

Report Title: **Draft Equality Scheme**

Forward Plan reference number (if applicable): **Not Applicable**

Report of: **The Chief Executive**

Wards(s) affected: **All**

Report for: **Key Decision**

1. Purpose (That is, the decision required)

- 1.1 To secure an Executive decision to introduce a generic Equality Scheme which brings the duties under the various UK anti-discrimination legislation such as on race, gender, disability, religion or belief, age and sexuality under a single strategic policy and operational framework.
- 1.2 To secure an Executive decision that when finalised and adopted, the Equality Scheme signals a move towards a unified and integrated approach to equalities work in Haringey.
- 1.3 To secure an Executive decision that the Scheme be introduced by 4th December 2006 to coincide with the coming into force of the Disability Public Duties.

2. Introduction by Executive Member

2.1 Equal Opportunity has undoubtedly developed and been embedded in Haringey over many years.

It has developed to the point where it is now a key consideration in everything we do as a Council.

The Equality Act 2006 and creation of a single equality body, the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) now make it necessary for us to review our approach to equalities work.

This report proposes a generic Equality Scheme, built around the respective public duties to promote equal opportunity in regard to age, disability, gender, race, religion or faith, and sexuality.

It will be used to work for equal opportunity simultaneously for all these six strands.

This approach has benefits for the Council and more importantly the six equalities strands covered in the Scheme. For the Council, it consolidates our approach to equalities work within a single strategic framework, thus avoiding the need to develop a separate Scheme for each of the strands; For the equalities communities, it dispels the notion of a so-called hierarchy of equality, which implies that one or other of the equalities communities is given greater importance than others in public policy; it also has the potential to encourage a closer, more partnership working on equalities at the grassroots by bringing together the different local equalities organisations in collaborative work with the Council.

Extensive consultation is now taking place within the Council and in the community, following which it is intended that the Scheme will be introduced by 4th December 2006.

I believe this is the way forward for Haringey. I therefore commend this report and the Scheme to the Executive Advisory Board.

Cllr. George Meehan
Leader of the Council and Executive Member for Equal Opportunity

3. Recommendations

3.1 That the Executive Advisory Board:

- i. Consider the draft Equality Public Duties Scheme appended;
- ii. Note its potential implications for the Council as set out in Paragraph 7 of this report.
- iii. Note the consultation scheduled set out in appendix 4 of draft Scheme;
- iv. Note that it is important that the Scheme be adopted and introduced by the 4th December, to coincide with the Disabilities Public Duties coming into force on that date.

Report Authorised by:

Contact Officer: **Inno Amadi**
Senior Policy Development Officer (Equality & Diversity)
Tel: Ext. 2580

4. Director of Finance Comments

It is understood that the financial implications envisaged at present are in respect of consultation and printing. Any expenditure relating to production of the Scheme will be met from the existing Equalities & Diversity budget.

5. Head of Legal Services Comments

The implementation of the scheme would enable the council to comply with the Equality Act 2006. As consultation is ongoing, we have no specific comments at this stage.

6. Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985

6.1 The following documents were consulted in the preparation of this report and the draft Equality Scheme:

- The Equality Act 2006
- Race Equality Scheme (Haringey Council)
- Draft Gender Public Duty
- Disability Equality Duty for Public Authorities

6.2. In addition, current single strand equalities legislation have informed the production of the draft Scheme. These are listed in appendix 1 of the draft Scheme attached.

7. Strategic Implications

1.1 The adoption of the Equality Scheme would have a number of policy implications for the Council.

i. It would confirm that Haringey has a generic and integrated approach to equal opportunity, which does not recognise a hierarchy of inequality.

ii. It would avoid the need to develop a separate equality scheme for each of the strands to which they are public duties.

iii. At grassroots level, it has the potential to bring together the various equality organisations and promote joint working between them.

iv. It would provide the Council with a full picture of the equalities agenda as it has developed in last few years and its wider linkage with social inclusion and community cohesion.

v. It would provide a single strategic document that will govern equalities work in Haringey and provide the basis for assessing performance that cover a broad spectrum of equality, inclusion and social cohesion issues.

8. Financial Implications

8.1 The financial implications envisaged at present are in respect consultation and printing. Any expenditure relating to the production of the Scheme will be met from the existing Equalities & Diversity budget.

9. Legal Implications

9.1 The Scheme will enable the Council to comply with the general equalities as well as the specific (Public) Duties.

10. Equalities Implications

The Scheme will ensure that all the equalities strands are given equal weight and promoted simultaneously in Haringey. By placing its implementation within the Council's business planning and performance management frameworks, equalities will be more effectively mainstreamed into everything the Council does.

11. Consultation

11.1 We have consulted extensively both within the Council and in the community from 27th October. We have ensured that groups representing the six equality strands have been included in the consultation exercise. A list of the groups are set out in appendix 4 of the draft Scheme.

11.2 In addition, a community consultation meeting was held on 13th November 2006. The consultation period formally comes to a close on 24th November 2006.

12. Background.

12.1 There is a move towards a generic approach to equality, which embraces the duties under the anti-discrimination legislation on race, gender, disability, religion or belief, age and sexuality under a single strategic and operational framework

4.2 Many public authorities are embarking on this route, driven by a number of factors, including:

* **Structural and legislative changes at the national level**, which include formation of the Commission for Equality Human Rights (CEHR), which bring together and take on the work of the existing commissions, i.e. the CRE, EOC and DRC. The new Commission will also assume responsibility for promoting equality and tackling unlawful discrimination in three new strands, namely, sexual orientation, religion or belief, and age.

* **Common features in the general and specific duties on public bodies**, relating to the equality strands, which broadly include the duties not to discriminate unlawfully; to promote equality of opportunity in services, employment and in every

other functions of a public body. In regard to race, it includes the duty to promote good relations between people of different racial, ethnic and origin. In addition to the general duties, there are also specific duties on public authorities (often referred to as public duties) in regard to disability, gender and race equality. These too have common features which include the duties to: consult and involve; carried out equalities impact assessment of proposals; monitor, report and act on disparities in outcomes and; provide information in accessible formats including minority languages where necessary.

12.2 * **Judgment about future trends**, which points towards a generic equality model overseen nationally by a single Commission; an impending new Single Equality Act which, as the government is intending, will bring together all the legislation on discrimination into a single legal framework to tackle discrimination and inequality.

13. Conclusion

The Scheme, in its final form will be the product of an extensive consultation process which will involve a wide range of groups in Haringey, including strategic partners, Council staff and organisations covering the six equality strands covered in the Scheme. These will include among others:

- * Council staff;
- * The Local Strategic Partnership;
- * The Race Equality Joint Consultative Committee;
- * Haringey Women's Forum;
- * Haringey Disabilities Consortium;
- * Haringey Faith Forum;
- * Haringey Age Concern;
- * Gypsies and Irish Travellers;
- * Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) Network.

14. Use of Appendices / Tables / Photographs

14.1 The appendices are as follows:

- i. The Draft Scheme
- ii. Implementation Strategy