

Title: Task & Finish Group – Equality & Diversity (Phase 2)

Lead Officer: Graham Leach

Portfolio Holder: Councillor Hales

Wards of the District directly affected: All

The Equality and Diversity Task & Finish Group have met and discussed the approach for undertaking phase two of their work in looking at the Council's approach to equality and diversity, especially with regard to race. They have asked me to share with you the update set out below ahead of your meeting tomorrow.

The specific focus of phase two is to look at the provision of services to the community and how the Council engages from residents as set out below:
*"2. WDC's engagement with residents, particularly where WDC is providing services, but also including the effectiveness of public messaging (website, press releases etc).
3. All contractors dealing with residents by exploring the procurement practices and which race equality conditions are applied into tenders if any.
4. WDC's promotion of racial equality generally e.g. addressing hate crime.
5. If the Council can do more to encourage engagement of BAME residents in democratic processes including standing for election and identifying its messages reach these Communities"*

The first step of this was to meet with Bernie Allen from the Community Wellbeing Team to discuss her wealth of knowledge and draw on her expertise in this area recognising the request from Overview & Scrutiny to provide a detailed plan of the second phase of work.

From this the Councillors are looking at taking a phased approach for this work.

1. Reviewing data held by service areas on ethnicity i.e. who do we know we are delivering services to
2. Looking to see if there are specifically tailored services for the one or more of the protected characteristics of the equalities act
3. Identifying the requirement of the Council to provide information in different languages and how that is achieved
4. Looking at the communications and marketing approach for the Council for distributing its messages within the community
5. Looking at the data from the merger of Councils to see how ethnically diverse an audience responses were received from and comparing this to the known diversity levels in the district
6. Challenging those areas on data collection about customers where it is not held to understand why not
7. Work with the Community Partnership Team to identify potential Community Groups who an external independent party could meet with to identify any barriers to service based equalities reasons
8. Work with service areas to understand the current position in respect of EQUIAs that are held for current work and the judgement used to complete them ahead of new projects

In respect of question 7 there will be a resource/cost of this and this will be investigated and reported back in due course.

The Group are mindful of the demands upon officers at present, therefore as part of the initial request for information, JMT will also be asked about capacity and for a reasonable timescale for responses. This will then be used to build a detailed plan for Overview & Scrutiny Committee.