

The Governance of Equality and Diversity at Bournemouth Borough Council

Recent restructures and changes within the Senior Management at Bournemouth Borough Council has had implications for the governance of equality and diversity and subsequently impacts the councils aim to achieve excellence on the equality framework for local government (EFLG) in 2015.

Consequently a review of corporate current governance arrangements and terms of reference for the Council's Equality and Diversity Strategy Group are required to realign the group's purpose with the necessary requirements to achieve excellence.

The new governance arrangements also address the inconsistent approach to the management of equality matters which currently exists within the Council.

At present some Service Equality Champions (SECs) are supported by broader equality groups/teams within their Service Unit, these meet regularly and are clearly engaged with their management teams and the other teams within the relevant business areas. This approach is seen as good practice and as such ought to be replicated across the organisation at directorate or service level as appropriate to available resources and business area needs.

Adopting such an approach will improve the effectiveness and efficiency of SECs, who in any event should form part of their relevant equality groups. This will also ensure meaningful engagement within management teams and assist in embedding equality in the service planning process.

Each Directorate is required to establish a:-

- i) Directorate Equality Group or
- ii) II) Service Equality Group,

Part of the above groups role will be to collate and pass on information via their Executive Director who will be held responsible for ensuring relevant issues are brought to the Equality & Diversity Strategy Group and appropriate action taken to address them.

This structure will benefit the council by providing consistency at both strategic and operational levels. It will also enable a more informed view of the Councils position to be better understood across the Council. Furthermore it will allow the early identification of specific areas where there are opportunities for the Council to make further improvements or identify where deployment of its limited resources or additional support would be most effective in reducing inequality and achieving excellence

These changes to the agreed arrangements must ensure that the Equality & Diversity Strategy Group, carries enough 'authority' within it to effect change and that the membership is senior enough to demonstrate political and executive leadership as required to achieve excellence, and also demonstrate the commitment to the progression of equality in Bournemouth. Organisational commitments from the highest levels are key requirements and critical factors for the achievement and maintenance of Excellence on the Equality Framework for Local Government.

This model delivers a more consistent and joined up approach, deeper involvement and stronger demonstration of 'buy in' from Senior Managers. These factors are essential if continued improvement in performance on equality at Bournemouth Borough Council is to achieve and it is to be judged as an excellent authority in 2015.

Progress and performance on equality will be reported on an annual basis to the Audit & Governance Committee.

Strengthening the strategic approach to equality provides the framework to successfully drive through any necessary changes, ensuring equality becomes embedded in all strategic decisions, service plans, business plans and processes.

In light of the above the following proposal is put forward and has been agreed in by the Executive Lead for Equality and Diversity, the Chief Executive.

Support and agreement for the new governance arrangements are now sought from CMT as follows:

That the following model for the governance of equality is agreed by CMT and adopted by the Council with immediate effect (refer to attached diagram).

Each Executive Director has previously identified one Service Director from their Directorate to serve as representative member on the Equality & Diversity Strategy Group (this member of the group has a mandate to act on behalf of or make decisions on behalf of, and report back on all Service Units within their Directorate)

The terms of reference for the Group, group membership and administrative arrangements were agreed previously by CMT.

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