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REPORT TO:	FINANCE & MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE	AGENDA ITEM:	10
DATE OF MEETING:	16 OCTOBER 2003		
REPORT FROM:	DEPUTY CHIEF EXECUTIVE	OPEN	
MEMBERS' CONTACT POINT:	IAN REID EXT 5790	DOC:	
SUBJECT:	DRAFT EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY POLICY STATEMENT	REF:	
WARD(S) AFFECTED:	ALL	TERMS OF REFERENCE:	

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### 1.0 Recommendation

- 1.1 That the Committee approve and adopt a draft Equality and Diversity Policy Statement (Appendix A to this report).

### 2.0 Purpose of Report

- 2.1 The purpose of this report is to:

- (1) outline the background and process which has led to the submission of the appended draft policy statement;
- (2) outline the consultation process undertaken; and
- (3) invite the Committee to approve and adopt the draft policy.

### 3.0 Background

- 3.1 The Corporate Management Team has recently been considering a review of the Council's Equal Opportunities Policy to take account of current legislation and national guidelines. In particular, the Council is required to take account of a framework provided by the Equality Standard for Local Government in assisting to "mainstream" equalities into service delivery and employment in all aspects of the Council's work. The Council is also required to publish a specific Race Equality Scheme.
- 3.2 I have therefore been invited to chair an inter-departmental Equal Opportunities and Diversity Action Group (EODAG) to consider these draft documents prior to wider consultation, both internally and externally. It is also intended that the EODAG will formulate procedures for a comprehensive training programme and mechanisms for

incorporating the policy and scheme, once agreed and adopted, into corporate strategies and service plans. Additionally, there needs to be provision for ongoing monitoring and review, and continuous community involvement.

#### **4.0 The Equality Standard for Local Government**

4.1 The Equality Standard has been jointly produced by the Commission for Racial Equality, Equal Opportunities Commission, Disability Rights Commission, Employers' Organisation for Local Government, Dialog, and the Local Government Association. The publication recognises the importance of fair and equal treatment in local government services and employment and has been developed as a tool to enable local authorities to mainstream gender, race and disability into council policy and practice at all levels. However, the framework is not restricted to these three areas of potentially unfair discrimination; it can be used for addressing all disadvantaged groups.

4.2 The Equality Standard builds on the principles of quality, leadership and community involvement and is designed to enable local authorities to assess their progress based on five levels:

- (1) commitment to a comprehensive equality policy;
- (2) assessment and consultation;
- (3) setting equality objectives and targets;
- (4) information systems and monitoring against targets; and
- (5) achieving and reviewing outcomes.

4.3 There is an expectation that successful implementation of the Equality Standard will depend on a partnership between the Council and the Community. The process should therefore involve:

- (1) Councillors – for leadership, support, resources, engaging with the community, and scrutiny;
- (2) Managers, Staff and Trade Unions – for speedy implementation, training, challenging existing cultures and traditions, and engaging with the community; and
- (3) the Community and Voluntary Sector – for working with the equality planning process, participating in scrutiny, and extending knowledge of the Equality Standard within the community.

#### **5.0 Draft Equality and Diversity Policy Statement**

5.1 In approving a draft Equality and Diversity Policy Statement, the EODAG has accepted the view that the policy should be a succinct, clear statement of the Council's vision, commitment, aims and responsibilities. The policy should

accordingly form the foundation stone of, and be clearly distinguished from, the more detailed action plans and processes which will be required to translate the policy into effective implementation.

- 5.2 Following EODAG approval, the draft statement and some explanatory notes were submitted for consultation within the Council and throughout the wider district community. The consultees (a list of whom forms Appendix B to this report) included local partners and other relevant organisations, members of the Derbyshire Equalities Forum, all South Derbyshire District Councillors, and the recognised trade unions representing this Council's employees.
- 5.3 Responses to the consultation exercise were received from District Councillors, the local Citizens' Advice Bureau, the Derbyshire Association for the Blind, the South Derbyshire Chamber, the East Midlands Black & Minority Ethnic Voluntary Sector Forum (VOICE), the Derbyshire Coalition for Inclusive Living, Derby City Council, and the Derbyshire Rural Community Council. The responses were generally positive in welcoming this latest Council initiative, although a number of respondents stressed the need for the Council to ensure that its stated commitment to Equality and Diversity is quickly translated into positive action. The EODAG has considered a number of helpful and constructive suggestions made for improving the consultation draft, and the appended draft statement and explanatory notes incorporate the amendments made.

## **6.0 Future Action**

- 6.1 The EODAG has also considered and approved an outline of a draft Race Equality Scheme, as required by the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000. This is intended to be very much a working document and will include:
- (1) a list of the functions and policies assessed as being relevant to the Council's general duty to promote race equality; and
  - (2) the Council's arrangements to:
    - (a) monitor its policies for any adverse impact on promoting race equality
    - (b) assess, and consult on, the impact that proposed policies are likely to have on promoting race equality
    - (c) publish the results of its assessments, consultation, and monitoring
    - (d) make sure the public have access to information and services
    - (e) train its staff and elected members on the council's race equality duties.
- 6.2 Each Department has been asked to carry out a priority-based assessment of its functions and policies, and to produce action plans to be included in the draft Race Equality Scheme. The EODAG has issued guidance to assist in those processes and to ensure consistency across departments. Once the action plans have been produced, the draft scheme will be submitted for both internal and external consultation - on a similar basis to that carried out for the draft Equality and Diversity Policy Statement. It is hoped that this can be done before the end of October 2003.

- 6.3 Following the consultation exercise, the draft Race Equality Scheme will be submitted to this Committee for approval and adoption.
- 6.4 The EODAG will also be giving detailed consideration to the provision of a comprehensive training programme, mechanisms for incorporating the Equality and Diversity Policy and the Race Equality Scheme into corporate strategies and service plans, and the means for ensuring ongoing monitoring, review and community involvement.

## **7.0 Financial Implications**

- 7.1 It is hoped that any additional expenditure can be accommodated within existing departmental budgets.

## **8.0 Corporate Implications**

- 8.1 The Council's commitment to equality and diversity, and the implementation of that commitment, are likely to have widespread implications for all corporate activities.

## **9.0 Community Implications**

- 9.1 Once approved and adopted, the appended draft is intended expressly to promote equality and diversity throughout the South Derbyshire community.

## **10.0 Conclusions**

- 10.1 The approval and adoption of the appended Equality and Diversity Policy Statement can be only the first step towards achieving a comprehensive programme of action on equality and diversity. The EODAG will need to be in a position to recommend a comprehensive training programme and mechanisms for "mainstreaming" the policy - and the proposed Race Equality Scheme - into corporate strategies and service plans, through progressive action plans and ongoing monitoring and review.
- 10.2 It must also be a key aim of the EODAG to recommend steps to ensure that the necessary knowledge and resources are made available to staff throughout the authority, without which there can be no chance of the Equality and Diversity Policy being implemented or of the Council being able to comply with its statutory obligations.

## **11.0 Background Papers**

- 11.1 Agenda and consultation papers considered by the Equal Opportunities and Diversity Action Group.