

EAST HERTS COUNCIL

LOCAL JOINT PANEL – 11 OCTOBER 2004

REPORT BY THE SECRETARY TO THE EMPLOYERS SIDE

EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY SCHEME/HATE CRIME/RACE EQUALITY

RECOMMENDATION – that (A) the attached Diversity and Equalities Policy,

(B) the attached Race Equality Scheme, and

(C) Hate Crime reporting procedure be agreed.

1.0 Background

1.1 East Herts Council has committed to achieve level 2 of the diversity standard for local government by April 2005.

1.2 One of the key elements of the standard is to have an Equal Opportunities Policy in place. In our case we have called our policy a Diversity and Equalities Policy.

1.3 In addition a requirement of the Race Relations Act 1976, as amended by the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000, is that all local authorities should have a Race Relations Policy in place We have complied with the legislation and produced a scheme and action plan. The latter is now due to be updated.

1.4 A further requirement of the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 is that all local authorities should have a race equality action plan and a racist incident recording procedure in place.

1.5 The government is currently working towards bringing all bodies that look at separate areas of discrimination, under one umbrella body.

2.0 Progress towards level 2 of the Diversity Standard.

2.1 East Herts Council have achieved level 1 of the Diversity Standard. A Diversity Steering group, made up of Officers from across the Council and with representation from external partners have influenced a number of practices to ensure good practice has been taken on board. This work continues.

2.2 A key component of our reaching level 1 of the standard was having a draft equal opportunities policy in place. We are conscious that our policy needs to reflect the needs of the people we produce it for and are currently attempting to ensure members of the public from all sectors of our population have the opportunity to comment on the draft. This consultation continues, but we do need to formally adopt our current policy and the attached document is offered for agreement.

2.3 The Race Relations Act 1976 as amended by the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 places a general duty on a wide range of public bodies to promote race equality. This duty means that in everything we do we should be able to demonstrate we have taken due regard to the need to:

- ◆ Eliminate unlawful racial discrimination;
- ◆ Promote equality of opportunity; and
- ◆ Promote good race relations between people of different racial groups.

The Diversity Steering Group continues to work with Managers to ensure we put best practice elements of equality practice in place. We also have specific National Performance Indicators to measure progress. The attached Race Equality Scheme is offered for agreement.

2.3 A further requirement of the Race Relations (Amendment) Act and National Performance Indicators place a duty on local authorities to record racist incidents and to record the number of incidents reported to the police.

2.4 The attached reporting process presented for agreement has been agreed in consultation with the police and will go live within the next few weeks. The intention is to record all hate crimes and not just those relating to Racist incidents. This ensures we continue with our campaign to ensure equality encompasses all forms of discrimination.

3.0 Conclusion

- 3.1 The attached policy, scheme and process (Appendix 'B', pages 29 - 46) are presented for agreement. Work continues on the outputs from the policy and practices. We will also continue to consult with internal and external customers and partners to ensure we bring the policies and processes up to date, both in terms of content, style and practice. Should there be any major changes in the ethos of the policies or practices they will be reported through this panel.
- 3.2 Part of the East Herts Senior Managers away day later this month will focus on Equality Impact Assessments for all service areas. This will ensure we are complying with all aspects of legal and good practice equality standards.

Background Papers

None

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