

LONDON BOROUGH OF BRENT

Meeting of the Executive
13th December 2004

Report from Director of Human Resources and Diversity

For action

Wards affected: All

Report Title: Brent Council's Corporate Equality Policy and Action Plan 2004-2006

Forward Plan Ref: HR-04/05-03

1.0 Summary

1.1 This report seeks member approval for Brent Council's Corporate Equality Policy and Action Plan 2004 -2006. The Corporate Equality Policy forms the basis of our commitment to the Equality Standard for Local Government, which the council adopted in June 2003. There are five levels to the Standard and the council reached Level one in March 2004 and aims to reach Level 2 and be working towards Level 3 by March 2006. This policy document has incorporated a Corporate Equality Action Plan, which sets out clear targets and timetables for achieving those objectives.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 Members are asked to adopt Brent Council's Corporate Equality Policy and Action Plan 2004-2006.

3.0 Detail

3.1 It is essential for us to promote equality and diversity in our service delivery and in our employment policy and practice. Equality and diversity need to be at the centre of our policy development, embedded in our service planning and delivery, and key to our vision for the future of the borough.

3.2 We have written this document to help further raise awareness of equality and diversity issues in Brent, to encourage debate and to invite feedback from our community. The publication of this document is also fundamental to reaching Level 2 of the Equality Standard for Local Government, a target we have set ourselves to have completed comfortably by March 2006.

4.0 Financial Implications

- 4.1 The costs of publishing this document will be met from the Corporate Diversity Team's budget. The document will be distributed widely across the council, to staff, managers and members, and to our partners.

5.0 Legal Implications

- 5.1 The council has a number of statutory obligations in relation to equality and diversity to which the proposed policy is relevant, including the Race Relations (Amendment) Act. There are no specific legal implications arising from the adoption of the policy.

6.0 Diversity Implications

- 6.1 The Corporate Equality Action Plan will enable the council to monitor the progress that we make in implementing our diversity policy.
- 6.2 It will also enable us to identify any gaps that may exist in the provision of our services and staffing issues so we can bridge those gaps.
- 6.3 This document would be made public so it would help raise awareness of the council's commitment to equality and diversity, and encourage debate in moving the agenda forward in making improvements in the lives of our residents.
- 6.4 Officers in the Corporate Diversity Team have completed an equality impact assessment on this proposed policy. (Appendix 1)

7.0 Staffing Implications

- 7.1 There are no specific staffing implications. The Leadership Group on Equality and Diversity is responsible for overseeing the implementation of all the council's plans for equality and diversity with the assistance from the Corporate Diversity Team.

Each department has an Equality Action Group whose role it is to co-ordinate the implementation of the policy at that level. The council is also assisted by colleagues who sit on the Diversity Reference Group representing their respective service areas.

All council staff have been trained on equalities as part of the council's commitment to promoting equality of opportunity, and this document will be widely available to new and existing staff. The managers and members will receive a hard copy of this document.

8.0 Background Papers

The Equality Standard for Local Government, available from the Employers' Organisation for local government

Reaching Levels 2 & 3 of the Equality Standard, available from the Corporate Diversity Team

Reaching Level 1 of the Equality Standard, available from the Corporate Diversity Team

Council's Strategic Diversity Policy Statement, available from Corporate Diversity Team

Race Equality Scheme 2004-06, available from Corporate Diversity Team

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APPENDIX 1

Impact Needs/Requirement Assessments Completion Form

Please note that you must complete this form if you are undertaking a formal Impact Needs/Requirement Assessment. You may also wish to use this form for guidance to undertake an initial assessment or screening. Use this form for new and existing policies. Where a question is not applicable to your assessment, please indicate.

- 1 What is the name of the service/policy/procedure/project etc to be assessed?**

Brent Council's Corporate Equality Policy and Action Plan 2004-2006.

- 2 Briefly describe the aim of the service/policy etc? What needs or duties is it designed to meet? How does it differ from any existing services/policies etc in this area?**

The Corporate Equality Policy forms the basis of our commitment to the Equality Standard for Local Government, which the council adopted in June 2003. There are five levels to the Standard and the Council has reached Level one in March 2004 and aims to reach Level 2 and be working towards Level 3 by March 2006. This policy document has incorporated a Corporate Equality Action Plan, which sets out clear targets and timetables for achieving those objectives.

- 3 Are the aims consistent with the council's Comprehensive Equality Policy?**

Yes, this is the revised Comprehensive Equality Policy so the aims are consistent.

- 4 Is there any evidence to suggest that this could affect some groups of people? Is there an adverse impact around race/gender/disability/faith/sexual orientation/age/health etc? What are the reasons for this adverse impact?**

There is no adverse impact around equality. This policy encourages all service areas to implement the equality and diversity policy. It will enable the Council to monitor the uptake of services and staffing issues in an effective way.

- 5 Please describe the evidence you have used to make your judgement. What existing data for example (qualitative or quantitative) have you used to form your judgement? Please supply us with the evidence you used to make your judgement separately (by race, gender and disability etc).**

The evidence from Brent Council's Annual Report on Equality and Diversity in Service Delivery 2003-04.

The evidence from Workforce Monitoring document has been used to make my judgement.

6 Are there any unmet needs/requirements that can be identified that affect specific groups? (Please refer to provisions of Disability Discrimination Act and the regulations on sexual orientation and faith if applicable)

The Corporate Equality Action Plan will enable the Council to monitor the progress that we make in implementing our diversity policy. It will also enable us to identify any gaps that may exist in provision of our services and staffing issues so we can bridge those gaps.

7 Have you consulted externally as part of your assessment? Who have you consulted? What methods did you use? And what have you done with the results i.e. how do you intend to use the information gathered as part of the consultation?

No, external consultation did not take place for this specific document but there was a wide consultation process when the Council's Race Equality Scheme 2004-06 was being written. Information gathered from that process was published within the scheme. We have also consulted with service areas via members of the council's Diversity Reference Group, and service areas have contributed fully to the plan. The draft policy has been subject to consultation over a period of months and has been circulated widely to senior managers.

8 Have you published the results of that consultation, if so, where?

External consultation did not take place so no results have been published for this policy.

9 Is there a public concern (in the media etc) that this function or policy is being operated in a discriminatory manner?

No, there is no public concern.

10 If in your judgement, the proposed service/policy etc does have an adverse impact, can that impact be justified? You need to think whether the proposed service/policy etc will have a positive or negative effect on the promotion of equality opportunity, if it will help eliminate discrimination in any way, or encourage or hinder community relations.

This is a positive step forward. The council adopted a Diversity Policy Statement almost three years ago, and whilst we have had a long time

commitment to equality of opportunity, we have not for a long time had a comprehensive equality policy in place. This document will be made public, so that people who live and work in Brent can see our commitment, and in so doing, we hope that the document will help increase awareness of the council's value for equality and diversity and will encourage debate and discussion about ways to move our agenda forward.

11 If the impact cannot be justified, how do you intend to deal with it?

Not appropriate.

12 What can be done to improve access to/take up of services?

- Encourage greater participation in local democracy and representation on public and voluntary bodies from people who would normally feel excluded from the decision-making process
- Promote the value of diversity through local events organised throughout the year
- Put resources into dealing with hate crime and supporting the victims of such crime
- Ensure that all sections of the community feel they have something to benefit from the regeneration of the borough
- Work with partner agencies to promote community cohesion.

13 What is the justification for taking these measures?

To make improvements in the lives of Brent's residents.

14 Kindly provide us with separate evidence of how you intend to monitor in future

Monitoring of action plan will be done through self assessments by the service areas and providing reports to Corporate Diversity Team. The CDT will also undertake audits of service areas. Ultimately the council's Leadership Group on Equality and Diversity are responsible for monitoring progress through our achievement through the different levels of the Equality Standard.

15 What are your recommendations based on the conclusions and comments of this assessment?

- There is no need for any immediate action.

16 If equality objectives and targets need to be developed, please list them here.

Not applicable.

What will your resource allocation for action comprise of?

The council can call on the leadership group on Equality and Diversity as a resource. The group is made up of members of the Corporate Management Team, the council's Chief Executive, the Leader of Brent Council as well as the lead Member for Equality and Service Improvement.

The leadership group is responsible for overseeing the implementation of all the council's plans for equality and diversity, including this policy document. This group is assisted by the Head of Diversity and the staff of the Corporate Diversity Team who in turn are accountable to the Director of Human Resources and Diversity. Officers in Human Resources also have specific equality responsibilities around employment, and each department has an Equality Action Group, whose role it is to co-ordinate the implementation of the policy at that level. The council is also assisted by colleagues who sit on the Diversity Reference Group, who represent their respective service areas.

If you need more space for any answers please continue on a separate sheet.

Signed by the manager undertaking the assessment

Full name (in capitals please) **Manjula Shah**
Principal Diversity Officer
Corporate Diversity Team

Dated **17th November**
2004

Others involved in the assessment - auditing team/peer review **Diversity Reference Group**
Corporate Diversity Team