



Executive
9th September 2008

**Report from the Director of Human
Resources and Diversity**

For Action

The Single Equality Scheme 2008- 2011

1.0 Summary

- 1.1** This is Brent Council's second Single Equality Scheme. It builds on the progress of our earlier equality schemes and is a development of our current scheme for 2007-2010. Its purpose is to show how as an authority we will meet our service delivery and employment obligations to residents and staff.
- 1.2** The scheme is governed by equality legislation namely the Disability Discrimination Act 2005, the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000, the Sex Discrimination Act as amended by the Equality Act 2006, Employment Equality (Religion or Belief) Regulations 2003, the Employment Equality (Sexual Orientation) Regulations 2003, the Equality Act, the Employment Equality (Age) Regulations 2006, Part 2 of the Equality Act 2006 re goods, facilities and services and the Human Rights Act 1998. The legal duties contained in these acts enable public bodies to identify actual and potential discrimination and the necessary steps to combat it. We have also set out detailed targets in a three year action plan, demonstrating our commitment to provide equal access to services for all.

2.0 Recommendations

The Executive is asked to:

- 2.1** Accept this report and endorse the scheme's publication.

3.0 Details

- 3.1** The Single Equality Scheme encapsulates our commitment to equality and

diversity. Equality and diversity is seen as a corporate goal and is a 'golden thread' which appears across all areas of the council's work. Our guiding

principle is to mainstream equality, diversity and community cohesion and make it an integral part of every day business.

3.2 Our work in developing this scheme has encompassed the 'six strands' of equality and diversity, even though as a public authority we have a legal duty to develop an equality scheme in race, gender and disability. Brent's approach to these duties as a matter of good practice has been the development of the Single Equality Scheme which goes beyond compliance and covers the areas of age, disability, gender, race, religion and belief and sexual orientation. We have followed through this six strand approach consistently in all our key activities, programmes, plans and policies.

3.3 The scheme, (appendix A attached), has been divided into three main sections. These sections have been clearly highlighted within the scheme. The first section looks at the demography of Brent in respect of diversity. The second focuses on our general and specific duties, and the final section sets out an action plan detailing our key priorities over the next three years and a review of progress over the past year.

3.4 The targets set out in the action plan reflect the participation of key stakeholders thorough the consultation and active involvement process and the functional assessment priorities. Some of our notable strategic objectives detailed in the action plan include improving equality of access to opportunities for tendering and bidding for all potential suppliers particularly from the BME community, reviewing pre-employment screening to take into account older and disabled applicants needs and increasing access and information about the Revenue and Benefits service to customers experiencing language barriers.

3.5 We have involved stakeholders and partners throughout our developments to ensure that we respond to local needs and build equality and diversity into our community leadership role. There is a quarterly process for monitoring and managing the performance of the Single Equality scheme action plan through the Leadership Group on Equality, Diversity and Community Cohesion and the Diversity Reference Group, and an annual review of performance, the high level objectives are then reflected in the directorate service plans.

4.0 Financial Implications

4.1 The cost of the publication of the Single Equality Scheme, which is estimated to be £7,000, will be met from the Corporate Diversity Team budget.

4.2 The activities set out in the action plan are funded from existing resources including mainstream budgets and government grant funding streams. There are no other financial implications arising from the scheme.

5.0 Legal Implications

- 5.1** The Council has duties in relation to equality and discrimination under the Disability Discrimination Act 2005, the Race Relations Act 2000, the Sex Discrimination Act, Employment Equality (Religion or Belief) Regulations 2003, the Employment Equality (Sexual Orientation) Regulations 2003, the Equality Act 2006, the Employment Equality (Age) Regulations 2006, and the Human Rights Act 1998.
- 5.2** The Council's general duties under the Disability Discrimination Act, the Race Relations Act and the Sex Discrimination Act include duties in carrying out its functions to have due regard to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination and promote equality of opportunity. The Council has specific duties to publish details of how the Council intends to fulfil its general duties under each of these acts.
- 5.3** The purpose of the Single Equality Scheme is to set out how Brent Council will continue to fulfil its duties in relation to equality and discrimination and to comply with the specific duties referred to in 5.2.
- 5.4** The Government has just published its response to the consultation on the proposed Equality Bill and hopes to have a bill ready for the new Parliamentary session. One of the key features of the bill will be a new equality duty on public bodies which brings together the three existing duties but also extends the duty to gender reassignment, age, sexual orientation and religion or belief. When, or if, the Bill becomes law, the Single Equality Scheme will obviously need to be reviewed to take into account the expanded duty.

6.0 Diversity Implications

- 6.1** This scheme ensures that all new and existing equality legislation is placed at the centre of the council's strategic planning, service delivery and employment practices, and is an integral part of the way in which we work.
- 6.2** The aim is to present an equality scheme which highlights priority actions identified across the Council over the next three years.
- 6.3** It is acknowledged that there are core similarities between the different strands of equalities legislation. It is also recognised that there are unique differences in the statutory requirements for these strands and these are addressed within the scheme.
- 6.4** The Single Equality Scheme provides an opportunity to focus on a range of other equality strands such as age, religion and belief, and sexual orientation and enables managers to respond to issues of multiple-discrimination.

Background papers

Legislation

Race

- The Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000
- Race Relations Act 1976
- The Race Relations Act 1976 (Amendment) Regulations 2003

Disability

- Disability Discrimination Amendment Act 2005
- Disability Discrimination Act 1995

Gender

- Sex Discrimination Act 1975
- Equal Pay Act 1970 (Amended)
- The Sex Discrimination (Gender Reassignment) Regulations 1999

Age

- Employment Equality (Age) Regulation 2006

Sexual Orientation

- Civil Partnerships Act 2004
- Employment Equality (Sexual Orientation) Regulation 2003
- The Employment Equality (Sex Discrimination) Regulations 2005
- Gender Recognition Act 2004

Religion and Belief

- Employment Equality (Religion or Belief) Regulation 2003
- Racial and Religious Hatred Act 2006

Equality and Diversity

- Equality Act 2006
- Human Rights Act 1998

Codes of Practice

Race

- Statutory code of practice on racial equality in employment

Disability

- The Disability Discrimination Code of practice (Goods, Facilities, services and premises) 2002

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