

EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

CABINET 20 MAY 2009

AUDIT SCOTLAND – THE IMPACT OF RACE EQUALITY ON COUNCIL SERVICES

Report by Depute Chief Executive / Executive Director of Corporate Support

1. PURPOSE

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide Cabinet with a summary of the Audit Scotland report – The Impact of Race Equality on Council Services - and to outline the implications for the Council.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 In November 2007 Audit Scotland undertook a study to examine how Councils approach their statutory Race Equality Duties.
- 2.2 Audit Scotland's approach to Best Value had shown that although race equality is the most established of each of the equality strands, preliminary consultation with key stakeholders had suggested that limited progress had been made in mainstreaming race equality.
- 2.3 Generally, Councils were making policy commitments to equality and putting policies and strategies in place, but there was limited evidence to show these were being translated into improved outcomes for service users from minority ethnic groups.
- 2.4 A copy of the report will be placed on the Members' Portal.

3. FOCUS OF THE STUDY

- 3.1 The main focus of the study examined how Councils' corporate commitments and process required by the race equality duties translated into positive outcomes for services users and to establish if there is a 'policy to practice' gap and what the reasons for this might be.
- 3.2 The study involved three main strands of work:
 - Strand 1 Questionnaire to all 32 Councils asking them to review arrangements and performance on race equality, submit key documents to study them and to provide what they considered to be good practice examples.
 - Strand 2 Fieldwork in two service areas (Libraries and Planning) in a sample of five Councils, to examine how corporate policies on race equality translate into actions at service level.
 - Strand 3 Involve a cross-section of current and potential service users from minority ethnic groups to consider the views of Councils' performance on

race duties and the extent to which Councils have made a positive impact at a local level.

3.3 East Ayrshire Council was involved in Strand 1.

4. SUMMARY OF THE AUDIT SCOTLAND REPORT – THE IMPACT OF RACE EQUALITY ON COUNCIL SERVICES

4.1 Audit Scotland found that while Councils had developed policies on race equality and many have taken a range of initiatives, the duty has not yet had significant impact on the delivery of services or on people from minority ethnic communities.

4.2 The report also identified a need for Councils to build a better understanding of the needs of their ethnic minority communities, mainstream their approach to race equality and give priority to race equality in delivering services.

4.3 The 6 key areas highlighted by the report were:

- despite considerable corporate activity and initiatives, Councils have limited evidence of the impact of the race equality duty on service delivery.
- minority ethnic communities say there is scope for Councils to make more impact in applying the race equality duty.
- Councils find the race equality duty challenging and have so far focused on compliance, policies and processes.
- Councils do not consistently prioritise and report on race equality or provide sufficient training for Councillors and staff.
- Councils lack full and robust information about minority ethnic communities and their needs.
- Councils can build on their achievements to date and make more impact through best value processes and with support from national organisations.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS FROM AUDIT SCOTLAND

5.1 The Report makes a number of recommendations on how Councils can improve and build on the race equality duty.

5.2 Councils should identify clear objectives to improve the impact and outcomes of service delivery on minority ethnic communities.

5.3 A more effective programme of race equality impact assessments that covers all service areas in a consistent manner should be adopted and results should be properly implemented.

5.4 Councillors should be equipped to undertake their responsibility for race equality by providing them with regular training on the race equality duty and regular progress

reports, including information about performance, outcomes and the monitoring of impacts by services.

- 5.5 A programme of improved learning and development should be delivered for staff at all levels, to provide them with the information, skills, knowledge and understanding they require and this should be monitored.
- 5.6 Information on minority ethnic communities, the inequalities they encounter and their needs should be published regularly and this information used to improve services.
- 5.7 Consultation and engagement with minority ethnic communities should be improved to ensure a deeper understanding of their service needs and priorities.
- 5.8 Councils should make use of the guidance and good practice on Best Value to ensure that race equality schemes are integrated in mainstream policy, management, service delivery and process.
- 5.9 Councils should work with partner agencies, including other Councils and through community planning partnerships to:
 - share information, expertise and resources
 - provide training and guidance for Councillors and staff
 - disseminate good practice

6. IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL

- 6.1 The key areas highlighted in the Report which are referred to in section 5 have been anticipated by the Council and actions taken which allow existing practice to be strengthened.
- 6.2 There is a need to improve the impact and outcomes of service delivery on minority ethnic communities. The development of the Race Network and the Equality Forum has allowed the Council to improve engagement with members from the minority ethnic community and to ensure effective delivery of services by utilising the expertise available within these groups.
- 6.3 There is a need for tangible outcomes for all equality strands within the Equality Scheme's action plans. The setting of specific outcomes will allow the Council to track and monitor the effectiveness of Council service delivery to minority ethnic communities.
- 6.4 There is also a need to integrate equality schemes in mainstream policy, management, service delivery and process.

7. THE CURRENT POSITION

- 7.1 A number of initiatives have been developed which will assist the Council in meeting many of the above recommendations.

- 7.2 The Council has developed a training programme for the implementation of Equality Impact Assessments which will be rolled out during June 2009. In addition to this specific training awareness sessions on Equality Impact Assessments will be delivered to Elected Members.
- 7.3 The Council commenced a full equality training programme in October 2007. Equality training has been delivered to Elected Members, Corporate and Extended Management Teams and a programme to roll out equality training to 4th tier managers commenced in September 2008. Online equality training was successfully piloted in January 2009 and this mandatory training will be rolled out for all employees on a phased programme across the Council.
- 7.4 As indicated in para 6.2 above, the Council has developed new engagement structures to consult and involve local minority ethnic communities as well as other groups covered by the Gender and Disability Equality Schemes. The development of the Race Network and the Bi- Annual Equality Forum allows the Council and Community Planning Partners to involve local community members to ensure a deeper understanding of their service needs and priorities.
- 7.5 The key messages and recommendations highlighted in the Audit Scotland Report will be monitored through the Equality Strategy Group and integrated into the Race Equality Scheme Progress Report which will be submitted to Cabinet in November 2009.

8. POLICY & LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 The Council has statutory obligations to meet in terms of promoting equality of opportunity and good race relations under the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000.

9. RISK MANAGEMENT

- 9.1 The proposals contained within this report will allow the Council to meet its statutory obligations thereby minimising any risk of challenge under the relevant statutes.

10. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.

11. COMMUNITY PLANNING

- 11.1 The promotion of race equality contributes to the objectives of the Community Plan in relation to Social Justice and Social Inclusion.

12. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 12.1 Cabinet is recommend to:
- a) note the content of this report;

- b) note that the Key Messages and recommendations highlighted in the Audit Scotland Report will be incorporated into the Race Equality Scheme Progress Report which will be submitted to Cabinet in November 2009; and
- c) otherwise endorse the actions detailed in section 7 of the report.

Elizabeth Morton
Depute Chief Executive/Executive Director of Corporate Support
30 April 2009

LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

1. Report by Audit Scotland - The Impact of Race Equality on Council Services (2008)

Any person wishing further information should contact Martin Rose, Head of Human Resources, Tel: (01563) 576092.

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