

WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL

Report by the Chief Executive

Social Justice Committee: 8 November 2006

Subject: Race Equality Scheme Progress Report and Action Plan

1. Purpose

- 1.1** The purpose of this report is to inform the Committee of progress on the delivery of the Race Equality Scheme Action Plan 2005 – 2006, and to get approval for the Race Equality Scheme Action Plan 2006 – 2007.

2. Background

- 2.1** The Race Relations Act 1976 (as amended by the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000) (RR(A)A) places a general duty on public authorities to promote race equality.

- 2.2** Under the RR(A)A the Council was required to produce a Race Equality Scheme by November 2002 stating which of its functions and policies are relevant to its general duty to:

- eliminate unlawful racial discrimination
- promote equality of opportunity, and
- promote good race relations between people of different racial groups.

- 2.3** The Race Equality Scheme (RES) was rewritten in 2005, in line with guidance from the Commission for Racial Equality. A new Action Plan was produced covering the first year of that three year scheme. The Council must report annually on progress made on the tasks outlined in the Action Plan.

- 2.4** The RES Progress Report 2005 - 2006 is attached at Appendix One, and the revised RES Action Plan for 2006 – 2007 is attached at Appendix Two.

3. Main Issues

- 3.1** Progress has been made in a number of areas, however there is further work required to ensure that the Council is fulfilling its duties. The Council not only needs to ensure that it eliminates unlawful racial discrimination but has a positive and more proactive role to promote equal opportunities and good relations between people from different racial groups.

Review of Services

3.2 Service areas have been prioritised in regard to relevance and importance to race equality for the three years of the current Race Equality Scheme. The year one service areas (05 – 06) that have been reviewed are:

- Public Relations and Marketing: Press releases, press adverts, Council Newspaper issues, marketing material
- Legal and Admin: Community Councils, Elections and Referenda, Contracts, Registration of Births, Deaths and Marriages, Procurement.
- Economic Development: Creating Employment
- Environmental Health: Food hygiene and safety, licensing for animal welfare, HMO, cinemas and caravan sites
- Trading Standards: Consumer Advice, Business Advice
- Halls and Events: Burial and crematorium services
- Skillseekers: Skillseekers, Modern apprentices, Get ready for work
- Education and Cultural Services: Policies relating to Administration, pupils, curriculum, Support for learning, Raising attainment
- Facilities Management: Catering (schools and welfare), other catering
- Homeless Service: Access to temporary housing accommodation, prevention of homelessness, Gypsies/Travellers Service
- Revenue Services: Housing and council tax benefit
- Tenancy services: Antisocial investigation and support team, Community Wardens, Administration of housing waiting list, letting of Council houses
- Social Work: Communications policy, Eligibility criteria/access to community care services.

Monitoring

3.3 One of the specific duties outlined in the Race Equality Scheme is that of monitoring the Council's workforce by ethnicity. This is one area in which the Council is not fully meeting its duty due to a lack of an appropriate software system. This was raised at the Audit and Performance Review Committee in September 2006 regarding the annual employee monitoring report and that Committee agreed to request that ICT and Business Development investigate appropriate systems and associated cost. Employee information is part of the Council's corporate agenda covering all aspects of employment.

Training

3.4 Equality and Diversity training of all staff across the Council has to be completed. The CMT has agreed a training option presented by Education and Cultural Services, who will develop one day awareness raising training on the main aspects of equality and diversity focusing on the strands of disability, race, faith, gender, age and sexual orientation.

4. Personnel Issues

- 4.1** Personnel issues include: staff time to carry out employee information checks; staff time to input monitoring information into excel spreadsheets or access databases; implications for workforce not having full training on equal opportunities legislation and the effect this could have on customer service.

5. Financial Implications

- 5.1** There are financial implications in meeting two of the specific duties as identified above. An employee monitoring system will need to be purchased if the Council is to be able to effectively and efficiently monitor its employees (including for other statutory returns etc). This will be brought to Council by Corporate Personnel. The budget of £54,000 for the development of equality and diversity training for all employees of the Council has been agreed by the CMT.

6. Conclusions

- 6.1** The Council is meeting a number of its duties in regard to race equality but additional financial input is required to meet those that it is not fulfilling.

7. Recommendations

- 7.1** The Committee is invited to:
- (a) acknowledge the progress made on the delivery of the Race Equality Action Plan to date,
 - (b) agree the new Action Plan to 2007

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01 November 2006

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Background Papers: Race Equality Scheme 2005 - 2008.

Wards Affected: All.