

## EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

### HOUSING COMMITTEE – 1 NOVEMBER 2006

### RACE RELATIONS (AMENDMENT) ACT 2000

#### Report by Executive Director of Neighbourhood Services

#### 1 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To report on progress in implementing the Council's Race Equality Scheme within the Housing Service.

#### 2 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 provides that all local authorities have a statutory "general duty" to work to eliminate unlawful racial discrimination, and to promote equal opportunities and good race relations. The duty is not optional and local authorities have to meet it even if the ethnic minority populations in their areas are small.
- 2.2 The Council at its meeting of 24 October 2002 approved the adoption of a Race Equality Scheme for East Ayrshire in line with the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000. It was also agreed that each department would prepare and submit a report outlining the impact of the Act upon their particular service areas by undertaking an initial assessment of functions and policies for the purposes of developing and implementing a departmental action plan.
- 2.3 The Housing Committee at its meeting of 26 March 2003 approved the department's action plan to conduct an initial assessment of each of its functions and policy areas, using the Race Equality Scheme's guidance and the methodology endorsed by the Commission for Racial Equality. (i.e. functions and policies were to be classified into **High, Medium or Low Relevance** with regard to their impact on race equality and reviewed on a three year cycle, beginning in year one with those of **High Relevance**).
- 2.4 The first cycle of reviews was completed in November 2005 with the assessment of the Low Relevance areas being duly reported to Housing Committee in January 2006. Accordingly, the review process has now revisited the High Relevance areas, viz.:
- **Allocations**
  - **Complaints**
  - **Homelessness**
  - **Information and Advice**
  - **Antisocial Behaviour (previously reviewed as Neighbour Disputes)**

### **3 REVIEW OF SERVICE AREAS**

**3.1** The criteria for these reviews took the form of:

- (a) Did the functions/policies have any relevance to race equality as defined by the “general duty” of eliminating discrimination, promoting equal opportunities or promoting good race relations?
- (b) Is there any evidence to believe that some racial groups could be affected differently? And if so which racial groups?
- (c) The amount of evidence, if any, to support answers to question (b).
- (d) Is there any public concern that the policy or service was being carried out in a discriminatory way?

**3.2** Since the last impact assessment carried out in November 2003, the Allocations Policy has been reviewed, a new Homeless Strategy has been approved and an Antisocial Behaviour Strategy has been developed, in conjunction with Community Planning Partners, and submitted to the Scottish Executive. The development of these policies and strategies embraced Equal Opportunities as a core principle. The Service is currently working towards Homepoint accreditation for its Information and Advice services. The Complaints procedure for the Service mirrors the corporate system.

**3.3** The reviews of the service areas, which included an examination of ‘customs and practices’, management decisions and written policies have established that all the associated policies and functions have been and are applied to all sections of the community in a fair and equal manner. No evidence came to light to indicate that any policy or function has had any adverse implications or effects on any service user from the ethnic minority groups.

**3.4** Monitoring arrangements for Allocations, Complaints, Homelessness and Antisocial Behaviour are in place to identify if there is any evidence to indicate that some racial groups could be affected differently by the policies and functions of these service areas. Monitoring has established that the ethnic minority groups in East Ayrshire have made limited use of the Allocations and Homelessness services. Incidents of Antisocial Behaviour have generally been recorded by the Community Wardens Service and have tended to be associated with retail outlets. Ethnic minority groups have made no use of the Complaints system with regard to Housing.

**3.5** The Service has not received any expressions of concern, from any source that its policies and services are being carried out in a discriminatory way.

### **4. INFORMATION AND ADVICE**

**4.1** In order to maximise opportunities to access services, a number of information leaflets in the three main ethnic minority languages of East

Ayrshire, namely Cantonese, Punjabi and Urdu have been produced. As well as providing a brief description of available services and how they may be accessed, the leaflets explain that we can also provide an interpreter via a telephone link at customer contact points to assist with their enquiries.

- 4.2** 'Language Point Cards' are available at all customer contact points. The cards enable non-English speaking customers to point to their language in order that staff can make telephone contact with an interpreter in order to establish the customer's needs and access them to the appropriate service.

## **5. PROMOTING RACE EQUALITY**

- 5.1** The Service is committed to the aim of the "general duty" and will continue to make race equality central to the way it delivers its services. In order to achieve this, we will:

- regularly assess the impact of our policies and functions to ensure we continue to promote race equality;
- consult with people who are likely to be affected by our services; and
- review and revise our policies and functions, if assessment and consultation reveals that they have had or may have an adverse impact on some racial groups within the community.

## **6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1** The management of Race Equalities Scheme is met from within existing budgets.

## **7. LEGAL/POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.1** The Council's Race Equality Scheme for East Ayrshire ensures that the Council complies with the requirements as laid down by the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 and by the Scottish Parliament.

## **8. COMMUNITY PLANNING IMPLICATIONS**

- 8.1** The activities laid out in this report comply fully with the Council's Race Equality Scheme and support the objectives of the Council's Equal Opportunities Policy and those for improving opportunities within East Ayrshire Council's Community Plan.

## **9. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 9.1** The Committee is asked to:

- i. note the progress made in implementing the Council's Race Equality Scheme in terms of High Relevance areas within the Housing Service;

- ii. note that reports on progress with Medium and Low Relevance areas will be submitted to future meetings of this Committee; and
- iii. otherwise, note the contents of this report.

**William Stafford**  
**Executive Director of Neighbourhood Services**

CMCA/LA  
9 October 2006

#### **LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS**

1. Report by Depute Chief Executive/Director of Corporate Resources to the Council on 24 October 2002.

For further information, please contact Gerry Darroch, Housing Services Manager, on 01563 554873.

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