

REPORT TO	DATE OF MEETING
Governance Committee	26 September 2012

Report template revised June 2008



SUBJECT	PORTFOLIO	AUTHOR	ITEM
Complying with the Equality Act 2010	Leader	Darren Cranshaw	9

SUMMARY AND LINK TO CORPORATE PRIORITIES

The purpose of this report is to update the Governance Committee on the steps we have taken to ensure that the Council meets the statutory requirements outlined in the Equality Act 2010. This issue was identified as an area for further consideration in the Annual Governance Statement. This report outlines the key requirements of the Equality Act 2012 and the significant amount of work that has been undertaken to build on our existing strengths in ensuring we meet these requirements.

As equality and diversity cuts across all of the Council's work, this reports links in with all of the Council's corporate priorities of clean, green and safe, strong South Ribble in the heart of a prosperous Central Lancashire, strong and healthy communities and efficient, effective and exceptional council.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Governance Committee is asked to note and comment on the report.

DETAILS AND REASONING

The Council has a strong track record of embedding equality and diversity in the way we deliver excellent customer service to all our residents and customers. Examples of this include the design and tailoring of services to meet individual needs in the Gateway customer service team, assisted waste collection service, through the approach to 'My Neighbourhoods' community involvement and our values as a council.

Last year the Equality Act 2010 came in to force, with statutory requirements that the Council must meet. The Equality and Human Rights Commission is responsible for ensuring the legislation is implemented and complied with by public bodies. As a result of the new requirements equality and diversity was identified in the Annual Governance Statement as an area for further consideration.

The Equality Act 2010 includes a new duty on the Council to consider equality in the way it carries out its work and have due regard to:

- ▶ Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act.
- ▶ Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- ▶ Foster good relations between people who share protected characteristics.

The Act extends the protected characteristics to include:

1. Age
2. Disability
3. Gender reassignment
4. Marriage / civil partnership
5. Race
6. Religion / belief
7. Sex
8. Sexual orientation
9. Pregnancy and maternity

As a result of the Council's work over the years on equality and diversity in the way we deliver excellent customer services, for us the implications of the Act has been around re-freshing, documenting and formalising what we do. Raising awareness of the requirements of the Act has also been a key area for us to work on.

Please see the following requirements of the Equality Act and the steps taken to ensure we meet them:

Key Equality Act 2010 Requirements:	How we have met the Requirements:
1. Carry out equality impact assessments of services and policies	The equality impact assessment process has been re-freshed to reflect all of the protected characteristics. Equality impact assessments have been carried out on all services and key policies. Where actions have been identified from the assessment process these actions are being dealt with.
2. Consideration of equality in the decision-making process	The guidance and template for council and committee reports has been amended to include a specific mandatory section for report authors to use to identify the equality implications of decisions. Linked to this the Council's re-freshed impact assessment process should be used for major changes to services or policies and published on the equality pages of our website.
3. Awareness raising of the equality duty requirements	The Leader as lead Cabinet Member for equality has been fully briefed on the requirements. Training has been undertaken with elected Members. There have been items on CllrConnect - the member portal. Briefings have taken place with the Senior Management Team and with employees. Updates have been placed on the employee intranet. The equality pages on the Council's website have been overhauled as a one-stop shop to raise awareness of the requirements under the equality duty.
4. Prepare and publish equality objectives	Equality objectives have been prepared as part of developing our corporate plan and services plans. This information has been published on the equality pages of our website.

Key Equality Act 2010 Requirements:	How we have met the Requirements:
5. Publish information on the protected characteristics of its employees	All our employees were asked to provide personal information against the protected characteristics which has been used to produce a high-level report on our workforce. This report has been published on the equality pages of our website.
6. Publish information on people affected by its policies and practices	This information is drawn from Census information and is available on the equality pages of our website.
7. Ensure an adequate evidence base of those with protected characteristics to inform decision-making and impact assessments	Evidence on our communities has been developed as part of the 'My Neighbourhood' community involvement initiative. A guide to engaging with the protected characteristics group has been prepared and is available on the equality pages of the website.
8. Ensure equality is a requirement in council contracts so that they meet equality requirements	All the Council's contracts include a clause to ensure that they meet equality requirements.

The Council has been mindful that with reducing resources and capacity we have had to take a focussed and targeted approach to the Equality Act, building on our existing work and ensuring that it is part of the way we do things as a council.

The equality webpages on the Council's website has been completely overhauled as a one-stop shop for all our equality information so that they are as transparent and customer-friendly as possible.

As can be seen above, the Council now meets the requirements of the Equality Act. The next challenge is ensuring that we continue to ensure we meet the statutory requirements.

The information and assessments will be reviewed at least annually depending on the needs of the services and policies, equality is already a key part of corporate and service planning and our values framework. Updates will be provided to the Leader of the Council as the lead Cabinet Member, Senior Management Team and to residents through our annual report published in the Council's newspaper FORWARD. Awareness will also be raised periodically on CllrConnect Member Portal and intranet. Re-fresher training will be provided as necessary.

The Council's internal audit plan includes a review of the Council's approach to equality and diversity and the outcome of this audit will be reported to the Governance Committee in the usual way.

The Governance Committee is asked to note and comment upon this report.

WIDER IMPLICATIONS

In the preparation of this report, consideration has been given to the impact of its proposals in all the areas listed below, and the table shows any implications in respect of each of these.

FINANCIAL	None as a result of this report.
LEGAL	The legal implications in meeting the Equality Act 2010 are included within the report.
RISK	If we did not meet the requirements of the Equality Act 2010 there could potentially be risks to the Council's reputation within the community and potential legal action. The actions identified in the report have mitigated these risks.
THE IMPACT ON EQUALITY	This has been considered as part of this report.

OTHER (see below)

<i>Asset Management</i>	<i>Corporate Plans and Policies</i>	<i>Crime and Disorder</i>	<i>Efficiency Savings/Value for Money</i>
<i>Equality, Diversity and Community Cohesion</i>	<i>Freedom of Information/ Data Protection</i>	<i>Health and Safety</i>	<i>Health Inequalities</i>
<i>Human Rights Act 1998</i>	<i>Implementing Electronic Government</i>	<i>Staffing, Training and Development</i>	<i>Sustainability</i>

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

- Documents referred to in this report are available on the Council's website at www.southribble.gov.uk.