

Corporate Equality Scheme

February 2008

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All are available on website

Forward

This is the first Corporate Equality Scheme (CES) for Woking Borough Council and it builds on the Council's corporate commitment to equalities through its Equality/Diversity Policy (Being Equal), the Race Equality Scheme, the Disability Equality Scheme and the Gender Equality Scheme adopted by the Council during the period 2002 to 2007. It is one of the key Council documents which contribute to both our vision of **Towards Tomorrow Today** and the Community Strategy for Woking.

What we seek for Woking is a vibrant, thriving community where *all* residents have the opportunity to fulfil their potential and where disadvantage and discrimination are challenged and rooted out.

We will not be able to achieve this on our own and recognise that we must work together with our residents, the community and voluntary sector, other public sector agencies and local business to achieve our vision. The Corporate Equality Scheme supports the objectives of the community strategy for Woking and in particular, ensuring that there is fair and equal access to services and facilities (Woking Community Strategy 2006, Theme 1)

The Council has statutory duty to produce equality schemes for race, disability and gender. This Corporate Equality Scheme will cover these three stands and include the three additional equality strands of age, sexuality and religion and belief.

Introduction

We believe that the Council's Vision and Values will only be realised if it truly encompasses all of Woking's residents. This is supported by our core values ;

- We are one organisation
- We are in the public service
- We care about people and the borough

We believe that the diversity of our population and workforce is one of our greatest strengths. Equality of opportunity and freedom from discrimination is a fundamental right and this Council has a duty to exercise leadership to promote this right. We intend to promote equality and prevent discrimination through our roles as:

- Service provider
- Employer
- Community leader

We will follow best practice in all equality areas and work to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination
- Eliminate harassment
- Promote equality of opportunity
- Promote good relations between different groups in the community
- Recognise and take account of people's differences

Being Equal – a valuing diversity policy

Woking Borough Council recognises that a thriving, dynamic and modern organisation and the community it serves is made up of different people. Valuing diversity means that any form of discrimination must not be tolerated and that differences should be both celebrated and welcomed; whether in the workplace or the community at large.

This valuing diversity policy, adopted by the Council in December 2002, aims to enhance both the quality and effectiveness of Woking's services in meeting the needs of everyone within the Borough by:

- Recognising that there are great gains, both social and economic, to be made from positively embracing the diversity of a community
- Providing a common policy framework to address the needs of socially excluded groups

- Developing co-ordinated equality plans and monitoring systems for both employment practices and service delivery
- Ensuring that all managers and service providers take responsibility for equality

The Council will promote equality and prevent discrimination through its roles as:

- Service provider
- Employer
- Community leader

The Policy Statement

Woking Borough Council recognises that:

- There are many forms of discrimination which affect vulnerable sections of the community -
 - Direct discrimination – where an individual or group receives less favourable treatment because of such things as sex, race or disability, for example
 - Indirect discrimination – where a condition or requirement, although applied equally to all people, has the effect that proportionately, one group of people will be less able to comply
 - Institutional discrimination – where an organisation collectively fails to provide an appropriate and professional service to a group of people because of such things as their sex, race or disability. It has been particularly highlighted in respect of race
- All members of Woking's diverse communities should have the opportunity to enjoy the highest possible quality of life
- A healthy community requires that all of its members feel they are not excluded and that their contribution is valued
- The Council must embed the concept of valuing diversity in all its policies and practices
- Woking Borough Council's accountability and leadership role within the democratic process give it additional responsibilities for championing the concept of valuing diversity both locally and beyond

Woking Borough Council will therefore strive to:

- Ensure that it builds fairness in to all that it does, and will not tolerate any forms of prejudicial discrimination
- Work in partnership with all sections of the community to ensure their maximum involvement in the democratic process
- Ensure that through listening, responding and working together with its community, service users, carers and employees, its services are designed to meet their identified needs, are available and accessible to all, and are delivered fairly in terms of quantity, quality and timing, a standard to be tested through Best Value Reviews
- Provide equality of opportunity for all its staff by ensuring its employment policies and practices, (concerning recruitment, retention, promotion, training and discipline), are designed to reflect and attract the communities that Woking serves
- Promote valuing diversity through its work with other agencies in the voluntary, community and private sectors to deliver on equality
- Develop environments where people are valued and respected, ensuring all of its officers are made fully aware both of the meaning of the valuing diversity agenda and of their individual responsibility to make it happen

- Take very seriously any complaints about inequality and set up effective systems of quality and equality monitoring, thus ensuring that action on valuing diversity is being continuously evaluated and improved
- Ensure that the community as a whole recognises the contributions made by Woking's diverse communities to the Borough's economic, social and cultural well-being

Key equality themes

The Council has identified the following key equalities themes:

- Race (tackling discrimination and promoting equality between groups)
- Disability
- Gender (women and men, including transgender people)
- Age (both younger and older people)
- Sexual Orientation
- Religion and Belief

The statements below set out the Council's commitment to these themes in the following areas.

Race

Woking Borough Council recognises that people from minority ethnic groups can experience discrimination on the basis of colour, race, nationality, religion and ethnic origin. This discrimination may manifest itself in all areas of their lives such as housing, employment, education and access to services. Racial harassment and violence is one of the most serious consequences of racism, damaging people emotionally and physically and limiting life choices and opportunities. The Council will take all necessary measures to prevent and tackle racial harassment and assist **all** people to live in freedom from harassment.

The Council's Race Equality Scheme is the plan which sets out the Council's commitment to promoting race equality. The Council recognises that our community is made up of many different groups and respects, values and celebrates this diversity. The Race Equality Scheme provides the Council with a range of different procedures to help ensure that equity is at the core of its policies and services.

The Council also recognises that there are certain areas within our community where the outcomes for White British people are below those of the majority and the Council is committed to working for the equality of **all** ethnic groups.

The complete Race Equality Scheme is available on our website and is appended to this scheme. See Appendix 2.

Disability

Woking Borough Council aims to ensure that disabled people are able to participate fully and equally within the communities of Woking.

This will be achieved by:

- creating a culture within the Council amongst Members and Officers to ensure that equality is at the core of all its activities.
- making services relevant and accessible to present and future users
- targeting resources, where necessary, to groups and communities who are most at risk of exclusion.
- ensuring that the Council's involvement in the voluntary and community sector supports the empowerment and self-organisation of disability groups.
- building a workforce that is representative of the diverse communities of the borough.
- influencing others through good practice in service provision, employment and procurement.

The Council commits to the Social Model of Disability which recognises that while some people may have disabilities which affect who they are physically or mentally, it is the barriers in society that create or compound their disabilities. The basis of the Council's policy and practices, in relation to people with disabilities and the development of the Disability Equality Scheme, is about identifying and removing these barriers.

The complete Disability Equality Scheme is available on our web-site and is appended to this scheme. See Appendix 3.

Gender

Woking Borough Council is committed to combating sex discrimination and sexism and promoting the equality of women and men. Women constitute half of the borough's population and the Council's workforce and while women make an equal and positive contribution to the community they often experience discrimination, social and economic disadvantage, lack of recognition, inferior status and negative attitudes.

The Council recognise that society has stereotypes for both women and men, and both women and men can lose out opportunities because of these stereotypes.

The Gender Equality Scheme aims to :

Ensure that women and men are able to access services

which are appropriate to their needs and participate fully and equally within the communities of Woking

Eliminate unlawful discrimination and harassment in employment practices and actively promote gender equality within the workforce

The complete Gender Equality Scheme is available on our web-site and is appended to this scheme. See Appendix 4.

Age

Woking Borough Council is committed to promoting equality of opportunity for younger and older people.

We recognise that society has negative attitudes, stereotypes and myths about youth, ageing, younger and older people, and that these attitudes and beliefs can lead to both younger and older people being socially and economically disadvantaged, excluded and marginalised. We believe that younger and older people have the right to equality and opportunity and make a significant and valuable contribution to the community at large.

The Council engages with all sectors of the communities of Woking and the commitment to provide services for younger and older people can be seen within the following policies and strategies:

Cultural Strategy

Community Strategy

Housing Strategy

People Strategy

Woking Local Plan

Age Equality means securing the equal participation in society of people of every age, securing a balance between equal citizenship, equality of opportunity, equality of outcome and respect for difference.

Sexual Orientation

Woking Borough Council is committed to combating the discrimination faced by lesbians, gay men and bisexual people. We want to ensure equality of opportunity for **all** people across services and employment.

We will respect the rights of individuals to be open about their sexual orientation, tackle homophobia, challenge stereotyping and improve knowledge about lesbian, gay men and bisexual communities, both internally and to the community as a whole.

The Council also recognises that the Civil Partnerships Act 2005 introduces new legal rights and responsibilities for same sex couples in registered partnerships and has taken steps to alter relevant procedures to take account of these rights.

Religion / Belief

Woking Borough Council recognises that people can face discrimination because of attitudes in society towards the religious groups to which they belong. Faith-based hate crime has been a new phenomenon in recent years, developing a character that is distinct from race hate crime.

The Council recognises that a person's religion or belief may mean that they have different needs, demands and expectations, which requires flexibility on the part of a service provider or employer.

The council is committed to eliminating illegal discrimination and exclusion on the basis of religion or belief.

Legal responsibilities

Promotion of Race Equality (Race Equality Duty Code of Practice, 2001)

The Race Relations Act 1975, made racial discrimination illegal. The Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 gives all public authorities a legal duty to promote race equality. This duty is supported by a statutory code of practice, enforceable in law, requiring public agencies to act proactively to:

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

Promotion of the Equality of Disabled People (Disability Equality Duty Code of Practice 2005)

The Disability Discrimination Act 1995 requires all employers and service providers to make reasonable adjustments to service delivery in order to improve disabled people's access to goods, services and employment. The Disability Discrimination Act 2005, extended the 1995 Act to cover public functions (such as enforcement and benefits) and introduced a duty to promote the equality of disabled people. This is supported by a new statutory code of practice, to which public agencies must have due regard in order to:

- Eliminate unlawful disability discrimination
- Eliminate unlawful disability harassment
- Promote equality of opportunity for disabled people
- Take steps to take account of disabled persons' disability even where that involves treating disabled people more favourably than other persons.
[This was already a provision of the DDA 1995, and is the only form of positive discrimination that is legal under UK law. However, the expectation is that positive discrimination should be avoided if a reasonable adjustment can be made without it.]

Promotion of Gender Equality (Gender Equality Duty Code of Practice 2005)

The Equal Pay Act 1970 and the Sex Discrimination Act 1975 combined to outlaw sex discrimination, for both women and men, in pay and employment and extended to women certain rights (such as the right to inheritance or to register a death) that had previously been withheld.

The Equality Act 2006 amends the Sex Discrimination Act 1975 to place a statutory duty on all public authorities, when carrying out their functions, to have due regard of the need:

- to eliminate unlawful discrimination and harassment
- to promote equality of opportunity between men and women.

Other equality areas

Over and above the codes of practice, the Equality Act 2006 makes it illegal, with regard to gender, sexuality and religion and belief, to exclude people unfairly, from having access to goods and services. Prior to this date it was only illegal to

discriminate on the grounds of race and disability. Best customer practice would mean extending this to ensure that people are not excluded unfairly because of their age. In effect this will mean that all of the council's services should aim to be accessible to all and that targeted services (e.g. for older people, young people etc.) should take account of service users different needs. These new legal duties are in line with what is already a best practice aim for Woking. It is also illegal under a variety of UK laws to discriminate against employees on the basis of their gender, race, disability, religion/belief, sexual orientation and age, except where there is a genuine occupational reason to do so. Additionally The Gender recognition Act 2005, requires all employers, service providers and public authorities to ensure that transgender persons who have a gender recognition certificate, to be recognised as their re-assigned or social gender. This includes ensuring that they receive services appropriate to their re-assigned or social gender.

Human Rights

In addition to the specific requirements set out above, six Articles of the European Convention on Human Rights (as described in the Human Rights Act 1998) also have implications for the provision of public services and function.

Article 2: Everyone has the right to life.

Article 3 No one shall be subjected to ... degrading treatment

Article 5 Everyone has the right to ... security of person

Article 8 Everyone has the right to respect for their private and family life, home and correspondence

Article 9 Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion ... subject only to such limitations as are prescribed by law and are necessary in a democratic society in the interests of public safety, public order, health, morals, or the freedoms of others

Article 10 Everyone has the right to freedom of expression (subject to the same requirements as Article 9), but the exercise of those freedoms carries duties and responsibilities to the rights of others.

Article 14 Prohibition on Discrimination. The enjoyment of the rights and freedoms set forth in the convention shall be secured without discrimination on any ground such as sex, race, colour, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, association with a national minority, property, birth or other status.

Power of Wellbeing

In areas where there are no legal duties placed on a public authority, the council may exercise its Power of Wellbeing (Local Government Act 2000) to benefit of the community. This can include extending the principles of any equality legislation to cover other equality areas. It is by using this power that the CES has been written, extending to all equality areas the best practice set out in the race, disability and gender codes of practice.

Social Inclusion

Whilst there is no direct correlation between social exclusion and equality and diversity, there is an indirect relationship between the two. Our Social Inclusion Strategy (December 2004) sets out our approach to tackling the risk of social exclusion occurring. Embedding equalities into our organisational culture is essential if we are to achieve the outcomes from the Social Inclusion Strategy. The Social Inclusion Strategy identifies the following key priorities :

- Geographical areas with the highest levels of deprivation
- Community Cohesion
- Residents with low skills and no qualifications
- Children and young people
- Residents over 65
- Residents with long-term illness

We recognise that many people who face discrimination and disadvantage because of their identity also face social exclusion. In prioritising support, intervention and resources at the most disadvantaged communities we are often prioritising equality groups too, but we recognise that it is possible to stereotype such minority communities as “disadvantaged”.

Managing equalities within Woking Borough Council

Engagement & Assessment

Consultation and engagement with communities and service users are major elements of designing services that are able to deliver the equality of outcomes that people need. Improving our performance cannot be done in isolation from those we seek to serve. Involving our residents is crucial in order to hear their views about current services and how these can be improved to meet current and emerging needs. The Council consults its residents through a variety of methods from the annual residents survey, citizen’s panel, area forums to service user surveys and focus group discussions. Information from all of these activities is used to help us shape our service plans each year.

When we revise or develop policies and services, we conduct equality impact assessments. These assessments are based on evidence from consultations (including the Annual Residents Survey, service consultations and customer feedback) and performance data. This information together with borough, ward and more localised statistics, provides managers with information about the needs of the diverse communities of Woking.

Equalities, Performance Management and Service Planning

Performance management is a key element of delivering good outcomes for communities, and the council’s approach to performance management has been designed to take into consideration the principles of the Equality Standard for

Local Government, which are used by the Audit Commission, as part of the Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA), to evaluate the equity of councils' achievements. The Standard requires a systematic approach around monitoring, review and outcomes, including evaluation of achievements and public engagement/scrutiny in order to change the design and delivery of services.

Council Service Plans will, during the annual service planning process, undertake equality impact assessments and all services are required to comment on the equality aspects of their service as part of the service planning process. Service Plans describe the priorities for each year and where equality performance improvements are required the targets set will be stated and details of how these improvements will be made included in a Corporate Equality Improvement Plan (action plan). All annual Service Plans are signed off by Management Team and approved by the Executive Committee.

Performance issues, including equality performance, are monitored throughout the year by the Council's Business Improvement team with quarterly reports submitted to the Executive Committee. Management Team will hold managers accountable for ensuring there is evidence of improved performance and equality of outcomes.

Meeting our employment and training duties

The Council annually monitors the profile of its staff by gender, race, disability, age, sexuality and religion and belief. The results of this monitoring is set out in the employment profile published in the autumn of each year. The profile contains information on the workforce, employee relations data and the impact of the Council's HR policies and the People Strategy. The profile also provides year on year comparisons as well as commentary on trends. Any identified areas for equality improvement will feed into Service Plans in the same way as for any other service setting any employment objectives, equality targets for recruitment, staff training, development and staff retention. This target setting will also be informed by the local labour market assessment.

Any employment benefits such as parental, family or adoptive leave and flexible working will be offered to employees at all levels. Where appropriate the Council will give special encouragement to, and provide specific training, as permitted by the Positive Actions provision of the equality legislation.

HR provide an annual training programme across a whole range of activities including comprehensive equality and diversity courses as well as training specifically on our duties under the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 and the Disability Discrimination Acts 1995 and 2005.

Equality and diversity is also included in the induction training for both staff and members.

Managing Equality Impact Assessments

Whilst currently there is only a legal requirement to conduct equality impact assessments for race, gender and disability the Council have taken a comprehensive approach to these assessments extending them to cover race, gender, disability, age, sexual orientation and religion and belief. Therefore one single impact assessment is made to cover the impact on any sector of our community of any council service, policy or project.

These impact assessments form part of the annual service planning process and any priority equality issues arising from these fed into the service plans as equality service targets. All identified equality issues will feed into a Corporate Equality Improvement Plan (action plan) which will be reviewed on an annual basis.

In order to better inform impact assessments and service planning it is important to know who uses and does not use our services. The Council will ensure that it collects and analyses service user data consistently and feeds this information into the service planning process.

Equality impact assessments are conducted when developing any new service, strategy or policy and for project work. Assessments on existing strategies and policies are conducted as part of the reviews of the function/service that is responsible for that policy.

Each review of function will:

- consider any issues identified through existing performance monitoring
- identify equality areas where performance monitoring has been less robust
- identify areas for development
- identify service strengths

Services will make judgements about the likely impact of their policies and functions on various equalities groups and will make their findings publicly available on the Council's web-site.

Equality Priorities for 2008 - 2013

This scheme has been informed by three strategic pieces of work: The Race Equality Scheme, The Disability Equality Scheme and The Gender Equality Scheme conducted between 2002-2007; consultations with the public and stakeholder groups conducted during this period; and internal reviews of the council's performance on meeting its existing equality objectives. This work has informed the strategic priorities set out in this section.

Review of the Race Equality Scheme: The scheme and action plan is due for review and the same consultation process will be used as that for the Disability & Gender Equality Schemes.

Good Employee Management: Meeting our obligations to staff, in both fair treatment and in equipping them to deliver services to a diverse community.

Ensuring that the council has a diverse workforce that reflects the community that it serves; and provides flexible working arrangements to minimise any barriers to employment.

Promoting Good Relations: Improving the visibility of and knowledge about Woking's multi-cultural and diverse communities to reduce the impact that stereotyping and prejudice can have on minority groups and promote cohesive communities.

Community Leadership: The council's strategic community role as a public agency and major local employer - Ensuring that equality is a priority for partners, contractors and other providers.

Internal Leadership: The council's performance on equality and diversity will be managed through strong internal leadership, transparency and open to scrutiny. Resources will be targeted to ensure that this is demonstrated through the Council's achievement against the Equality Standard for Local Government.

Involvement: Involving service users and the wider community in how services are designed; Engaging with communities on an ongoing basis

Information, Publication Review and Scrutiny

Our publication duties will be met and made accessible through the equalities and diversity site on the Council's website.

Summaries of reviews, assessments, consultations and monitoring will be published as they are agreed by respective directorate management teams. With regard to publishing the results of our employment and training duties these are met through the publication of the annual employment profile in July of each year.

It is already the council's practice to provide translation, interpretation or other accessible formats (such as Braille and tape) for those who need it.

The Corporate Equality Scheme will be reviewed annually by the Equality & Diversity Forum where progress on the action plan is reported and summaries of reviews and assessments are presented.

Plan of impact assessments for Strategies and policies

14th Energy Efficiency Report
Air Quality Management Plan
Asset Management Plan
Best Value Performance Plan
Capital strategy
Car Parks Charter
Civic Functions and Expenses BV Improvement Plan
Climate Change Strategy
Community Legal Service Partnership Strategy
Community Safety Strategy
Community Strategy
Constitution & Members Handbook
Contaminated Land Strategy
Corporate Learning Plan
Countryside Strategy
Cultural Strategy
Development and Building Control Charter
Development Plans – Local Plan
Emergency Plans
Empty Homes Strategy
Equality/Diversity Policy
Financial Strategy
Food Law Enforcement Plan
Fraud Policy
Grounds Maintenance BV Improvement Plan
Health Best Value Improvement Plans
Home Energy Conservation Act
Homeless Review and Strategy
Housing BV Improvement Plan
Housing Strategy
HRA Business Plan
Implementing Electronic Government Statement
Internal Audit Plan
Investment Programme
Joint Municipal Waste Strategy
Key Worker Strategy
Legal Services BV Improvement Plan
Leisure BV Improvement Plan
Local Agenda 21 Strategy
Overpayment Policy - Benefits
Parking Management Plan
Parking Services BV Improvement Plan
People Strategy
Planning Users and Enforcement Concordat
Planning, Building Control & Environmental

Corporate Equality Scheme 2008 – Woking Borough Council

Principles of Consultation
Private Sector Renewal Policy
Procurement Strategy
Race Equality Scheme
Social Inclusion and Community Cohesion Strategy
Staff Handbook
Standards Manual
Supplementary Planning Guidance
Surrey Local Transport Plan
Surrey Structure Plan
Surrey's Supporting People Strategy
Taxi Customer Charter
Treasury Management
Vision and Values
Waste Collection Plan
Waste Management Best Value Improvement Plan
Waste Management Strategy
Woking Local Plan

APPENDIX 1 – BEING EQUAL, A VALUING DIVERSITY POLICY

Definition

Valuing diversity embodies an evolving, systematic approach to equalities that seeks to eliminate all forms of discrimination and to recognise the benefits of celebrating diversity. This policy aims to enhance both the quality and effectiveness of Woking's services in meeting the needs of everyone within the borough by:

- Moving beyond an anti-discriminatory approach that emphasises processes to a proactive approach that focuses on actual outcomes
- Recognising that there are great gains, both social and economic, to be made from positively embracing the diversity of a community
- Providing a common policy framework for addressing the needs of socially excluded groups
- Developing co-ordinated equality plans and monitoring systems for both employment practices and service delivery
- Ensuring equality becomes a mainstream responsibility for all managers and service providers

The Policy Statement

Woking Borough Council recognises that:

- There are many forms of discrimination which affect vulnerable sections of the community -
Direct discrimination – where an individual or group receives less favourable treatment because of such things as sex, race or disability.
Indirect discrimination – where a condition or requirement, although applied equally to all people, has the effect that proportionately, one group of people will be less able to comply
Institutional discrimination – where an organisation collectively fails to provide an appropriate and professional service to a group of people because of such things as their sex, race or disability.
- All members of Woking's diverse communities have a right to enjoy the highest possible quality of life
- A healthy community requires that all of its members feel they are included and that their contribution is valued
- The Council must embed the concept of valuing diversity in all its policies and practices
- Woking Borough Council's accountability and leadership role within the democratic process give it additional responsibilities for championing the concept of valuing diversity both locally and beyond

Woking Borough Council will therefore strive to:

- Ensure that it builds fairness in to all that it does, and will not tolerate any forms of prejudicial discrimination

- Work in partnership with all sections of the community to ensure their maximum involvement in the democratic process
- Ensure that through listening, responding and working together with its community, service users, carers and employees, its services are designed to meet their identified needs, are available and accessible to all, and are delivered fairly in terms of quantity, quality and timing, a standard to be tested through Best Value Reviews
- Provide equality of opportunity for all its staff by ensuring its employment policies and practices, (concerning recruitment, retention, promotion, training and discipline), are designed to reflect and attract the communities that Woking serves
- Promote valuing diversity through its work with other agencies in the voluntary, community and private sectors to deliver on equality
- Develop environments where people are valued and respected, ensuring all of its officers are made fully aware both of the meaning of the valuing diversity agenda and of their individual responsibility to make it happen
- Take very seriously any complaints about inequality and set up effective systems of quality and equality monitoring, thus ensuring that action on valuing diversity is being continuously evaluated and improved
- Ensure that the community as a whole recognises the contributions made by Woking's diverse communities to the Borough's economic, social and cultural well-being

The Vision for Woking

The Community Strategy describes the sort of place Woking aspires to be in the future. It is based on what local people have said are their key concerns and priorities, and is the over-arching strategy for the Borough. Four of the six Community Aims focus on fairness, inclusion and accessibility:

- A strong community spirit with a clear sense of belonging and responsibility
- Access to quality and affordable housing for local people and key workers
- A community which values personal health and well-being
- Integrated and accessible local facilities and services

Local people said they wanted the Council to work to improve the quality of life for everybody in Woking regardless of any differences. This "Being Equal – Valuing Diversity Policy" describes how the Council intends to deliver on this important priority, and the attached Appendix 1 gives details on how it is organised to deliver services and take decisions.

We are, however, on a learning curve and do not have a complete understanding of all the issues involved. We therefore want input from our employees, service users and communities; so please get involved and let us know your experiences.

Please contact Refeia Zaman, Senior Policy Officer (Equality and Diversity) on 01483 743479 or email refeiazaman@woking.gov.uk, for further details about anything mentioned in this document.

How the Council is organised to deliver services and take decisions

Woking Borough Council is composed of 36 councillors, with one third elected three years in four. Councillors are democratically accountable to residents of their ward. All councillors meet together as the Council. Meetings of the Council are normally open to the public. Here Councillors decide the Council's overall policies and set the budget each year.

The Executive is the part of the Council which is responsible for most day-to-day decisions. The Executive is made up of the Leader, elected by the Council, and a cabinet of six Councillors appointed by the Council. When major decisions are to be discussed or made, these are published in the Executive's Officers at a meeting of the Executive, this will generally be open for the public to attend except where personal or confidential matters are being discussed. The Executive has to make decisions which are in line with the Council's overall policies and budget. If it wishes to make a decisions which is outside the budget or policy framework, this must be referred to the Council as a whole to decide.

There are three overview and scrutiny committees who support the work of the Executive and the Council as a whole. They allow citizens to have a greater say in Council matters by examining matters of local concern. These lead to reports and recommendations which advise the Executive and the Council as a whole on its policies, budget and service delivery. Overview and scrutiny committees also monitor the decisions of the Executive.

The Council has people working for it (called "Officers") to give advice, implement decisions and manage the day-to-day delivery of its services. The Council's Management Team comprises the Chief Executive and two Executive Directors, who provide strategic direction at the top level. The Officers directly responsible for day-to-day services are called Service Heads. There are nine Service Heads, each responsible for a particular Service Area. These Service Areas are: Community Services, Housing, Customer Services, Environmental Services, Planning and Regulation, Policy and Performance, Property Services, Resources, and Secretariat.

Appendix 2 – Race Equality Scheme 2008 -2011

“Woking Borough Council is determined that all individuals within our borough are able to play as full a part as they wish in local life and that no one, no matter what their circumstances, should be excluded.”

WBC Social Inclusion & Community Cohesion Strategy

“All members of Woking’s diverse communities have a right to enjoy the highest quality of life.”

“A healthy community requires that all of its members feel they are included and that their contribution is valued.”

WBC Being Equal – A Valuing Diversity Policy

The Race Equality Scheme is also available on our accessible web site www.woking.gov.uk and in the following formats on request:

Summary version in plain English and other languages, eg. Urdu, Italian, Chinese.

Larger print – 16 point and above

Tape or CD

Please contact Refeia Zaman to obtain a copy in your preferred format. Tel : 01483 743479 , e-mail refeiazaman@woking.gov.uk or write to her at Woking Borough Council, Civic Offices, Gloucester Square, Woking, GU21 6YI

Introduction

The Council clearly states in its Vision and Values that it cares about people and that our customers and community are the focus of what we do. We will treat everyone with fairness and dignity, respecting people's differences and needs and behave openly and consistently.

This revised Race Equality Scheme forms part of our Corporate Equality Scheme and further enhances our Valuing Diversity Policy, Social Inclusion and Community Cohesion Strategy, Cultural Strategy, External Communications Strategy, Supporting People Strategy and the Community Strategy for Woking.

Outline of the Duty

The Race Relation (Amendment) Act 2000 (RRAA 2000) places a statutory duty on all public authorities, when carrying out their functions, to put measures in place to:

- eliminate unlawful race discrimination
- promote equality of opportunity
- promote good relations between persons of different race

This is known as the 'general duty' and aims to make race equality an integral part of the way public authorities work, by putting it at the centre of policy making, service delivery and employment.

To support progress in delivering the general duty, there are also a series of 'specific duties' which apply to listed public authorities. The specific duties, in brief, are:

- To prepare and publish a race equality scheme, showing how the authority will meet the general and specific duties and setting out its race equality objectives.
- To set out and prioritise which of the council's current and proposed functions and policies are relevant to the general duty to promote race equality (see appendix 1).
- To assess the impact of its current and proposed policies and practices on race equality.

- To gather and use information on how the public authorities' policies and practices affect race equality in the workforce and in the delivery of services.
- To consult stakeholders (ie. employees and service users) and take account of relevant information in order to determine its race equality objectives.
- To implement the actions set out in the Race Equality Scheme, within three years, unless it is unreasonable or impractical to do so.
- To report against the scheme every year and review the scheme every three years.

Purpose of the Race Equality Scheme (Aims & Objectives)

- To ensure all those living, working or visiting Woking are able to access services which are appropriate to their needs and participate fully and equally within the communities of Woking; (aim)
- To promote good relations between persons of different race; (aim)

And

- To eliminate unlawful discrimination and harassment in employment practices and actively promote race equality within the workforce. (aim)

This will be achieved by (objectives):

- Creating a culture within the Council amongst Members and Officers to ensure that equality is at the core of all its activities.
- Eliminating unlawful discrimination and harassment in employment practices and actively promoting race equality in the workforce.
- Building a workforce that is representative of the diverse communities of the borough
- Making services relevant and accessible to present and future users
- Targeting resources, where necessary, to groups and communities who are most at risk of exclusion.
- Promoting equality through partnership working and community leadership.

- Ensuring that the Council's involvement in the voluntary and community sector supports the empowerment and self-organisation of community groups focusing on equality and inclusion.
- Influencing others through good practice in service provision, employment and procurement.

How we intend to achieve our aims.

- Leadership and accountability. The Chief Executive is the equality champion for WBC and has identified equality as one of the key priority areas. There is a portfolio holder for Equality and Social Inclusion and the Equality and Diversity Working Group (an internal officer team) are responsible for overseeing progress on equalities in the organisation. Equality and Diversity is one of the skills required in the new Behaviour and Skills Framework being implemented for all staff across the Council during 2008.
- Gather and analyse information on our employees and service users in order to identify areas for improvement and priorities for action;
- Consult stakeholders, including employees, Unison (Public Sector union), members of the community and voluntary sectors and service users. Again to establish areas of concern, areas for improvement and inform the action plan and targeting of resources.
- Carry out impact assessments. There is a legal requirement under the RRAA (2000) to assess the impact of policies on race equality. The Council's Equality Impact Assessment process includes race and the other five equality strands (disability, gender, age, sexuality and religion and belief). The assessment is a simple tool that enables the Council to check whether any existing or proposed strategy, policy, service or project is discriminating (actual or perceived) against any particular group or groups of people. This is to make sure that, as far as possible, any negative consequences of any strategy, policy, service or project are eliminated or minimised and opportunities for promoting equality are maximised.

- Access to information and services. The Council provides a wide range of information to the general public. It will try to ensure that this information is appropriate and accessible to everyone who requires it, eg. alternative formats and translations available on request.
Services can also be accessed in a variety of ways, including face to face, via telephone and electronic. Again the Council will endeavour to ensure that services provided are accessible to those that require them.
- Prioritise and implement race equality objectives. Priorities and objectives have been established from the results of consultation with community representatives, as well as taking into account priorities for WBC (see Developing an Action Plan section below).
- Report and review. An annual report on progress made on the Equality and Diversity agenda will be made to the Executive. The Race Equality Scheme will be reviewed and revised every three years. Stakeholders, including the Equality Forum, will be involved in reviewing progress to date and the effectiveness of the previous scheme and its objectives.
- Ensuring our workforce is representative of the community it serves. The Council monitors the make up of staff and those applying for employment to ensure they broadly reflect the make-up of local communities across all levels of the organisation. Monitoring also covers those applying for and receiving training and promotion, those benefiting or suffering a detriment as a result of performance assessment, those involved in grievance or disciplinary procedures and those leaving the Council's employment.
- Training . A detailed portfolio of equalities training has been put together to ensure the skills and understanding of staff and Members within the organisation is developed. This programme is regularly reviewed and updated to take into account changes in legislation and thinking as well as to ensure that courses are contributing towards changing 'hearts and minds'.

Developing an Action Plan

The information gained from consultation with the Equality Forum (an external group consisting of voluntary groups representing the six equality strands) and other local community groups has been used to inform the development of an action plan in support of this scheme. The detailed activities and actions developed will form part of a Corporate Equality Action Plan (CEAP). This CEAP will be the Council's single action plan covering all equality issues and will be included in the Council's business planning process.

The CEAP will be monitored and managed by both Councillors and Council Officers and be a living document able to be modified appropriately should priorities change and/or new issues arise.

Priorities for Woking Borough Council

As well as ensuring that we focus on delivering the aspirations of the local community, as set out in the Community Strategy, the Council has identified six priority themes that are built into everything we do:

- A strong community spirit with a clear sense of belonging and responsibility;
- A clean, healthy and safe environment;
- A transport system that is integrated and accessible;
- Access to decent affordable housing for local people and key workers;
- A community which values personal health and well-being;
- Provide opportunities and encourage people to participate in learning throughout their lives so they progress and reach their full potential.

Equality is fundamental to these themes. The Council is committed to equality of opportunity for people, regardless of race, age, religion, gender, sexual orientation, disability or any other differences. This commitment not to tolerate any form of discrimination and recognise the benefits of positively embracing the diversity of our community is set out in the Council's Corporate Equality Scheme (this Race Equality Scheme, the Disability Equality Scheme and Gender Equality Scheme form appendices to the corporate scheme) and 'Being Equal' A Valuing Diversity Policy. Training for all staff and councillors will be essential in raising awareness of the issues facing

different sections of Woking's diverse communities, ensuring equalities is mainstreamed into everyday business and changing 'hearts and minds'.

Priorities from consultation

Many different issues were raised in the consultation exercise. The consultation group, consisting of a wide range of community representatives and interest groups, identified the following priority areas:

- Accessible and appropriate services, including the provision of ESOL classes so that people were able to learn/improve English and thus be in a better position to access services. In addition, the provision of accessible and appropriate information on services available.
- Representation, including an organisation which is reflective of the local communities at all levels.
- Education, including greater parental participation and access to language classes.
- Health and wellbeing, including attitudes to disability and mental health.
- Work and economic development, including discrimination in employment and language/skills issues.

Appendix 1

Services relevant to equality: These are services which the Council has assessed as being relevant to equality generally and to the Council's duty to promote race equality in particular. The services are listed in priority order for action over a period of three years, although Equality Impact Assessment is being incorporated into the Service Planning process. This will make sure consideration is given to promoting equality and ensuring discrimination is not taking place for all services on an annual basis.

Year 1

Housing and Council Tax Benefits
Housing Development and Advice
Tenant and Leaseholder Services
Homelink – Home Improvement Agency
Careline
Community Care
Customer Care
Centres and Day Care
Drop-in Centres
Meals Service
General Leisure Functions
Arts and Cultural Services
Outdoor Amenities
Outdoor Sports
Sports Development
Summer Play Schemes
Sport and Recreation (Leisure Centre and Pool in the Park)

Year 2

Marketing Communications
Promoting the Local Economy
Public Market
Revenues (Council Tax and Business Rates)
Community Transport

Concessionary Fares
Taxi and Private Hire Licensing
Environment and Sustainability
Recycling
Community Safety
Refuse Collection
Removal of Abandoned Vehicles
Grants to Voluntary and Community Organisations
Housing Advances
Private Sector Housing
Public Sector Housing (Disabled Facilities Grant Adaptations)
H G Wells Conference and Events Centre

Year 3

Civic Functions and Expenses
Corporate Management and Member Services
Elections and Electoral Registration
Street Furniture
Property Management
Parking Services
Cesspool Emptying
Development Control
Energy Services
Environmental Control
Land Drainage
Landscape and Trees
Public Conveniences
Street Cleaning
Building Control
Dog Control/Animal Welfare
Food Safety and Communicable Diseases
Health and Safety at Work
Licensing
Local Land Charges/Searches
Pest Control

APPENDIX 3 – DISABILITY EQUALITY SCHEME 2007 - 2010

“Woking Borough Council is determined that all individuals within our borough are able to play as full a part as they wish in local life and that no one, no matter what their circumstances, should be excluded.”

WBC Social Inclusion & Community Cohesion Strategy

“All members of Woking’s diverse communities have a right to enjoy the highest quality of life.”

“A healthy community requires that all of its members feel they are included and that their contribution is valued.”

WBC Being Equal – A Valuing Diversity Policy

The Gender Equality Scheme is also available on our accessible web site www.woking.gov.uk and in the following formats :

Larger print – 16 point and above

Braille

Tape or CD

Other Languages e.g. Urdu, Spanish, Italian, Chinese

Summary version in plain English or language that would be accessible to people with learning difficulties.

Please contact Refeia Zaman to obtain a copy in your preferred format. Tel : 01483 743479 , e-mail refeiazaman@woking.gov.uk or write to her at Woking Borough Council, Civic Offices, Gloucester Square, Woking, GU21 6YI

Introduction

The Council clearly states in its Vision and Values that it cares about people and that our customers and community are the focus of what we do. We will treat everyone with fairness and dignity, respecting people's differences and needs and behave openly and consistently.

This Gender Equality Scheme further enhances our Equality & Diversity Policy, Race Equality Scheme, Disability Equality Scheme, Social Inclusion and Community Cohesion Strategy, Cultural Strategy, External Communications Strategy, Supporting People Strategy and the Community Strategy for Woking.

Outline of the Duty

The Equality Act 2006 amends the Sex Discrimination Act 1975 to place a statutory duty on all public authorities, when carrying out their functions, to have due regard to the need:

- to eliminate unlawful discrimination and harassment
- to promote equality of opportunity between men and women.

This is known as the 'general duty' and will come into effect on 6 April 2007.

To support progress in delivering the general duty, there are also a series of 'specific duties' which apply to listed public authorities is also introduced in the Disability Discrimination Act 2005 a new duty for the public sector. This duty *will come* into force in December 2006. There is a general duty which applies to all public authorities, plus additional specific duties to support the majority of public authorities in achieving the outcomes required by the general duty.

The basic requirement for a public authority when carrying out their functions is to have due regard to do the following:

- promote equality of opportunity between disabled people and other people

- eliminate discrimination that is unlawful under the Disability Discrimination Act
- eliminate harassment of disabled people that is related to their disability
- promote positive attitudes towards disabled people
- encourage participation by disabled people in public life
- take steps to meet disabled peoples needs, even if this requires more favorable treatment.

Purpose of the Disability Equality Scheme (Aims & Objectives)

To ensure that disabled people are able to participate fully and equally within the communities of Woking. (aim)

This will be achieved by (objectives) :

- creating a culture within the Council amongst Members and Officers to ensure that equality is at the core of all its activities.
- making services relevant and accessible to present and future users
- targeting resources, where necessary, to groups and communities who are most at risk of exclusion.
- ensuring that the Council's involvement in the voluntary and community sector supports the empowerment and self-organisation of disability groups.
- building a workforce that is representative of the diverse communities of the borough.
- influencing others through good practice in service provision, employment and procurement.

Definition of a disabled person

For the purpose of this scheme Woking Borough Council recognises a disabled person as someone who has an impairment or a disability. An impairment is an injury, illness, congenital condition that causes or is likely to cause loss or difference in the way the body and/or mind works.

A disability can be physical, sensory, learning, a mental health issue or unseen.

It is society that disables people who have impairments because of the way it is set up prevents such people from taking an equal part in every day life.

It is further recognised that some people will have more than one disability, some will have a disability that is unseen and that these can be compounded where there are communication and/or language difficulties.

How we intend to achieve our aim

By adopting the Social Model of Disability

A Social Model approach states that people with disabilities are disabled by physical and social barriers which prevent them from carrying out day to day activities and pursuing the same opportunities as non-disabled people. The barriers result from social structures and attitudes, rather than from a person's disability or medical condition. The Disability Equality Duty aims to understand and dismantle the barriers which exclude and limit the life chances of disabled people.

Woking Borough Council commits to this Social Model approach and will take steps to ensure that this is embedded in all service areas. The Council shall lead by example and influence others to achieve the aim of this scheme.

Through involvement

The Council's Vision and Values contains the statement "We will be approachable and regularly inform people about what is going on, we will listen to people's views and take them into account when making decisions".

By involving disabled people as a matter of course in Council activities we will improve understanding of the range of barriers faced and also help avoid mistakes rather than having to solve problems after they have occurred.

The information gained from disabled people through focus groups and from questionnaires will enable priorities to be identified and inform the action plan.

Using Equality Impact Assessments

This is a legal duty under the Disability Discrimination Act 2005. The assessment is a simple tool that enables us to check whether any existing or proposed strategy, policy, service or project is discriminating (actual or perceived) against any particular group or groups of people. This is to make sure that, as far as possible, any negative consequences of any strategy, policy, service or project are eliminated or minimised and opportunities for promoting equality are maximised.

By using Equality Impact Assessments the Council will do its best to ensure that any strategy, policy, service or project does not unreasonably discriminate against any individual or group. It will assist individuals and teams within the Council to think carefully about the likely impact of their work on people in Woking and to take any appropriate action to improve our strategies, policies, services and projects.

The process for conducting Equality Impact Assessments is being built into the Council's committee report and project management structures.

Developing an Action Plan

As with any scheme, policy or strategy it is the various activities and actions implemented in support of the aim and objectives that will make the difference. A key element in developing the Action Plan will be the lead taken by the Portfolio Holder for Equalities and Social Exclusion and the inclusion of all Council Service Areas to ensure that cross cutting issues such as the safeguarding and promotion of young people's welfare and community safety are taken fully into account fully. For example, in consultation with the Council's lead officers for children and domestic abuse.

The information gained from the focus groups and questionnaire will be used to inform the development of an action plan in support of this

scheme. The detailed activities and actions developed will form part of a Corporate Equality Action Plan (CEAP). This CEAP will be the Council's single action plan covering all equality issues and will be included in the Council's business planning process.

The CEAP will be monitored and managed by both Councillors and Council Officers and be a living document able to be modified appropriately should priorities change and/or new issues arise.

Priorities for Woking Borough Council

As well as ensuring that we focus on delivering the aspirations of the local community, as set out in the Community Strategy, the Council has identified six priority themes that are built into everything we do. One of these is Equality.

The Council is committed to equality of opportunity for people, regardless of race, age, religion, gender, sexual orientation, disability or any other differences. This commitment not to tolerate any form of discrimination and recognise the benefits of positively embracing the diversity of our community, is set out in the Council's 'Being Equal' A Valuing Diversity Policy and the Race Equality Scheme. The Disability Equality Scheme further demonstrates the Council's commitment to ensuring that equality is at the core of all its activities. Training for all staff and councillors will be essential in raising awareness of the difficulties faced by people with disabilities and the Scheme will take account of all other statutory requirements and duties placed upon the Council. These will be reflected in the Action Plan.

Priorities for Disabled People – emerging themes

Many issues were raised through the consultation process with disabled people and organisations supporting disabled people - all will need to be considered in informing the Corporate Equality Action Plan. There are four emerging themes that disabled people have told us they are concerned about. These are Transport & Street Accessibility, Employment, Accessible Services and Housing & General Living. Each of these themes was of equal importance and each contained a number of stated priorities. These emerging themes and stated priorities are summarised in Table 1.

Monitoring and reporting on progress

In order to check whether the Council is actually making a difference, and that our actions are having an impact, we need to measure our performance.

We shall monitor our progress through an Equalities Forum. This will be created with representatives from all the different groups that are at risk of experiencing inequality and exclusion. The Forum will be chaired by the Portfolio Holder for Equalities and Social Exclusion, will support mutual understanding and meet twice a year to review the Action Plan.

It will be essential that the Council's staff and members are equipped to deal with all customers in a manner appropriate to their needs. Through workforce planning the resources and skills necessary to provide an appropriate, responsive and quality experience for the customer can be considered.

We will report annually on progress made with fulfilling the duty and whether our targets are being met. Progress with the Corporate Equality Action Plan will be monitored on a quarterly basis.

Revising the scheme

The scheme will be revised every 3 years and the action plan will be reviewed twice yearly by the Equalities Forum.

APPENDIX 4 – GENDER EQUALITY SCHEME 2008-2011

“Woking Borough Council is determined that all individuals within our borough are able to play as full a part as they wish in local life and that no one, no matter what their circumstances, should be excluded.”

WBC Social Inclusion & Community Cohesion Strategy

“All members of Woking’s diverse communities have a right to enjoy the highest quality of life.”

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Introduction

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This Gender Equality Scheme forms part of our Corporate Equality Scheme further enhances our Corporate Equality SValuing Diversity Policy, Race Equality Scheme, Disability Equality Scheme, Social Inclusion and Community Cohesion Strategy, Cultural Strategy, External Communications Strategy, Supporting People Strategy and the Community Strategy for Woking.

Outline of the Duty

The Equality Act 2006 amends the Sex Discrimination Act 1975 to place a statutory duty on all public authorities, when carrying out their functions, to have due regard of the need:

- to eliminate unlawful discrimination and harassment
- to promote equality of opportunity between men and women.

This is known as the 'general duty' and is effective from 6 April 2007.

To support progress in delivering the general duty, there are also a series of 'specific duties' which apply to listed public authorities. The specific duties, in brief, are:

- To prepare and publish a gender equality scheme, showing how the authority will meet the general and specific duties and setting out its gender equality objectives.
- In formulating its overall objectives, to consider the need to include objectives to address the causes of any equal pay gap.
- To gather and use information on how the public authorities' policies and practices affect gender equality in the workforce and in the delivery of services.

- To consult stakeholders (ie. employees, service users) and take account of relevant information in order to determine its gender equality objectives.
- To assess the impact of its current and proposed policies and practices on gender equality.
- To implement the actions set out in the Gender Equality Scheme, within three years, unless it is unreasonable or impractical to do so.
- To report against the scheme every year and review the scheme every three years.

Purpose of the Gender Equality Scheme (Aims & Objectives)

- To ensure that men and women are able to access services which are appropriate to their needs and participate fully and equally within the communities of Woking; (aim)

And

- To eliminate unlawful discrimination and harassment in employment practices and actively promote gender equality within the workforce. (aim)

This will be achieved by (objectives):

- Creating a culture within the Council amongst Members and Officers to ensure that equality is at the core of all its activities.
- Eliminating unlawful discrimination and harassment in employment practices and actively promoting gender equality in the workforce. This includes discrimination and harassment of transsexual people.
- complying with the Equal Pay Act (1970) and addressing any gender pay issues
- building a workforce that is representative of the diverse communities of the borough
- making services relevant and accessible to present and future users
- Targeting resources, where necessary, to groups and communities who are most at risk of exclusion.
- Ensuring that the Council's involvement in the voluntary and community sector supports the empowerment and self-

organisation of community groups focusing on equality and inclusion.

- Influencing others through good practice in service provision, employment and procurement.

How we intend to achieve our aims.

- Leadership and accountability. The Chief Executive is the equality champion for WBC and has identified equality as one of the key priority areas. There is a portfolio holder for Equality and Social Inclusion and the Equality and Diversity Working Group are responsible for overseeing progress on equalities in the organisation.
- Gather and analyse information on our employees and service users in order to identify areas for improvement and priorities for action;
- Consult stakeholders, including employees, Unison, members of the community and voluntary sectors and service users. Again to establish areas of concern, areas for improvement and inform the action plan and targeting of resources.
- Carry out impact assessments. This is a legal requirement under the Equality Act 2006. The assessment is a simple tool that enables the Council to check whether any existing or proposed strategy, policy, service or project is discriminating (actual or perceived) against any particular group or groups of people. This is to make sure that, as far as possible, any negative consequences of any strategy, policy, service or project are eliminated or minimised and opportunities for promoting equality are maximised.
- Prioritise and implement gender equality objectives. Priorities and objectives, for this first scheme, will be established from the results of the focus group with community representatives and questionnaires completed by staff, as well as taking into account priorities for WBC (see Developing an Action Plan section below).
- Report and review. An annual report on progress made on the Equality and Diversity agenda will be made to the Executive.

The Gender Equality Scheme will be reviewed and revised every three years. Stakeholders, including the Equality Forum, will be involved in reviewing progress to date and the effectiveness of the previous scheme and its objectives.

- Training – A detailed portfolio of equalities training has been put together to ensure the skills and understanding of staff and Members within the organisation is developed. This programme is regularly reviewed and updated to take into account changes in legislation and thinking as well as to ensure that courses are contributing towards changing ‘hearts and minds’.

Developing an Action Plan

The information gained from the focus group and questionnaires has been used to inform the development of an action plan in support of this scheme. The detailed activities and actions developed will form part of a Corporate Equality Action Plan (CEAP). This CEAP will be the Council’s single action plan covering all equality issues and will be included in the Council’s business planning process.

The CEAP will be monitored and managed by both Councillors and Council Officers and be a living document able to be modified appropriately should priorities change and/or new issues arise.

Priorities for Woking Borough Council

As well as ensuring that we focus on delivering the aspirations of the local community, as set out in the Community Strategy, the Council has identified six priority themes that are built into everything we do:

- A strong community spirit with a clear sense of belonging and responsibility;
- A clean, healthy and safe environment;
- A transport system that is integrated and accessible;
- Access to decent affordable housing for local people and key workers;
- A community which values personal health and well-being;
- Provide opportunities and encourage people to participate in learning throughout their lives so they progress and reach their full potential.

Equality is fundamental to these themes. The Council is committed to equality of opportunity for people, regardless of race, age, religion, gender, sexual orientation, disability or any other differences. This commitment not to tolerate any form of discrimination and recognise the benefits of positively embracing the diversity of our community is set out in the Council's 'Being Equal' A Valuing Diversity Policy, Race Equality Scheme and Disability Equality Scheme. The Gender Equality Scheme further demonstrates the Council's commitment to ensuring that equality is at the core of all its activities. Training for all staff and councillors will be essential in raising awareness of the issues facing different sections of Woking's diverse communities, ensuring equalities is mainstreamed into everyday business and changing 'hearts and minds'.

Priorities from consultation

Many different issues were raised in the consultation exercises. The external group, consisting of community representatives and interest groups, identified the following priority areas:

- Stereotypes and prejudices, linked with women, men and transsexual people.
- Social isolation.
- Representation in public life and in senior decision making roles.
- Education and lifelong learning.
- Caring responsibilities including child care and elder care.

The internal consultation took the form of a questionnaire, sent electronically to all staff. 152 responses were received. Priorities identified included:

- Lack of job share opportunities.
- Issues around flexible working.
- Number of women in senior positions.
- Issues around harassment and dealing with complaints.
- Caring responsibilities and work-life balance.