



## Corporate Resources Scrutiny Committee

### Briefing Paper

Report of: Lucy Bennett, Equality & Diversity Officer

Date: Thursday, 14<sup>th</sup> January 2010

Open

## Equality and Diversity – December 2009 Update

### 1. Summary

- 1.1 The report provides an update on Equality and Diversity work currently taking place as part of the Being Different Together project and details recommendations made by an independent report into improving equality and diversity outcomes in Worcestershire.

### 2. Background

- 2.1 The Council is working in partnership with the 5 other districts and the County Council to deliver a unified Equality and Diversity plan for Worcestershire in the form of the 'Being Different Together project'.

- 2.2 The Council is represented on the project as follows:

Project Steering Group – John Champion, Leader of the Council and Rachael Gill, HR Officer.

Project Management Group – Lucy Bennett, Equality and Diversity Officer.

- 2.3 The project was successfully awarded £232,000 of funding from the West Midlands Regional Improvement and Efficiency Partnership. The aim of the project is to improve collaborative working and avoid duplication across the seven councils as well as supporting capacity to engage and deliver services to our diverse communities.

### 3. Key Issues

Work being progressed for delivery of the Council's Single Equality Scheme includes:

- 3.1 Internal Equality Monitoring was undertaken in August 2009 in order to update council records and ensure compliance with new discrimination legislation. Results have been collated and there was a 42% response rate. A key issue is how the council ensures buy-in from employees and gains 100% response rates in future.

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- 3.2 Equality Impact Assessments (EqIA). The programme of training for managers has now finished and completed EqIA screening documents are starting to be returned. A timetable will be put together in the New Year for full impact assessments to be undertaken. The results of EqIAs will now be incorporated into all reports going through Council when a new policy or service is proposed. Members were provided with a short training session covering EqIAs on the 29<sup>th</sup> October 2009 during the Members Information Session. Further requests for training are welcomed and will be accommodated wherever possible.
- 3.3 Timescales. The Council will be assessed on the Equality Framework for Local Government in January 2010. Feedback will be provided to us in order to assess whether we are at developing or achieving level.
- 3.4 Equality and Diversity Training will be provided for all employees commencing in the New Year. It will focus on the Changing Face of Worcestershire with an emphasis on Wyre Forest demographics and recognising difference and how it can affect service provision.
- 3.5 Community Engagement has been at the forefront of recent Equality and Diversity work. On 14<sup>th</sup> October 2009 the first Wyre Forest World Food Event took place to mark the launch of the Wyre Forest, Community Forum.  
The event was a success and many different sectors of the community attended. Plans are afoot to run a similar event next year which will tie into the Kidderminster Arts Festival. A provisional date for the diary is 21<sup>st</sup> August 2010.  
On 25<sup>th</sup> November 2009 the first Wyre Forest Radar meeting was held. Again all sectors of the community were invited to come and put their thoughts and ideas forward to help to improve our local community. A talk was provided by students from Stourport High School, detailing their thoughts on priorities and issues facing the District from a young person's perspective. Other speakers included Forest Glades Leisure Centre and also Justin Bryant representing The Hate Crime Partnership.  
Future meetings will take place on a quarterly basis and will also cover various events taking place in the District such as Chinese New Year celebrations and Gay Pride.  
Future meetings will be facilitated and organised by various attendees to ensure the forum remains community focused.
- 3.6 Waterhouse Report. The Being Different Together project board commissioned Waterhouse Consulting Group to carry out an independent mapping report to gather information about the various communities in Worcestershire. They were asked to consider the population using the six equality strands, this also included looking at their housing tenure, household makeup, income and employment opportunities in the areas.

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The independent report has now been received and contains twenty-six detailed recommendations. The Project Steering Group has identified five specific key recommendations which it is asking all Worcestershire Councils to adopt at this stage. It is anticipated that each of the Councils will adopt those key recommendations.

The recommendations are:

- a. That the current Being Different Together group should be formalised and strengthened to spearhead a far more joined-up and integrated approach to equality and diversity promotion in Worcestershire.
- b. That the seven councils should, develop, improve and attempt to standardise the various means of consulting and involving local residents, service users and interest groups in improving services, particularly specialist targeted services for statutory equality groups.
- c. That the seven councils should make use of the Being Different Together group to draw up a comprehensive plan and programme for equality training for all seven councils in Worcestershire, clarifying in the process the purpose of training, the nature of it's content, the sections of staff at whom different kinds of training should be directed, preferred methods of delivery, and how much should be spent on it and by whom.
- d. To meld equality training with the overall local authority equality strategy for Worcestershire
- e. To provide Worcestershire-wide rather than authority specific, equality training for councillors and members, thus increasing the frequency of training and it's cost effectiveness.

## **4. Options**

- 4.1 That the Corporate Resources Scrutiny Committee recommends that Cabinet approve the recommendations of the Waterhouse Report.
- 4.2 To continue to work closely with Worcestershire County Council for the needs of all our communities.

## **5. Consultation**

- 5.1 Proposals refer to more collaborative working which will lead to cost savings, increased resilience and more effective delivery.

**6. Related Decisions**

N/A

**7. Relevant Council Policies/Strategies**

N/A

**8. Implications**

8.1 Failure to accept the recommendations will lead to isolated working.

**9. Equality Impact Needs Assessment**

N/A

**10. Wards affected**

10.1 All

**11. Appendices**

None

**12. Background Papers**

12.1 A copy of The Waterhouse report is available from the HR office. The equality and diversity officer can email a copy to members who would prefer an electronic version.

**Consultees**

Alison Braithwaite, Corporate Development Improvement Manager  
Rachael Gill, HR Officer

**Officer Contact Details:**

Lucy Bennett  
Equality & Diversity Officer  
Ext. 2773  
[lucy.bennett@wyreforestdc.gov.uk](mailto:lucy.bennett@wyreforestdc.gov.uk)