

**Cabinet**

**6 November, 2012**

**Report of the Cabinet Member for Leisure, Culture and Tourism**

**Single Equality Scheme 2012-2016: Realising the Vision for a Fair and Inclusive Council**

**Summary**

1. This report summarises the Council's equality journey so far and requests the Cabinet to approve:
  - A new equality vision for the Council
  - The new Single Equality Scheme (2012 – 2016)
  - Governance arrangements for the scheme

**The Council's Equality Journey**

2. The Council has adopted the Equality Framework for Local Government (EFLG) as its pathway to excellence in equality. The Framework incorporates the requirements of the Equality Act 2010. In July 2010, following an LGA peer review, the Council was placed at level "Achieving" of the Framework. We now aim to be at Level "Excellent" by the first quarter of 2014/15.
3. A key element of demonstrating excellence will be evidencing equality in outcomes. The new Single Equality Scheme (SES) will therefore be founded on SMART<sup>1</sup> objectives to improve life outcomes for the communities of identity in York, especially those who face socioeconomic disadvantage.
4. The SES will be a key element in the taking forward the Council's response to the final report of the York Fairness Commission. Adoption of the SES will go a long way towards ensuring that the required values and governance are in place to deliver the Fairness Commission's recommendations within the Council. The SES addresses in its objectives and action plans all of the inequality themes identified by the Commission.

<sup>1</sup> Specific, measureable, achievable, realistic and timely

## Updated Equality Vision

5. The Cabinet is requested to approve the following updated equality vision statement:

*We believe that everyone should enjoy the excellent quality of life our city offers. This means enjoying a long and fulfilling life, in good housing, with excellent opportunities in work, education, training, self-development and participation in public life, safety and security in family and social life, and the chance to enjoy diverse and inclusive culture and leisure opportunities.*

6. To achieve this vision we have prioritised Building Stronger Communities and Protecting Vulnerable People, in the Council Plan 2011-15. In addition the Council will:
  - Design our policies and practices to be inclusive from the start
  - Provide services that are flexible enough to meet the needs of our different communities
  - Employ, support and develop workers from these communities
  - Work with our partners to support and inspire our communities to continue to ensure that York is a fair, inclusive and a welcoming city
  - Adopt and apply the 10 Fairness Principles recommended by the York Fairness Commission in their final report, published in September 2012, in everything we do.
7. The vision reflects feedback from the equality communities in York captured during consultation and engagement events throughout 2011-12. These include meetings of the Equality Advisory Group, *Help us to Get it Right* days, and events that have informed the One City Strategy, the Fairness Commission and the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment.

## Realising the Vision

8. In order to realise the vision, it is proposed that Cabinet:
  - Approves a new **Single Equality Scheme (SES)** for 2012-16 (See Annex). It sets out 3 objectives:
    - **A Fairer York: Narrowing quality of life gaps**
    - **Respecting and celebrating diversity**
    - **An enabling, positive and diverse council workforce**

Having a Scheme in place, is one of the actions under the Building Stronger Communities priority of the Council Plan 2011-16 . The Scheme tells the public, partners and equality community groups about the council's equality vision, objectives and proposed actions, why they were arrived at, who will be involved in delivering them and who will scrutinise the delivery. It brings together objectives and targets found in a number of existing council and partner policies and strategies and also includes new objectives and targets. Outcomes cover both residents and staff.

- Supports the development of **Community of Identity Plans**, to be co-produced, co-owned and co-managed by each of the communities of identity and relevant partners in York.
- Encourages partner organisations also to produce equality schemes outlining their organisational equality priorities, approaches and contributions to Community of Identity plans when they are in place.
- Promotes the development of a city-wide Single Equality Scheme that pulls together shared action as identified across all the Contracts. This scheme will be used to refresh and update the **One City Plan**.
- Supports the development of **governance mechanisms** necessary to deliver and scrutinise the delivery of the Community of Identity plans and the One City Plan.

9. The above will form the **York Equality System**.

### **Scheme Governance**

10. The Scheme will be led by the Cabinet Member for Leisure, Culture and Tourism supported by the Council Management Team and the Equality Leadership Group and advised by the Equality Advisory Group.
11. It is proposed that the newly re-constituted Inclusive York Board takes on the role of driving forward a city-wide SES as part of a wider ownership of monitoring the Fairness Principles. It will take responsibility for the three areas of the One City Strategy: Fairness and Equalities, Community Cohesion, and Engagement and Active Citizenship and will update and lead on the necessary action plans. It will ensure co-ordination of forums representing the various communities of identity. In this way it will address the issues and

agenda that are raised by the communities of identity. It will also oversee the development of Community of Identity plans and will facilitate the delivery of any action to be taken in response of community needs identified in the plans.

12. EAG will remain one of the Council's key advisory groups focussing on advising the Cabinet on the SES and dealing with key strategic Community Impact Assessments (CIAs - formerly known as EIAs). The critical friend review that followed the EFLG assessment recommended that EAG should be more representative of the equality communities. Furthermore, the membership and operation need to be updated to enable it to handle the functions assigned to it more effectively. Key changes will be:
  - The group needs to be representative of each of the communities of identity
  - The group should be led by the communities of identity themselves
  - Membership should be confined to the communities of identity: Councillors should no longer be members. The Cabinet member will attend as an observer and to receive advice.

### **Communities of Identity (Col) Plans**

13. Communities of Identity are non-geographical communities who share common experiences, opportunities and challenges. These experiences, opportunities and challenges relate to gender, gender reassignment, race, disability, age, sexual orientation, religion and belief, pregnancy and maternity, marriage and civil partnerships. They also relate to carers of older and/or disabled people as well as to deprivation because of someone's social and economic background.
14. Whilst the SES outlines what the council will do for a fair and inclusive council and city, the Plans will be the main vehicles to engage and empower Cols to act with the council and its partners to deliver agreed outcomes. It is expected that the Plans will:
  - Be co-produced, co-owned and co-managed by each Community of Identity in York, the council and its partners.
  - Empower and support the communities to live productively and harmoniously in the city.
  - Help social partners in York to realise their vision for an inclusive city, as well as meet the requirements of the Equality

Act 2010 public sector duty to promote good relations between equality community groups and other groups.

15. The plans are likely to include information about the make-up of each community, its physical and virtual assets and the challenges and opportunities it faces now and in the future as well as action(both by the each community as well as others) to address the challenges. Once in place, they will be the primary sources of information and evidence to consider when assessing the impact of decisions made by council and its partners in the future.

### **Consultation**

16. The proposed vision, the Single Equality Scheme and the proposal to put in place Community of Identity plans, respond to stated needs of equality community groups as identified through a number of engagement and consultation mechanisms, including the council's Equality Advisory Group and the Staff Equality Reference Group. The objectives, actions and targets in the SES were developed with members of equality community groups during the *Help us to Get it Right* day that took place in September 2012. A feedback report from the day is available on request.
17. They also take on board the recommendations of the Fairness Commission, Local Government Association Diversity Peer Challenge for level Achieving of the Equality Framework for Local Government and the independent critical friend review.
18. The Equality Advisory Group held a Help us to Get it Right Day on 19 September, where representatives from Communities of Identities examined and commented on the SES action plan. Most of these comments have been incorporated into the detailed action plan (available from the author). Remaining comments will be used to refresh the action plan after June 2013.
19. Members of the public and community groups are invited to comment on the Scheme at any time, on the relevant internet pages, by ringing or by e-mailing the council. Their comments will be taken on board during the annual review of the scheme expected to take place in June each year.
20. The SES will be a living document and will continue to be discussed with EAG, the Staff Equality Reference Group, and the Inclusive York Partnership in order to develop it further.

21. An internal and external communication plan for the scheme will be developed by the Equality Leadership Group when it meets in December 2012.

### **Options and Analysis**

22. The equality system, as set out in this report, is recommended as it will empower the Communities of Identity to take charge of their future and will offer the Council and its partners the means and pathways to embed fairness, equality and diversity in their organisations as well as across the city.
23. The Council is no longer required to have a SES and has the option not to do so; however, having a SES will:
  - i. Support the Cabinet, councillors involved in Overview and Scrutiny, and members of the public to scrutinise progress with the equality agenda in the council and the city
  - ii. Increase knowledge and understanding about equality and diversity in York
  - iii. Contribute to and support putting in place inclusive strategic plans
  - iv. Encourage and support council partners to contribute to shared equality objectives and outcomes in the city
  - v. Provide a mechanism for council to demonstrate that it meets the Public Sector Duties as in the Equality Act 2010

### **Implications**

24. **Financial** – The SES will assist Cabinet in allocating resources and in budget setting.
25. **Human Resources** - All HR policies and practices will need to be constantly reviewed to ensure that they are in line with HR objectives of the Scheme that are also included in the Workforce Strategy Plan. It is essential that data about our workforce is up to date and that staff well-being surveys are regularly undertaken to ensure that all staff have good outcomes and experiences whilst in our employment and/or in the employment of those we award contracts and grants to.
26. **Equalities** –The recommendations in this report will support council to achieve its vision for a fair and inclusive council and city.

27. **Legal** – The Scheme will assist the Council to meet its public sector equality duties.
28. **Crime and Disorder** –The Scheme includes community cohesion objectives and actions and will draw from and contribute significantly to hate crime and domestic violence policies and plans, amongst others.
29. **Property** – The Scheme will ensure that council meets provisions of the Equality Act 2010 relating to the accessibility of premises open to the public or let by the council. Not meeting the requirements of the Act can lead to costly legal challenges.

### **Risk Management**

30. The level ‘Excellent’ improvement plan will be the main mechanism via which the Single Equality Scheme will be risk-managed. The Audit and Governance Committee will receive regular reports about the improvement plan.

### **Recommendations**

31. Cabinet is requested to:
  - Consider and approve the Council’s current equality vision
  - Approve the Single Equality Scheme 2012 to 2015
  - Approve the governance arrangements set out including changes to the Equality Advisory Group set out in paragraph 12

Reason: To help the Council to achieve its vision for a fair and inclusive council and city

### **Contact Details**

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	<b>Report Approved</b>	✓	<b>Date</b>	26.10.12.
<b>Specialist Implications Officer(s)</b>				
<b>Wards Affected:</b>			<b>All</b>	✓
<b>For further information please contact the author of the report</b>				

**Background Papers:**

File held by the author

Feedback report on *Help us the Get it Right Day* held by the author

SES Action Plans

**Annex:** The Single Equality Scheme including objectives