

# WIRRAL COUNCIL

## COUNCIL EXCELLENCE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

WEDNESDAY 16 MARCH 2011

<b>SUBJECT:</b>	<b>REACHING EXCELLENT OF THE EQUALITY FRAMEWORK FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT</b>
<b>WARD/S AFFECTED:</b>	<b>ALL</b>
<b>REPORT OF:</b>	<b>INTERIM DIRECTOR OF CORPORATE SERVICES</b>
<b>RESPONSIBLE PORTFOLIO HOLDER:</b>	<b>COUNCILLOR IAN LEWIS</b>
<b>KEY DECISION?</b>	<b>NO</b>

### 1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to highlight changes to equality legislation and Government equality policy that will affect the method of / timescale to reaching 'excellent' status of the Equality Framework for Local Government. This work is part of the Corporate Plan 2010/2011 (strategic objective 5, create an excellent council) to encourage efficiencies as well as tackling Wirral's inequalities, and as part of the Council's legal obligations within the Equality Act 2010.

### 2.0 RECOMMENDATION/S

- 2.1 That this report be noted.
- 2.2 To note that the action plan for reaching 'excellent' status is being reviewed and refreshed to reflect the requirements of the new Equality Duty 2010, the Government's Equality Strategy 'Building A Fairer Britain' (December 2010), and the changes to the role of the Local Government Improvement and Development's Equalities Team.
- 2.3 To note that the deadline for being assessed for 'excellent' status of the Equality Framework for Local Government will need to move from November 2011 to July 2012.

### 3.0 REASON/S FOR RECOMMENDATION/S

- 3.1 The introduction of the general and specific duties contained within the Equality Duty 2010, which come into effect from the 6 April 2011.
- 3.2 The publication of the Government's Equality Strategy 'Building a Fairer Britain' (December 2010) – to tackle the causes of inequality within the guiding principles of freedom, fairness and responsibility.
- 3.3 The Local Government Improvement and Development's Equalities Team are undergoing changes following the introduction of the Government's Equality Strategy and budget cuts, which will affect how and when Council's will be

assessed for the different levels of the Equality Framework.

#### **4.0 BACKGROUND AND KEY ISSUES**

4.1 The Equality Duty 2010 places general and specific duties on public organisations:

##### ***General Duties*** (legal requirement)

- To eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation
- To advance equality of opportunity
- To foster good relations between different groups of people

##### ***Specific Duty*** (legal requirement)

- Publish sufficient information to demonstrate compliance with general duties **by 30 July 2011**, including:
  - Information on the effect that policy / funding decisions will have / have had on protected groups (race, gender, disability, gender reassignment, age, pregnancy and maternity, religion and belief, sexual orientation, marriage and civil partnership).
  - Evidence of analysis undertaken, evidence of information used in analysis, and details of any engagement undertaken (internal and external)
- Publish a revised set of equality objectives **by 6 April 2012**

4.2 The Government's Equality Strategy 'Building a Fairer Britain' (December 2010) sets out a new approach to equality which moves away from identity politics to recognising people's individuality. The 5 guiding principles will be:

- (i) Creating equal opportunities for all – develop frameworks that help create fairness and opportunities for everyone.
- (ii) Devolving power to people – devolve power, free up businesses, public services, the voluntary sector, communities and citizens to develop solutions and promote good practice.
- (iii) Transparency – shining a light on inequalities and giving individuals and communities the tools and information to challenge organisations that are not offering fair opportunities, and public services that are not delivering effectively for all the people they serve.
- (iv) Supporting local action – giving voluntary and public sectors the freedom to work together to innovate and drive effective measures which build a more inclusive and cohesive society based on tolerance and respect for all.

- (v) Embedding equality – leading by example and embedding equality as an integral part of our policies and programmes.

## **5.0 RELEVANT RISKS**

- 5.1 Legal challenges from staff, service users, residents, businesses, community organisations, the Equality and Human Rights Commission, and Government if the Council does not adhere to the requirements of the Equality Duty 2010.

## **6.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

- 6.1 Not applicable.

## **7.0 CONSULTATION**

- 7.1 Both internal and external consultation will take place when the Council is refreshing its equality objectives.
- 7.2 Other public sector organisations in Wirral will need to meet the same equality requirements. Any private or voluntary sector organisation providing services on the Council's behalf will also need to give due regard to the Equality Duty 2010 requirements.

## **8.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR VOLUNTARY, COMMUNITY AND FAITH GROUPS**

- 8.1 Any voluntary, community or faith sector organisation providing services on the Council's behalf will also need to give due regard to the Equality Duty 2010 requirements.

## **9.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: FINANCIAL; IT; STAFFING; AND ASSETS**

- 9.1 No additional resource implications are contained in this report

## **10.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 10.1 Legal challenges from staff, service users, residents, businesses, community organisations, the Equality and Human Rights Commission, and Government may arise if the Council does not adhere to the requirements of the Equality Duty 2010.

## **11.0 EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS**

- 11.1 The action plan for reaching 'excellent' status is being reviewed and refreshed to reflect the requirements of the new Equality Duty 2010, the Government's Equality Strategy 'Building A Fairer Britain' (December 2010), and the changes to the role of the Local Government Improvement and Development's Equalities Team.

- 11.2 Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)

(a) Is an EIA required? No

## **12.0 CARBON REDUCTION IMPLICATIONS**

12.1 There are no implications contained in this report.

## **13.0 PLANNING AND COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS**

13.1 There are no implications contained in this report.

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## **APPENDICES**

No appendices are contained within this report.

## **REFERENCE MATERIAL**

All reference material is publicly available.

## **SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)**

<b>Council Meeting</b>	<b>Date</b>
<b>Council Excellence Overview and Scrutiny Committee</b>	<b>21 September 2010</b> <b>17 March 2010</b> <b>16 September 2009</b>