

REPORT TO: POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE ON 27 APRIL 2010

SUBJECT: SINGLE EQUALITY SCHEME

BY: CHIEF EXECUTIVE

1. REASON FOR REPORT

- 1.1 The Policy and Resources Committee is asked to approve the draft Single Equality Scheme for consultation purposes and the undertaking of research to prioritise the actions to support the scheme.
- 1.2 This report is submitted to Committee in terms of **Section H(12)** of the Council's Scheme of Administration relating to formulating, supervising the implementation of and reviewing as necessary the policies and practices of the Council in relation to its arrangements for promoting, fostering and maintaining equal opportunities.

2. RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 **The Policy and Resources Committee is asked to approve the draft Single Equality Scheme for consultation purposes.**
- 2.2 **The Policy and Resources Committee are also asked to approve the use of available funding to provide direction for actions within the Single Equality Scheme.**

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 At the Communities Committee on 16 February 2010, the meeting were advised of the position in relation to the new Single Equality Duty. Since then the Equality Bill has now been passed by the Parliament and will now become law. The majority of the Act's provisions will come into force in October 2010, while the others will be implemented on April 2011.
- 3.2 Currently the Council has in place Equality Schemes for race, gender and disability to meet previous legislative requirements. The new Single Equality duty replaces the need to have separate schemes.
- 3.3 The draft Single Equality Scheme addresses our responsibilities in meeting this new duty. The draft Single Equality Scheme covers all equality strands and this forms the basis of our work on prioritising equality and diversity through our activities. The Single Equality Scheme will give direction to our equality agenda and respond more effectively to the requirement of the Equality Act 2010. **(Appendix)**
- 3.4 After approval, the draft Single Equality Scheme will be submitted to the Equality Forum and Community Planning Community Engagement Group for

consultation. It will then be reported back to the Communities Committee for final approval.

- 3.5 However this legislation is wide ranging and contains new equality strands for consideration. It would not be practical to attempt to address all areas of the Bill at once and a prioritised action list which is realistic and affordable will be developed. Identifying actions in consultation with stakeholders will need to be undertaken to establish the prioritised actions.
- 3.6 These services cannot be provided in-house due to staffing circumstances. Currently the Council has 1 Equal Opportunities Officer whose workload is at capacity and therefore would not be able to undertake this level of work. Further this post has been vacant since April putting additional pressure on the service.
- 3.7 Some of the work might have been undertaken by the Fairer Scotland Fund Research & Information Officer (RIO) which relates to the development of deprivation research including equality strands however that post will be vacated in July 2010 and will not be replaced in order to effect a financial saving.
- 3.8 As a result it is proposed that this work is undertaken by an external consultant. The research will be centred around:
- Support and develop the Equality Forum
 - Support the Corporate Advisory Forum
 - Carry out research into the needs of the area on equality groups such as:
 - Demographic information
 - Identifying the general needs
 - Identifying the services which they use and what ones they do not use
- 3.9 The cost of the research is estimated at approximately £10,000. This requires the Council to obtain the services through the procurement process.
- 3.10 The cost can be funded due to vacancies within the Fairer Scotland Fund programme.
- 3.11 The savings are:-
- | | |
|---------------------------------------|--------------------|
| Equal Opportunities Officer - | £ 6,900 |
| FSF Research and Information Officer- | <u>£25,620</u> |
| Total Savings | £32,520 |
|
Cost of project- |
£10,000 |
- 3.12 Using the savings from vacancies covers the whole cost of the project while leaving £22,520 remaining.

4 SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS

(a) Single Outcome Agreement/Service Improvement Plan

Meeting the requirements of the proposed Single Equality Bill will assist the Council to achieve National Outcome 7 which states “We have tackled the significant inequalities in Scottish society”. In addition, the Council has made a commitment to develop a culture, which encourages both equal opportunities and the observance of equal opportunities.

(b) Policy and Legal

The Council will have a legal duty to meet the requirements arising from the Single Equality Bill recently approved. The risk of not meeting our duties is prosecution for non-compliance.

(c) Resources (Financial, Risks, Staffing and Property

There may be additional financial implications arising from the Single Equality Scheme in order to implement actions. The cost of the research is £10,000 which can be met from staff vacancies.

(d) Consultations

The Corporate Equality & Diversity Advisory Forum has consulted with services on the draft Single Equality Scheme. The Chief Financial Officer, Chief Legal Officer and John Ferguson have been consulted and are in agreement with the contents of the report.

5 CONCLUSION

- 5.1 The Policy and Resources Committee is asked to approve the draft Single Equality Scheme for consultation purposes. The revised version of the Scheme will be submitted to the Communities Committee for approval.**
- 5.2 This committee is also asked to approve the undertaking of a research project to assist with the identification and prioritisation of actions for the Single Equality Scheme.**

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Background Papers:

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