are being delivered jointly through partnership working.

5.6 It therefore seemed logical and efficient to produce a Partnership Single Equality Scheme. There are objectives detailed in the action plan which relate purely to Harborough, whilst others which apply to all partners.

5.7 The draft scheme was considered by all partner members and their respective staff during July and August 2011 and comments received have been considered with the scheme being amended as appropriate.

5.8 The draft scheme underwent external consultation with local community groups and with groups sub-regionally. External consultation on the draft scheme ended on the 30<sup>th</sup> September 2011, with adoption of the scheme by all partners time-lined for March 2012.

## 6 Legal Issues

6.1 There is no longer a legal requirement for the Council to have in place a specific and distinct equality and diversity scheme. However, there is a

requirement on the Council to identify and publish its equality objectives by 6<sup>th</sup> April 2012. Failure to comply with the public sector equality duties could result in the council facing a legal challenge and its reputation being damaged.

## 7 Resource Issues

7.1 The Council has committed £8,000 to the Partnership for the period November 2010 to October 2011 and a proportionate amount until March 2012 to ensure the objectives detailed for Harborough in the partnership agreement are delivered as required.

## 8 Equality Impact Assessment Implications/Outcomes

8.1 An Equality Impact Assessment has been completed and is attached at Appendix B.

## 9 Impact on the Organisation

9.1 It is important that the Council is able to identify its equality objectives and to demonstrate how it plans to meet and discharge its responsibilities as required under the public sector duties.

## 10 Community Safety Implications

10.1 Specific actions identified within the scheme have been designed to address and foster good community relations between different community groups regardless of their race, gender, disability, sexual orientation and religion/belief.

## 11. Carbon Management Implications

11.1 None identified at present.

## 12. Risk Management Implications

12.1 There is a potential risk to the council if there is a failure to recognise the requirements of the Equality Act 2010 and adhere to the specific duty implementation deadlines.

## 13 Consultation

13.1 Internal consultation with staff and external consultation with partners and other local groups was undertaken between July and September 2011.

## 14 Options Considered

14.1 Not producing a single equality scheme. The Council has a duty to identify and publish its equality objectives and the Councils existing equality policies and schemes are out of date and in need of review to meet the new legislative requirements.

15 Background Papers

- Equality Act 2010
  - Equality and Human Rights Commission: A guide for public authorities
  - Government Equalities Office: Public sector Equality Duty
  - Summary of Consultation Responses
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**Previous report(s):**

**Information Issued Under Sensitive Issue Procedure: N**

**Ward Members Notified: N**

**Appendices:**

- A.** Draft Leicestershire District Councils Equality and Diversity Partnership – Single Equality Scheme
- B.** Equality Impact Assessment
- C.**
- D.**