

Equality Strategy 2008-11: Equality issues the Council should consider in the next 3 years

Summary

1. The report summarises issues that the Council needs to consider and take on board in its Equality strategy and schemes 2008-2011.
2. Members are requested to note the contents of annex 1 in the report.
3. Members are also requested to approve an one-off grant totalling £1,250 to be given in equal sums of £250 to each of the five community groups who are currently co-opted to the Social Inclusion Working Group so as to consult with people from the six equality strands about issues that need to be considered in the context of the Council's refreshed Equality Strategy and schemes for 2008 to 2011.

Background

4. At the Development Day on 25 February 2008, SIWG members and co-optees considered issues to be considered in the refreshed Equality strategy and schemes 2008-2011.
5. Issues identified are summarised in Annex 1 of this report.
6. There is a requirement to directly consult and engage community groups and people from each six equalities strand in the refreshes. This is best achieved via the groups which are currently co-opted to sit on SIWG.

Consultation

7. Issues and recommendations in this report were arrived at in discussions between members and co-optees at the SIWG Development Day on 25 February 2008.

Options

8. Option 1: To approve the recommended one-off grant
9. Option 2: Not to approve the recommended one-off grant
10. Option 1 is recommended. Reason: To help identify key equality issues from as many community groups as possible so that the refreshed Equality strategy and schemes can consider and begin to resolve them.

Analysis

11. One-off grants of £250 to be given by the end of March 2008 to each of the following groups:
 - a. Older Peoples Assembly
 - b. York Racial Equality Network
 - c. York Interfaith Forum
 - d. York LGBT Forum
 - e. Council Equalities Team as the Forum is currently being developed.
12. The grants should be spent on consultation activities to take place between March and the end of May 2008.
13. Any grant not spent by end of May 2008 will be returned to the Equalities Team.
14. All beneficiary groups will report the outcome of their consultation at SIWG meeting in July 2008, in writing.

Corporate Priorities

15. The Equality strategy and schemes and the actions recommended for one-off grant will contribute to community cohesion and Council Equality objectives.

Implications

16. These are as follows:

- **Financial** – None. The one-off grant will be found from existing Equality Team budgets
- **Human Resources (HR)** – None
- **Equalities** - Issues outlined during in annex 4 and during additional consultation events, will further the development of the refreshed Council Equality Strategy and Schemes 2008-2011, which will contribute to the promotion of inclusive and cohesive communities and to Council Equalities aims and objectives.
- **Legal** - None
- **Crime and Disorder** - None
- **Information Technology (IT)** - None
- **Property** - None
- **Other** - None

Risk Management

17. N/A

Recommendations

18. To note the contents of the report.

19. To approve the one-off grants in paragraphs 8 to 14 above

Reason: To collect the views of as many equality strand groups as possible to inform the refreshed Equality strategy and schemes 2008-2011.

Contact Details

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Heather Rice
Director of People and Improvement

Report Approved

Date

3 March 2008

Wards Affected:

For further information please contact the author of the report

All

Background papers – None

Annexes- Annex 1 – SIWG Development Day 25.2.2008: Key issues that Council should consider in Equality Strategy 2008-2011

Annex 1 - SIWG Development Day 25.2.2008: Key issues that Council should consider in Equality Strategy 2008-2011

Overall issues

- Overall the Strategy should promote respect, diversity, understanding, tolerance, and cohesive communities.
- Council has a moral and legal responsibility to promote Equalities as the leading "place-shaper"
- Council should reinforce Equalities through its recruitment processes. Should ask equality questions at interview, incorporate commitment to equalities under essential attributes and skills in person specifications, and include the promotion of the equalities agenda in all job descriptions and Personal Development Reviews
- Council should lead making issues of age, sexual orientation, and religion and belief, real and relevant to life in the City.

Strand-specific issues

Sexual orientation

- This is an "invisible" agenda in York. The City should welcome and support sexual diversity.
- Consider the needs of older LGBT residents e.g. provision and allocation of sheltered/assisted accommodation etc
- People may wish to keep their sexuality private and this should be respected
- People of all ages who face intimidation/discrimination because of their sexuality must receive tailored and sensitive support
- When asking people about their sexual orientation we need to explain that the reason is to meet their needs.
- Councillors need to lead respect for and tolerance of sexually diverse people

Religion and Belief

- Council should connect with locally "invisible" religions like Islam, Buddhism etc
- Is there a dominant religion in the City? What is the effect of this on community cohesion?
- Need to consider the needs of people without faith (e.g. bereavement services for Humanists)
- Identify what religions we have in the city, and act proactively to avoid negative impact on City cohesion due to lack of integration because of religious belief and practice
- Council services should be responsive to cultural and religious requirements of both service users and staff (e.g. halal meals in care homes and schools; prayer/contemplation rooms for staff)
- Council must respond early to incidents and tensions arising from religious beliefs

Age

- Training and development provision for over 50s
- There is a drop in birth rate and a rise in aging population. What will the effect on pensions be? Where is the money going to come from?
- Given that York's older population is increasing Council must consult and involve those who are not 50 yet so as to identify and plan for future needs
- Maintaining independent living and preventing bad health: Interventions must start as early as possible
- Must work with other partners especially Health
- Consider the effect of transport policies on an aging population
- Increase activities to bring the different generations together
- Ensure you engage and involve all ages
- Consider carers needs when planning services and workforce/HR development

- The need for home care provision for the elderly will rise

Gender

- Council should lead gender issues in employment by putting in place HR policies responsive to peoples' needs e.g. work-life balance, closing the pay gap, flexible working.
- Recruitment and selection should avoid job stereotyping. Job descriptions and person specs should be gender-neutral
- More leisure provision for women from BME groups (e.g. women/men only sessions in swimming pools)
- Need measures to deal with the isolation that women from BMEs face in the City.
- Children Services need to engage with men as role models
- Need more women councillors. More women in senior Council jobs. Break the salaries ceiling for women.

Disability

- Council has a key role to ensuring that the physical environment is planned taking disability issues into consideration
- Need to increase the number of people with disabilities employed by Council
- More adult changing rooms in York are needed

Race

- Early years and youth provision should consider the needs of the rising numbers of BME in the City.
- Schools will need to increase ESOL provision to BME children, families and even workers
- Information about services and citizen obligations should be proactively offered in various key languages
- Council must act now to prevent potential conflict from rises in BME population. Racism to and from newly settled communities needs to be dealt with.

- There is potential for conflict between races especially between established BME groups and new migrants
- Need to tackle Islamophobia, and the rise of racism against East Europeans
- Must engage with BME women and young people, not just BME "elders"