

<b>DECISION-MAKER:</b>	EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, NEIGHBOURHOODS		
<b>SUBJECT:</b>	APPROVAL OF THE COUNCIL'S EQUALITY SCHEME 2009-12		
<b>DATE OF DECISION:</b>	10 <sup>TH</sup> FEBRUARY 2010		
<b>REPORT OF:</b>	HEAD OF NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES		
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#### **STATEMENT OF CONFIDENTIALITY**

Not applicable

#### **SUMMARY**

Legislation requires the Council to produce and publish a Race Equality Scheme, Gender Equality Scheme and Disability Equality Scheme every 3 years. The Council has updated its previous Schemes and combined them into one document – the Equality Scheme 2009-12. The Equality Scheme contains the Council's commitment to deliver equality actions that will help eliminate discrimination, hate crime and harassment and promote greater equality in respect of race, gender and disability. The Equality Scheme also includes actions to address inequality issues in respect of age, sexual orientation, religion and belief and gender identity.

#### **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- (i) To approve, under delegated powers 6.1.22 and 6.1.25, the Council's Equality Scheme 2009-12.
- (ii) To approve, under delegated powers 6.1.22 and 6.1.25, the updating of the Council's Equality Policy. (The Equality Policy is Appendix 6 of the Equality Scheme 2009-12.)

#### **REASONS FOR REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. The Council has a statutory obligation to consult on and produce Equality Schemes.

#### **CONSULTATION**

2. Disabled People have been actively involved in putting together the Equality Scheme in compliance with the Council's legal obligations.
3. The Equality Scheme 2009-12 has been subject to extensive consultation involving the public, Voluntary and Community groups, Agencies representing groups of interest, other Public sector bodies, representative Fora, and council staff, Unions and Members. Comments and views have been collected via meetings, electronic mailing, questionnaires, workshops, and small group/1:1 discussion, and incorporated into the Equality Scheme as relevant. (A full listing of consultees is Appendix 3 in the Equality Scheme.)

## **ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED**

4. A failure to produce and publish Equality Schemes would breach the Council's statutory duties.
5. The Council could have produced and consulted on 3 separate Equality Schemes as some other Authorities have chosen to do. A single comprehensive Equality Scheme has been preferred as a more effective and value-for-money approach, as well as a better vehicle to engage public interest.

## **DETAIL**

6. The Equality Scheme 2009-12 seeks to address three separate, but overlapping legal duties to produce Schemes (action plans) to detail activities and actions to best meet the Council's obligations to:
  - eliminate unlawful discrimination;
  - promote equality of opportunity between persons of different racial groups, between Disabled People and other people; and between men and women;
  - positively promote good relations between people from different racial backgrounds;
  - promote positive attitudes towards Disabled People and tackle damaging stereotypes relating to Disabled People, gender and race;
  - tackle racial and sexual harassment and harassment of Disabled People;
  - encourage participation of people from all our diverse communities in public life - including specifically, taking steps towards meeting the needs of Disabled People even if this means more favourable treatment.
7. The consideration of these activities and actions is "mainstreamed" into all the Council's key functions:
  - service provider;
  - employer;
  - purchaser / commissioner of goods and services;
  - community leader and partner.
8. The council delivered /made good progress on more than 90% of the actions in the previous Equality Schemes (2006-09). This Equality Scheme (2009-12) builds on the achievements from the previous Schemes and commits the council to new equality actions. The equality actions have been selected on the basis of four criteria:
  - Evidence of need – identified through regularly reviewing council services and practices to consider their impact on different communities and social groups (ie. undertaking equality impact assessments);
  - Relevant National/local performance indicators - so that outcomes can be objectively measured;
  - Value-for-money use of resources – to achieve better outcomes through effective targeting;

- “Expert” opinion – the views of partners, specialist agencies, customers and people who experience the effects of inequality on what they think would make the most difference.
9. Many of the actions in the Scheme are already endorsed in the delivery plans of the Council’s major Strategies e.g. Children and Young Peoples’ Plan, Health and Wellbeing Strategy, Local Regeneration Strategy and Safe City Partnership Plan.
  10. The key actions address equality issues across all “strands” – race, gender, religion and belief, impairment, sexual orientation, gender identity and age.
  11. Monitoring and progress reports on the actions in the Scheme will be periodically available on the Council’s website. A formal Report will be produced and published on an annual basis to comply with legislative requirements.
  12. Renewing the Council’s Equality Scheme has also given the opportunity to update the Council’s Equality Policy. The revised Policy reflects changes in legislation and removes references to national “benchmarking” standards which are no longer valid. (The revised Policy is Appendix 6 of the Equality Scheme.)

## **FINANCIAL/RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

### **Capital**

13. None

### **Revenue**

14. Resources to deliver the actions in the Scheme that are replicated from other major Strategies have already been endorsed through the clearance and approval process for those Strategies.
15. The remaining actions in the Scheme have been identified through Equality Impact Assessment work within services and through business planning. Therefore, resources for these actions are contained within current revenue budgets.

### **Property**

16. None

### **Other**

17. None

## **LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

### **Statutory power to undertake proposals in the report:**

18. The duty to produce Equality Schemes is contained within the Race Relations Act 1976 (as amended), the Disability Discrimination Act 2005 and the Equality Act 2006.

### **Other Legal Implications:**

19. The Equality Scheme has also taken into consideration the relevance of the Human Rights Act 1998, and the Crime & Disorder Act 1998 (specifically s.17 duty).

20. Cabinet Report “Corporate Equality Policy and Plan” – recommendation (iii) on 4<sup>th</sup> April 2005 approved delegated powers to “make amendments to the Equality Policy as required” to the Executive Director, Neighbourhoods.
21. Cabinet Report “Equality Schemes for Race, Gender and Disability” – recommendation (ii) on 13<sup>th</sup> November 2006 approved delegated powers to “make amendments to the Council’s Equality Schemes in order to address evolving legal performance requirements.” to the Executive Director, Neighbourhoods.

**POLICY FRAMEWORK IMPLICATIONS**

22. The Equality Scheme will have an impact on services delivered across the whole Council and therefore is relevant to all plans in the policy framework.

**SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION**

**Non-confidential appendices are in the Members’ Rooms and can be accessed on-line**

**Appendices**

1.	The Equality Scheme 2009-12
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**Documents In Members’ Rooms**

1.	The Equality Scheme 2009-12
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**Background Documents**

Title of Background Paper(s)	Relevant Paragraph of the Access to Information Procedure Rules / Schedule 12A allowing document to be Exempt/Confidential (if applicable)
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1.	Children and Young Peoples’ Plan 2009-12	
2.	Customer Access Strategy	
3.	Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2009-12	
4.	Local Regeneration Strategy 2009-12	
5.	Workforce Strategy 2009-12	
6.	Safe City Partnership Plan 2009-12	
7.	City of Southampton Strategy 2026	
	All other documents are listed at Appendix 2 in Equality Scheme	

**Background documents available for inspection at:** Room 79, Civic Centre

<b>FORWARD PLAN No:</b> N/A	<b>KEY DECISION?</b>	Officer Key Decision
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<b>WARDS/COMMUNITIES AFFECTED:</b>	All
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