

Joint Consultative Committee (JCC) with Ethnic Minorities

21 September 2016

SUBJECT: Refresh of the Equality Strategy

LEAD CONTACT: Evereth Willis, Merton Council
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POSITION: Equality and Community Cohesion Officer

ORGANISATION: Merton Council

RECOMMENDATIONS: That the JCC:

1. Notes the timeline for refreshing the strategy
2. Contributes to the developing the equality objectives

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND PURPOSE OF REPORT

The Council's Community Cohesion Strategy 2012-15 has expired and the Equality Strategy 2013-17 will expire in March 2017. The Equality Act 2010 requires the council to publish equality objectives every four years to demonstrate how it will meet the Public Sector Equality Duty.

It has been agreed to combine the two strategies and perhaps focus on less outcomes.

2. Background:

- 2.1. Merton's current Equality Strategy will expire at the end of March 2017. The Equality Act 2010 introduced the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) which requires the local authority, when exercising its functions, to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation and to advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between persons who share a "protected characteristic" and those who do not. "Protected characteristics" are; age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.
- 2.2. The Equality Act 2010 also requires the council to publish equality objectives every four years to demonstrate how it will meet the PSED. The current strategy has the following five objectives:
 - Tackling Inequality
 - Service Access
 - Improving Engagement
 - Promoting Community Cohesion
 - Workforce Development

- 2.3. The refreshed strategy needs to meet legislative requirements to publish equality objectives every four years. The Council's Community Cohesion Strategy 2012-15 has also expired. Due to the similarities between the two strategies, going forward it has been decided to combine them into one document.
- 2.4. A more streamlined strategy and implementation plan will be produced. Objectives will be developed through consultation with departments and stakeholders.

Next steps

- 2.5 The JCC is invited to comment on the proposal to develop a refreshed equality strategy (combining community cohesion considerations) and contribute to the development of equality objectives.

3. Structure

- 3.1. The refreshed strategy will outline 5-10 objectives. Each objective will have 2 or 3 equalities outcomes that are linked to departmental service plans. This approach enables equalities outcomes to be aligned with departmental service plans.

4. Governance

- 4.1. The strategy will be monitored by the Corporate Equality Steering Group, Corporate Management Team, Departmental Management Teams and an annual update given to the Overview and Scrutiny Commission

5. Equality Analysis

- 5.1 The strategy will outline the Equality Analysis process to embed it in our decision- making and change management processes.

6. Consultation:

- 6.1. Consultation will include internal and external stakeholders.

7. Timescales

- 7.1. A draft strategy will be produced by 31 October and public consultation will take place from 1 November to 16 December. A draft strategy will be considered by Cabinet on 16 January 2017. The final document will be presented to Council for adoption on 7 February 2017. The new strategy will be launched and publicised in April 2017.

8. Appendices

- Appendix I – Equality Strategy 2013-17
https://www.merton.gov.uk/equality_strategy_2013-17_final_v2.pdf
- Appendix II – Community Cohesion Strategy 2012-15
https://www.merton.gov.uk/120612_community_cohesion_strategy_v13.pdf