

Equalities in Test Valley

ANNUAL REPORT 2009/10



www.testvalley.gov.uk

WELCOME TO OUR ANNUAL EQUALITIES REPORT 2009/10

Welcome to the final Annual Report of the Equality Scheme 2007-10.

This has been a particularly challenging year for Test Valley Borough Council, but we have continued to forge ahead with our equalities and diversity work. And the year has seen some significant changes in the way we go about this work. We have revised the terms of reference and membership of the Equality Board to include four Councillors, a Unison representative and our Strategic HR Manager, and we have introduced a new Corporate Equality Group with representatives from each service.

We have continued to work closely with service users and stakeholders to ensure their voices are heard and that their opinions and views help shape the future of our services.

The Critical Friends Group has continued to monitor the Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA) programme and has provided knowledgeable and in-depth feedback to Members and to individual services. We have revised our EQIA timetable to focus our efforts on the most significant services where there is most scope to make a difference.

The training and development needs of our staff have been met in a number of ways. We have continued to run our half day 'diversity workshop' for all new members of staff, and feedback continues to be extremely positive. Equality and Diversity DVD's are available for service and individual use, and we commissioned seem theatre-based training for councillors and senior officers.

The new Equality Framework for Local Government has brought new challenges, and the Equality Group is focussed on being ready for external peer assessment for the 'Achieving' by March 2011.

Finally, we have been working hard with the community to produce our new Equality Plan (Scheme) 2010-2013 for Test Valley. The action plan has been developed after workshops held with a wide range of groups and individuals from across the borough

PROGRESS AGAINST OUR PRIORITY AIMS 2009/10

Knowing our Customers

- PA1** We will continue to develop information about our customers so that we can target information and services more effectively and avoid unnecessary duplication
- The new Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system went live in October 2009 and will improve reporting.
 - The new CRM system enables integration with back office systems including iworld (the Council Tax system) and CAPS Uniform (Environmental Services), to avoid unnecessary duplication of effort and a more efficient service.
 - The Customer Insight project will also be a useful tool in assisting us with better targeting of customers and streamlined processes and procedures.
- PA2** We will update and promote our Borough Profile to ensure that relevant information is available and used for service planning
- Borough Profile is available on the Council's intranet and is being used for service planning and the production of key strategy documents
- PA3** Create a central database of representative organisations to aid our communication and consultation process
- Work on this is ongoing as part of our developing community engagement work

Engaging with Customers

- PA4** Develop and recruit an external forum to provide ongoing help to develop our Scheme
- The Community Development Worker (BME Mental Health) has established a Cultural Diversity Forum to bring together individuals and groups and statutory agencies
 - We held a series of involvement workshops with groups and individuals across the borough as part of the development of our Equality Plan 2010-13.
- PA5** Investigate ways to identify and engage with representative groups in the borough and to explore ways they could work with the Council
- A workshop on engagement with rural communities was held in Romsey, attended by community members, service users, health and social care professionals and the

portfolio holder for Housing, Health and Community, focussing on engagement with local minority communities, in particular gypsies and traveller communities.

PA6 Identify ways to improve our consultation methods to be as inclusive as possible

- We have refocused the citizens' panel as a partnership panel – My Test Valley – including a new recruitment campaign to get people involved
- We use a variety of different methods for consultation and engagement work, including workshops, focus groups, exhibitions and surveys

PA7 Develop a standard set of 'equality' questions to be included in all consultations

- A common set of questions have been developed and are used in service specific consultation, as appropriate.

Improving staff awareness of equalities and diversity issues

PA8 We will train and inform our councillors and staff on equalities and diversity issues and their responsibilities under the Duties and ensure all staff who have contact with the public are aware of procedures to accommodate people with different needs

- Training sessions on equality impact assessments have been delivered to all officers responsible for report writing. Follow up sessions will be arranged for new staff.
- All new staff take part in a half day Diversity Workshop aimed at raising awareness of equality issues and providing staff with some tools to make a positive contribution to the equality and diversity agenda whilst at work.
- We commissioned a theatre-based training session for Members and senior officers in December 2009, exploring equality and diversity issues through drama

PA9 Share examples of best practice in equality impact assessments (EQIA) and use the lessons as learning tools

- The Critical Friends' Group meets quarterly to provide advice and support to services completing EQIAs
- An e-form has been developed to bring together equality, risk management and sustainability for committee reports to streamline the process and ensure consistency

- Training has been delivered to all report writers to emphasise the importance of considering all aspects of equality - disability, race, gender, age, religion or belief and sexual orientation

Enabling access to opportunities for everyone in our community

PA10 We will publicise our commitment to equalities and diversity to the wider community, making sure that we reach as many people as possible

- All recruitment advertising carries the Council's commitment to equality of opportunity.
- We are part of the Hampshire Equality Network which enables us to work in partnership across the county to support and develop equalities and diversity.

PA11 Keep our Employment Equality Policy under regular review, and update as necessary, to ensure compliance

- The Equality in Employment Policy has been revised and agreed by the Policies and Procedures Review Group and the Equalities Board.
- An Equal Pay Audit was completed in 2008/2009.

PA12 Ensure we are targeting the best available talent and expertise in our recruitment processes

- All Human Resources policies and procedures have been revised, and the recruitment policy and process was subject to a comprehensive EQIA. The Hampshire recruitment portal ensures opportunities at Test Valley are available to the widest audience.

Tackling barriers to Council services and facilities

PA13 We will work to ensure that physical access to our services is appropriate

- All of the sites from which the Council provides a service offer equal access to built facilities for ambulant and mobility impaired people, and safe evacuation in the event of emergency.

PA14 We will provide relevant information in a range of appropriate formats and offer translation / reading facilities, as well as appropriate audio facilities on the Council's website

- Council's publications are available in alternative formats on request

- Translators are available using The Big Word service and are available at any time. We keep a list of staff who have some proficiency in a language other than English
- Accessibility tools are available on the Council's website, such as read speaker and a magnifier
- Individual key services provide some information in other languages on the Council's website, for example electoral registration information is available in 12 other languages including Arabic, Polish and Portuguese.

PA15 Each service to undertake EQIAs for disability, race, gender, age, religion and belief , transgender and sexual orientation to identify any potential or actual discrimination, disadvantage or harassment

- The EQIA timetable has been reviewed and changes agreed by the Equality Board and OMT. The programme of EQIAs is monitored by the CFG and progress reported to the Equalities Board

Working with our partners

PA16 We will regularly give information to our partners and contractors about our commitment and approach to equality and diversity, to make sure that they understand our duties and actively support us to deliver our aims

- Equality of access and opportunity and reducing inequalities between different groups are themes which run through the Community Plan and the Joint Areas of Focus (JAFs), for example tackling anti social behaviour (JAF3), and supporting more cohesive and resilient communities in targeted areas of Test Valley (JAF4)

PA 17 Adopt a standard clause for contracts to ensure the equality policy is incorporated in partnerships and contractual arrangements

- A standard equalities clause is included in all our contracts, and contractors are required to conform to the same standards of equality and diversity as the Council

Measuring Performance

PA 18 We will monitor our best value performance indicators, and develop others as appropriate and necessary

- All our corporate indicators are monitored via our Covalent system, and reported to management and members on a regular basis and is available on the website

ACTIONS PLANNED FOR 2010/11

We will publish our new Equalities Plan (Scheme) for 2010-2013, and start to deliver the action plan. This new action plan is built around the Equality Framework for Local Government five areas of performance. Actions include:

Knowing your communities

- Organise a multi-cultural festival
- Develop the role of the Councillor youth champion

Place shaping, leadership, partnership and organisational commitment

- Keep the grants process under review
- Make equality an integral part of our procurement strategy and process

Community engagement and satisfaction

- Include young people on the list of consultees for major decisions
- Consult on leisure activities for specific groups

Responsive services and customer care

- Investigate opportunities for dance and drama sessions for young people with learning disabilities
- Improve information about disabled access to our facilities

Modern and diverse workforce

- Undertake regular equal pay audits
- Provide training, ongoing development and support for staff with regard to equalities

The detailed action plan is in the Equality Plan 2010-2013, available on the council's website.

WHAT WE HAVE DONE TO ELIMINATE DISCRIMINATION AND PROMOTE EQUALITY OF OPPORTUNITY?

- We held a series of workshops and a Disability Involvement Day to involve a range of groups and individuals as possible in the development of our new Equality Plan
- We completed the final year of our three-year rolling EQIA programme
- We have refocused our EQIA programme
- All Cabinet reports must include an EQIA screening report
- All Human Resources policies and procedures have been reviewed
- All new members of staff attend a half day diversity workshop

HOW WE COLLECT AND USE INFORMATION

To find out about satisfaction with the services we deliver

Individual services carry out extensive work to determine satisfaction with service delivery, for example consultation with residents about the New Neighbourhoods, and Older People's Forums in Andover and Romsey

Specific groups are asked for their feedback on plans, such as some redevelopment work in Andover town centre and improvements to play spaces across the borough

Employee satisfaction

Our equality and diversity workshop is monitored on an ongoing basis, and feedback from participants continues to be excellent. This workshop is run by a Corporate Director, an important part of the Council's commitment to the equality agenda.

The council carried out an Employee Survey in January 2010.

Equality impact assessments (EQIA)

The EQIAs completed in 2009/10 encompassed a wide range of strategies, policies, functions, projects, plans and procedures. As a result of the assessments, action plans are in place in many areas to improve the service we offer.

Our 'corporate' EQIAs – recruitment, customer access, communications and consultation – are monitored on a rolling basis by the Equalities Board, and will be refreshed in 2010/11. The EQIA timetable for the coming year is included below.

EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENTS 2010/11

Corporate

Customer Access
Communications
Consultation
IT Strategy

Chief Executive's Service

Workforce Strategy

Finance

Procurement Strategy and function
Anti-Fraud Policy

Legal & Democratic Service

Elections and electoral registration
Licensing
Local Land Charges
Committees / Members' Support / Mayor

Planning Policy & Transport

Parking Service
Project implementation, including Highways
Agency functions

Leisure & Wellbeing

Sports and Recreation Strategy
Green Space Strategy
Child Protection Policy
Romsey Sports Centre
Andover Leisure Centre
The Rapids
The Depot
Knightwood Leisure Centre
Charlton Lakeside
Allotment Rules and Regulations
Burials Rules and Regulations

Housing, Health & Communities

Homelessness: determinations and applications; temporary housing; rent deposit scheme
Community Development Strategy and function
Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership
Gypsies and travellers policies and procedures