

**Agenda Item No:** **Report No:**  
**Report Title:** **Gender Equality Scheme**  
**Report To:** **Cabinet** **Date:** **17 October 2007**  
**Lead Councillor:** **Councillor Jon Freeman**  
**Ward(s) Affected:** **All**  
**Report By:** **Chief Executive**  
**Contact Officer(s):** **Jackie Gavigan, Equalities Co-ordinator**

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**Purpose of Report:**

To seek Cabinet's support for the Gender Equality Scheme 2007-10.

**Officers Recommendation(s):**

1 To adopt the Gender Equality Scheme 2007-10 (see Appendix A).

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**Reasons for Recommendations**

- 1 To ensure the Council complies with its duties under the Equality Act 2006;
- 2 To enable the Council to progress with its gender equality work.

**Information**

**Equality Act 2006**

- 3 Under the Equality Act 2006, the Council has a general duty to:
  - Eliminate unlawful sex discrimination and harassment;
  - Promote equality of opportunity between women and men.
- 4 The regulations under the Act require that, since May 2006, we produce and publish a Gender Equality Scheme and Action Plan which sets out the arrangements we have in place to meet the duty. The aim of the Scheme is to proactively ensure that women and men are treated equally and fairly as service users and employees.

**Link to Other Equalities Work**

- 5 The Government wants local authorities to approach equalities on a comprehensive basis. We are committed to achieving Level 2 of the Equality Standard for Local Government, which is a framework for mainstreaming equalities into all our activities. The equality categories covered by the Equality Standard are race, gender and disability. Other equalities legislation covers religion and belief, age and sexual orientation.

- 6 The Council is already working to promote gender equality and tackle sex discrimination as an employer and as a provider of services. Level 2 of the Equality Standard involves conducting a programme of equality assessments to help us identify and remove any discriminatory barriers which prevent equal access for women and men. The outcome of assessments enable gender equality objectives to be incorporated into policy, service and action planning, leading to improvements in service provision and employment practices.
- 7 The programme of equality assessments has highlighted several areas for promoting gender equality which are reflected in the Scheme's Action Plan at **Appendix A**.

### **Gender Equality Scheme**

- 8 The Scheme and Action Plan are regarded as a continuation of the Council's work in promoting gender equality. They will be reviewed on an on-going basis and a revised Scheme published every three years.
- 9 Residents, staff and councillors are invited to read and comment on the Scheme on the Council's website at <http://www.lewes.gov.uk/legal/11824.asp>. Further ongoing consultation is being carried out with equality stakeholder groups, local public authorities and with women and men in Lewes District to ensure the Scheme reflects their priorities and concerns.
- 10 The Council's Equalities Co-ordinator will co-ordinate the gender equality work and actions that need to be put in place across the Council.
- 11 Like the Council's other Equality Schemes for Race and Disability, the Gender Equality Scheme will be a stand alone document but linked to the Comprehensive Equality Policy. Progress will be monitored through the Equalities Working Group.
- 12 Progress on implementing the Scheme will also be shared at the quarterly meetings of the East Sussex Equality Co-ordination Group.

### **Financial Appraisal**

- 13 The cost of gender equality training and consultation will be met within existing budgets. There will be a cost in staff time.

### **Environmental Implications**

- 14 I have completed the Environmental Implications questionnaire and have identified no impacts, either positive or negative, arising from this Report.

### **Risk Management Implications**

- 15 I have completed a risk assessment in accordance with the Council's Risk Management methodology and have identified that the main risk of not complying with the duty is that the Council could fail its audit requirements and attract criticism from the Audit Commission and the Equal Opportunities Commission. We will avoid this by implementing the actions and adhering to the target dates and measurement criteria contained in the action plan.

## **Background Papers**

### **16** Comprehensive Equality Policy 2005-08

Gender Equality Duty guidance – Equal Opportunities Commission

Equality Assessment guidance and proformas

## **Appendix**

### **17** Appendix A - Gender Equality Scheme and Action Plan 2007-10