

Item No. 8.	Classification: Open	Date: September 12 2007	Meeting Name: Council Assembly
Report title:		Motions	
Ward(s) or groups affected:		All	
From:		Strategic Director of Legal and Democratic Services	

1. MOTION FROM COUNCILLOR TAYO SITU (seconded by Councillor Robert Smeath)

Please note that, in accordance with council assembly procedure rule 3.10(3), council assembly shall consider this motion.

Corporate Equalities Action Plan

1. Notes that this month the executive member for citizenship, equalities and communities will bring a report before the executive called 'Update on Implementation of Southwark's Equalities Scheme'.
2. Notes that since 2002 every local authority (and other public authority) in England, Scotland and Wales has had a statutory obligation to prepare an overarching 'race equalities scheme' which sets out how it will meet its duties under the amended Race Relations Act.
3. Notes that, like other councils, Southwark has chosen to have one equalities scheme to cover all equalities issues, rather than separate equalities schemes for race, gender, disabilities, etc.
4. Further notes that the Corporate Equalities Action Plan (CEAP) which the council formerly published that set out its equalities policies and objectives, their projected completion dates and which officer was responsible for them has been discontinued.
5. Council assembly believes that the CEAP was a useful, single document that laid out the policies and objectives the council was committed to and against which its performance could be measured.
6. Council assembly believes that the CEAP was the primary public document that the council used to publicise its practical (as opposed to procedural) commitments to the equalities agenda.
7. Believes that there is a commitment to producing the CEAP until at least 2009 in the Equalities scheme. The equalities scheme including this commitment was agreed by the executive and includes this commitment and to date has not been amended to remove it.
8. Council assembly believes that by deciding that the CEAP was not needed chief officers appear to have acted beyond their remit, acting against what has been decided by the executive through the proper decision making process.
9. Council assembly believes that whilst targets and actions directly or indirectly related to equalities are included in the corporate plan and the community

strategy there is a risk that the focus and detail of these targets and actions will be lost.

10. Council assembly notes the following elements in the 2003 – 2006 CEAP and not included in the corporate plan;
 - A 'lead responsibility' column for all commitments to show who is responsible for their implementation
 - An outline of the equalities roles of the leader, executive, councillors and chief officers
 - Details of the council's role as an employer and enabler of employment
 - The quantitative number of other commitments specifically made to target inequality in the borough
 - The qualitative level of detail (especially of what specific actions will be taken to achieve objectives)
11. Council assembly believes that whilst the CEAP was flawed, as confirmed by Lord Ouseley, it did provide a good base from which to build. It was a single space where all council equalities policies, responsibilities and actions were outlined with a good level of detail.
12. Council assembly believes that changing and improving equalities policies was easier with a single CEAP because existing policy was laid out clearly and not disparately in several vague documents. Believes that the case for "mainstreaming" equalities commitments has not yet been made, and that mainstreaming must not preclude focused monitoring of these areas in isolation.
13. Council assembly believes it is disappointing that there will not be a further Audit Commission report on progress into the implementation of the Ouseley recommendations.
14. Council assembly calls upon the executive to ensure that there will be a full Audit Commission follow up report.
15. Council assembly asks overview and scrutiny committee to investigate the decision to do away with a CEAP and wider issues arising from the implementation or otherwise of the Ouseley recommendations.

Comments of the Strategic Director (Regeneration and Neighbourhoods)

The executive member for citizenship, equalities and communities will be reporting to the executive in October on implementation of the council's equalities scheme.

Southwark has adopted the approach taken by many local authorities to develop one overarching equalities scheme to encompass all the statutory requirements placed upon us by a range of equalities legislation.

The council's policy in relation to equalities is to comply with the Local Government Equality Standard, a voluntary non-statutory benchmarking tool. The need to adopt a corporate equalities action plan (CEAP) was historically a requirement of this Standard. During the course of the last year, the Standard was amended, with the effect that there is no longer a requirement within the Standard for a stand alone corporate equalities action plan.

The published version of the equalities scheme 2005-08 states that the CEAP was under revision and that a new one would be developed that would take us to 2009, because at the time, that was the requirement of the Standard.

Given the changes to the equalities standard, the change made was a technical one. This was reflected in the report presented to the overview and scrutiny committee by the executive member for citizenship, equalities and communities in October 2006.

The last meeting of the Ouseley working group agreed to mainstream the implementation of recommendations of Lord Ouseley's report.

As part of the CPA corporate assessment, the Audit Commission will measure how effectively the council is working corporately, and with its partners, to improve services and deliver improved outcomes for local people. This will be undertaken in March/April 2008, and a number of the key lines of enquiry in the corporate assessment relate to the council's approach to equalities.

As part of this overall approach to business planning and performance management, the council remains able to track the progress of implementation of Lord Ouseley's recommendations.

Note: If the motion is agreed, any proposals will be submitted to the executive and the overview and scrutiny committee for consideration.