

REPORT TO: COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE 7 DECEMBER 2010

SUBJECT: SINGLE EQUALITY SCHEME

BY: CHIEF EXECUTIVE

1. REASON FOR REPORT

- 1.1 The Communities Committee is asked to approve the revised Easy-read version of the Single Equality Scheme.
- 1.2 This report is submitted to Committee in terms of Section H (12) of the Council's Administrative Scheme relating to the implementation and review of policies and practices of the Council in relation to its arrangements for promoting, fostering and maintaining equal opportunities.

2. RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 **The Communities Committee is asked to approve the revised Easy-read version of the Single Equality Scheme.**

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 At the Communities Committee on 12 October 2010 (Para 9 of the minute refers), there was submitted a report by the Chief Executive advising Committee of the implications of the Equality Act 2010 and asking the Committee to approve the easy to read version of the Single Equality Scheme.
- 3.2 During discussion concern was raised that the document was too simplistic in its presentation and it was suggested that the document be reviewed and brought back to a future meeting. It was noted that the easy to read version document had been written following the Government's guidelines and had been produced in response to a request from the Equality Forum following the consultation of the original draft Scheme and that the Forum were satisfied with the document.
- 3.3 Following further discussion it was agreed that the easy to read version of the Single Equality Scheme be reviewed and brought back to a future meeting for consideration and that in the meantime, the full, comprehensive version as submitted to the Policy and Resources Committee on 27 April 2010 (Para 8 of the minute refers) be approved.
- 3.4 Following the Committee meeting ENABLE Scotland contacted the council in support of the approach it was taking. Enable Scotland is Scotland's leading charity providing services and support to people with learning disabilities.
- 3.5 In a letter to the Press and Journal which ENABLE responded to their article, they commended the Moray Council for its stance on inclusion and for attempting to produce an easy-read version of its Single Equality Scheme.
- 3.6 ENABLE explained that "Easy read is a method of using simpler text, supported by appropriate illustrations, aimed primarily at people with a learning disability or poor literacy. However it is also appreciated by many others, including people whose first language is not English. It is admirable that Moray Council has attempted to make its publications accessible to residents who have a learning disability - all of whom are entitled to use the same council services as their non-disabled peers. All too often organisations offer Braille and audio versions of their publications, yet fail to realise that they are falling short of complying with discrimination law and not meeting the needs of learning disabled people. . . . It can be challenging to make complex

information easier to understand but, for many people with learning disabilities, easy read is an invaluable format that means they can take part in their local and wider community just like anyone else.”

- 3.7 In addition ENABLE offered to re-write the Single Equality Scheme in easy read format for the Council at no charge. The revised easy-read version has been produced in consultation with ENABLE Scotland’s Accessible Information Unit. **(Appendix 1)**
- 3.8 In addition, ENABLE Scotland has produced a summary, specifically for people with learning disabilities **(Appendix 2)**.
- 3.9 If the easy read version is approved, then illustrations will be added to the document as recommended by ENABLE.

4. SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS

(a) Single Outcome Agreement/ Service Improvement Plan

The Single Equality Scheme is a key element in supporting the national outcome of tackling inequalities in Scottish society.

(b) Policy and Legal

Previous equality legislation imposed a duty on local authorities to produce separate equality schemes on Race, Gender and Disability. Under the Equality Act 2010, local authorities should publish equality outcomes based on evidence and involvement of equality groups and communities. In preparation for the new legislation the Moray Council has produced a Single Equality Scheme, which will replace all three existing schemes.

In producing documents the council must also ensure that these documents are accessible to everyone in the community. The council normally offers documents in alternatives formats such as Braille, audio or other languages. The easy read format addresses the council’s duties in relation to people with learning or literacy difficulties.

(c) Financial implications

There are no financial implications to the production of this report.

(d) Risk Implications

None.

(e) Staffing Implications

This version of the report has been produced by ENABLE Scotland, free of charge.

(f) Property

None

(g) Equalities

Publication of the Single Equality Scheme will assist the Moray Council in complying with the public sector duty under the Equality Act 2010. Producing an easy-read version of the scheme will enable greater involvement of equality groups and communities in implementing and monitoring our equality outcomes.

(h) Consultations

The Moray Equality Forum has expressly asked for an easy-read version of the Single Equality Scheme. The final version was produced in partnership with ENABLE Scotland.

5. CONCLUSION

- 5.1 In producing documents the council must ensure that these documents are accessible to everyone in the community. The council normally offers documents in alternatives formats such as Braille, audio or other languages. The easy read format addresses the council's duties in relation to people with learning or literacy difficulties. Given that the Single Equality Scheme is developed to outline the council's approach to equality it is particularly important that this document is accessible to the whole community. Therefore the Communities Committee is asked to approve the easy-read version of the Single Equality Scheme.**

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Background Papers:
Ref: 867974