

EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

HOUSING COMMITTEE – 26 March 2003

RACE RELATIONS (AMENDMENT) ACT 2000

Report by Director of Homes and Technical Services

1 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1** To report action taken and progress made in implementing the Council's Race Equality Scheme within the Department of Homes and Technical Services.

2 BACKGROUND

- 2.1** 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.

- 2.2** The Race Relations (Amendment) Act places an express general duty on public bodies to:

- (i) Eliminate unlawful racial discrimination
- (ii) Promote Equality of Opportunity
- (iii) Promote good relations between persons of different racial groups

- 2.3** It was agreed that each department would prepare and submit a report outlining the impact of the Act upon their particular service area by undertaking an initial assessment of functions and policies for the purposes of developing and implementing a departmental action plan.

3. DEPARTMENTAL ACTION

- 3.1** The Department of Homes and Technical Services conducted an initial assessment of each of its functions and policy areas, using guidance as laid out in the Race Equality Scheme, and methodology endorsed by the Commission for Racial Equality.

3.2 This initial assessment required each service area to be set against a series of questions:

- (a) To determine whether the function/policy had any relevance to race equality as defined by the general duty of eliminating discrimination, promoting equal opportunities or promoting good race relations?
- (b) To consider if there is any evidence to believe that some racial groups could be differently affected? And if so which racial groups?
- (c) To determine how much evidence if any there is to support answers to question (b).
- (d) To determine whether there is any public concern that the policy or service is being carried out in a discriminatory way?

3.3 Appendix 1 outlines the full findings of this initial assessment process.

4. DEPARTMENTAL ACTION PLAN

4.1 Having completed the initial assessment of functions and policies as outlined at paragraph 3 above, the Department of Homes and Technical Services has prioritised those service areas for review in accordance with their relevance to the general duty.

4.2 Within Year 1 (by 30 November 2003) the department will have conducted a thorough review of the following service areas which are considered as having a **high relevance** to race equality as they have an impact on all three parts of the general duty.

Allocations
Complaints
Homelessness
Information and Advice
Neighbour Disputes

4.3 Within Year 2 (by 30 November 2004) the department will have conducted a thorough review of the following service areas which are considered as having a **medium relevance** to race equality as they have an impact on two parts of the general duty.

Estate Management
Nominations
Rent Arrears
Repairs
Tenancy Support

- 4.4 Within Year 3 (by 30 November 2005) the department will have conducted a thorough review of the following service areas which are considered as having a **low relevance** to race equality.

Improvement Programmes
Tenant Participation

- 4.5 The review process will reflect the guidance as laid out in the Race Equality Scheme and methodology endorsed by the Commission for Racial Equality. This may include specific research, monitoring and analysis of statistical information and consultation with the ethnic minority community where appropriate.
- 4.6 The results of the Year 1 reviews will be reported at the first meeting of this Committee in 2004.

5. EMPLOYMENT DUTY

- 5.1 There is a specific duty on the Council relating to employment issues. In response to this duty Personnel Services will continue to monitor and report, on behalf of all departments, to the first meeting of the Sub-Committee of the Policy and Resources Committee in 2004. The Department of Homes and Technical Services will support Personnel Services in the specific duty to employment issues through its own Personnel Section.

6. PROMOTING RACE EQUALITY

- 6.1 To promote the Council's continuing commitment to equality issues the Corporate Sub-Committee will:
- Introduce an employee leaflet outlining the practical implications of the Council's Race Equality Scheme.
 - Introduce a leaflet outlining the Council's Race Equality commitment to the community.
 - Participate in other awareness raising events and activities.

- 6.2** The Department of Homes and Technical Services will take an active role in the promotion of the Council's commitment to Race Equality in the community by including the Council's Race Equality leaflet in every new tenant's information pack and making the leaflets available at all its customer contact points.
- 6.3** The department is in the process of preparing a number of information leaflets in the three main ethnic group languages of East Ayrshire, namely Cantonese, Punjabi and Urdu. These leaflets will provide a brief description of the department's services and how to access these to individuals, who use these languages and are not comfortable in the use of English. The leaflets also explain that the department will provide the services of an interpreter via the telephone at its customer contact points to assist with enquiries. The department will provide the similar access to interpreters, to other foreign language speakers, who will be able to indicate their language by means of 'Point Cards' made available at customer contact points.
- 6.4** Personnel Services (Training and Development) will develop and deliver a training programme designed to outline the Council's equalities strategy. Furthermore, the Training and Development Section will offer support to service departments who identify specific training requirements in implementing the Race Equality Scheme. In addition the Department of Homes and Technical Services will develop and deliver a training programme designed to help staff assist customers not comfortable in the use of the English language to gain access to services through interpreters.

7. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1** The management of Race Equalities Scheme is met from within existing budgets. The proposals within the plan further organise existing commitments and responsibilities.

8. LEGAL/POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1** The introduction and publication of the Race Equality Scheme for East Ayrshire ensures that the Council complies with the requirements in this respect as laid down by the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 and by the Scottish Parliament.
- 8.2** The activities laid out in this report comply fully with the Council's Race Equality Scheme and with the legal implications as laid out in the Act. They also support the objectives of the Council's Equality Opportunities Policy.

9. RECOMMENDATIONS

The Committee is asked to:

- i. approve the Departmental actions detailed within this report and described in paragraphs 4 - 6 above;
- ii. note that the Director of Homes and Technical Services will provide a report on the department's first year progress in due course; and
- iii otherwise note the contents of this report.

James Lavery
Director of Homes and Technical Services
15 March 2003

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 Joseph Cassidy, Policy Manager, on 01563 576617.

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