
**Decision Session: Cabinet Member for
Leisure, Culture and Social Inclusion**

11 October, 2011

Report of the Director of Communities and Neighbourhoods

Outcome of the Diversity Peer Challenge: July 2011

Summary

1. The purpose of this report is to inform the Cabinet Member of the outcome of the Local Government Information and Development Diversity peer challenge which took place on 26 and 27 July 2011.
2. The challenge confirmed that the Council meets the requirements of Level Achieving of the Equality Framework for Local Government.
3. The Council is now working towards Level Excellent, which it aims to achieve within 24 months of the date of this report.

Background

The Equality Framework for Local Government (EFLG)

4. The framework is the national standard that measures council performance in equality and diversity. It has been put together by the Local Government Information and Development (LGID), the national organisation that supports councils in continuous improvement.
5. The framework combines the requirements of the British Customer Services Excellence Standard and of current equality legislation. It has three levels of performance: Developing, Achieving and Excellent. The challenge took place against the requirements of level Achieving.

Diversity Peer Challenge

6. A team of “peer reviewers” or “peers” led the challenge. They were senior managers and councillors from LGID and councils already at level Achieving. They looked at written evidence and also visited the council and interviewed councillors and officers as well as talking to

local council partners, including people from York's equality community groups.

Summary of challenge team findings

7. The team found that the council's overall strengths were:
 - Senior leadership and commitment to equality and diversity, especially as demonstrated by the Leader, the Cabinet Member for Leisure Culture and Social Inclusion and the Chief Executive
 - A good understanding of the make up of York's communities, which will be furthered through the consistent use in decision making of the information produced by the Business Intelligence Hub
 - The internal and external structures ("governance structures") it has in place to ensure that progress with equality and diversity is ongoing. The peer team noted the importance of the Fairness Commission, and the contribution of the Equality Advisory Group (EAG) and the Staff Equality Reference Group (SERG) . It also noted the importance of ward committees and their newsletters.
 - Engagement and consultation with community groups. The team identified the budget consultation process as "impressive".
 - Equality impact assessments that increasingly influence and improve service development
 - Responsive services and good customer care for older and younger people, disabled people, homeless young people, travellers and users of leisure services.
 - In terms of workforce development, the team noted the young apprentices scheme, the mentoring programme, the variety of equality training available, flexible working and staff engagement through the SERG

8. The team suggested that areas for further improvement include:
 - Working with partners to share and use information to inform common decision making
 - Services that are flexible enough to respond to rapid demographic changes and to the needs and aspirations of all equality communities (as opposed to mainly younger, older, disabled, and some Black and Minority Ethnic communities).
 - Increased focus on LGBT and women issues
 - Putting in place a gypsy and traveller strategy

- Promoting equality and diversity through procurement and grants
- Updating the hate crime and domestic violence strategies and processes.
- Promoting a councillor and officer body that reflects York's current demographic profile and consistently engages with equality issues and communities across all service areas and policies.

Next Steps

9. Officers are finalising discussions with LGID following which the official report of the peer team will be published. The council's success in obtaining level 'Achieving' can then be communicated and marked appropriately.
10. An action plan is currently being developed by the Council's Equalities Leadership Group to address the above issues and to move the Council on to level 'Excellent' within two years.

Consultation

11. The Council will continue to consult widely on all aspects of its performance in Equalities and particularly with the Equalities Advisory Group.

Corporate Priorities

12. Achieving level 'Excellent' within the EFLG is an identified priority within the Council Plan.

Implications

13. There are no additional implications arising from this report.

Risk Management

14. Equalities is recognised as a key risk in the Council's risk management framework and as such is constantly monitored by the Council's Management Team.

Recommendations

15. The Cabinet Member is requested to note the contents of the report.

Reason: So that the Council can put in place an action plan to achieve 'Excellent' under the EFLG'.

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Specialist Implications Officer(s)			
Wards Affected:			All ✓
For further information please contact the author of the report			

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