

Item No.	Classification	Date	Committee
	Open	28.6.05	Cross Party Working Group
Report Title		Equality Scheme – Update	
Ward (s) or groups affected		All	
From		Chief Executive	

1. RECOMMENDATION

1.1 That the Working Group note progress on revising the Council's Equality Scheme, the extensive consultation that is taking place, and agrees to consider the draft Scheme at its July meeting.

2. BACKGROUND

2.1 As part of the Council's statutory duty under the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000, the Council is required to publish a Race Equality Scheme. The purpose of the Scheme is to set out how the Council seeks to meet its race equality public duty. In particular the Scheme should outline how the Council will ensure that our policies and services reflect the needs of the diverse communities that live in the borough. We are required in the Scheme to demonstrate that we work proactively to:

- Eliminate discrimination
- Promote equality of opportunity
- Promote good race relations.

2.2 The Council's first Race Equality Scheme covered the period 2002-2005.

2.3 While the Council is only required to review the full Scheme as necessary, every three years it is required to review its assessment of all policies and functions and to publish this. Because of significant developments across the whole equalities agenda since the original RES was published, the opportunity has been taken to undertake a full revision of the Scheme.

2.4 As part of his review, Lord Ouseley noted the Council's intention to revise the Scheme. He recommended that an urgent and extensive consultation should take place with the community and staff to ensure that the new Scheme had maximum support. This was already planned.

2.5 This report sets out the progress to date in developing the revised Equality Scheme, the proposed format of the Scheme, and the timetable for completion and publication.

3. FACTORS FOR CONSIDERATION

3.1 In line with the Council's policy on equality, diversity and social cohesion the new Scheme will encompass the six dimensions of diversity that come within that policy – age, disability, faith, gender, race and sexuality. This approach has been welcomed by the external Equality and Diversity Panel, and reflects best practice being adopted across many local authorities. It is anticipated that recent legislation

relating to disabilities will in any case shortly place a similar general duty on the Council to that relating to race.

3.2 To make the Scheme user-friendly, the format of the Scheme is also being changed. In identifying an appropriate format, consideration has been given to the approaches used by other local authorities. The Scheme will now comprise a core document and a series of Annexes. This will enable the Annexes to be updated as necessary, without needing to constantly change the whole Scheme. The proposed format is as follows.

- **Southwark Equality Scheme**

3.3 This will set out the aims of the Scheme, and the arrangements that the Council has to meet and exceed our statutory duties in regard to:

- Policy development
- Service delivery
- Employment
- Procurement
- Regulation

3.4 It will include the principles of consultation, arrangements for monitoring, and the arrangements for carrying out Equality Impact Assessments. It will cover our duties in relation to monitoring our staff profile, and our duties in respect of training.

- **Annex 1: Relevance Schedule of Policies, Services and Functions**

3.5 This sets out all the Council's policies, services and functions, with an appropriate relevance rating. This relevance rating of HIGH, MEDIUM or LOW, is an assessment of the degree to which the policy or function does or potentially could have a differential impact on communities because of race, disability, age, faith, gender, and sexuality. The CRE issued guidance on how to make this rating in relation to race, including using both statistical evidence and issues where the community have raised concerns. The Council has adopted this approach and applied it to all the aspects of potential discrimination.

3.6 The Council had a duty under the RRAA 2000 to publish this Schedule by 31st May 2005. It revises the original Schedule contained within the RES 2002-2005. This Schedule is accessible via the Council's website and is attached to this report. Once the consultation on the full Scheme is completed, there may be minor amendments to this Schedule.

3.7 A key aim of the Relevance Schedule is to inform internally and externally how the Council undertakes its equality function. Decisions and service delivery regarding policies and functions that have a HIGH or MEDIUM rating need to ensure that they have fully explored and addressed equalities impact as an ongoing part of the way that policy or function is developed and implemented.

- **Annex 2: Programme of Equality Impact Assessments 2005-2008**

3.8 This will set out the three-year programme of Equality Impact Assessments to ensure that the Council is meeting all three parts of its general duty. The proposals will cover:

- New and revised policies
- New and existing functions
- Cross cutting reviews where differential outcomes may result from the combined impact of a number of services

3.9 The consultation programme with both staff and community has focused on the content of this programme, and particularly the cross cutting reviews.

- **Annex 3: Equality Impact Assessment Guidance and Template**

3.10 This will be the framework that the Council uses to undertake Equality Impact Assessments.

- **Annex 4: Equalities Consultation Policy**

3.11 This will set out best practice guidance for the Council in consulting with diverse communities in regards to Equality Impact Assessments and more generally in the conduct of its business.

4. CONSULTATION ON THE SCHEME

4.1 In line with Lord Ouseley's recommendation, the Council is completing wide-ranging consultation on the Scheme, as follows:

- Discussions with the Equality and Diversity Panel
- Presentations and feedback at each of the eight Community Councils
- Presentations and feedback from the eight Area (Housing) Forums
- Presentation and feedback at a BME communities event hosted by SREC 23rd June
- Presentation and feedback at local community forums
- Presentation and feedback at 13 community of interest groups/forums
- Presentation and feedback at six half-day sessions for Council staff, attended by 336 staff across all grades and services of the Council – 93% recorded that the sessions were satisfactory to excellent.
- Discussions with the black and minority and LGBT staff consultative groups

4.2 Overall, feedback has been positive on the proposed programme of reviews, and in particular the themes and issues identified for cross-cutting reviews.

4.4 The consultation closes on 30th June. The full consultation schedule is attached.

5. TIMETABLE FOR COMPLETING THE SCHEME

5.1 The proposed timetable for completing and publishing the Scheme is as follows:

30 th June	Consultation closes
25 th July	Draft Scheme to the Cross Party Working Group
1st September	Consideration by Overview and Scrutiny
11 th October	Consideration by Executive

5.2 Given the interest and concerns in relation to equality matters at this time, the Working Group may wish to consider if the final Scheme should be submitted to Council Assembly on 19th October.

5.3 Depending on this, final publication of the Scheme would be in late October 2005.

6. COMMUNITY IMPACT STATEMENT

6.1 The Council has a duty to promote equality of opportunity, eliminate unlawful discrimination, and promote good relations between people of different communities. The proposals in this report would be a direct contribution to the Council meeting that duty by setting out how it intends to meet its statutory duties and comply with best practice.

7. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

The Council's responsibilities for addressing equality and diversity are part of its core functions, and the resources to deliver the programme set out in the Scheme will be contained within departmental service budgets.

8. CONSULTATION

The development of the Scheme involves extensive consultation with all the communities of interest that may experience discrimination. Through the Community Council and Area Housing Forum consultations, as well as specific communities of interest, a cross section of all communities in the borough have been engaged in the process as part of the Council's commitment to promoting good community relations.

Background Papers	Held At	Contact
The duty to promote race equality: a guide for public authorities - CRE	Social Inclusion, Town Hall, Peckham Road, SE5 8UB	Nathalie Hadjifotiou 020 7525 7194

APPENDIX A

Audit Trail

Lead Officer	Chief Executive	
Report Author	Nathalie Hadjifotiou, Head of Social Inclusion	
Version	Final	
Dated	17.6.05	
Key Decision	Not at this stage	
CONSULTATION WITH OTHER OFFICERS /DIRECTORATES / EXECUTIVE MEMBER		
Officer Title	Comments Sought	Comments Included
Borough Solicitor	No	
Chief Finance Officer	No	
Chief Officers	No	
Executive Member	Not at this stage	