

## **COUNCIL MEETING – 16 DECEMBER 2003**

### **RECOMMENDATION TO COUNCIL** **COUNCILLOR MRS. LEWIN – HARRIS – COMMUNITY** **LEADERSHIP**

#### **Equality Policy For Taunton Deane Borough Council**

During 2002/03, the Community Leadership Panel was responsible for overseeing a best value review into the Council's performance on equality issues. The review was conducted by the Equality and Diversity Group - a cross departmental team of officers which still meets on a regular basis to ensure that progress is made in this key statutory area.

The Council, on the recommendation of the Community Leadership Panel (9 April 2003), has adopted the 'Equality Standard for Local Government'. The Equality Standard features five levels (level 5 being the most difficult to achieve), providing a framework for the Council to measure planned improvements in equalities practice.

The development of a comprehensive equality policy is a requirement for achieving level 1 of the Equality Standard for Local Government. It is also one of the fundamental action points that emerged from the equalities best value review.

#### **The Draft Equality Policy**

The Equality and Diversity Group has prepared the draft Policy attached as Appendix 'A'. The draft Policy is intended to be comprehensive, not only in the range of Council activities covered, but also in terms of the equality issues covered (race, gender, disability, age and others specified).

Consultation on the draft Equality Policy ended on November 28<sup>th</sup> 2003. The draft Equality Policy attached as Appendix A incorporates comments received by the Community Leadership Panel at two recent meetings (11 and 25 November 2003), together with views expressed by staff and partner agencies.

#### **Impact on Corporate Priorities**

Aside from its various statutory obligations in the equalities area, the Council is committed to 'promoting fairness and equality of opportunity in all that we do' as part of its priority for 'Delivery'.

This Policy, if adopted, will have far reaching implications for Council services and the way they are delivered to all sections of our community.

It is therefore RECOMMENDED that the draft Equality Policy attached as Appendix 'A' be adopted

**Councillor Mrs J. Lewin-Harris**

## **APPENDIX A**

### **TAUNTON DEANE BOROUGH COUNCIL**

#### **DRAFT EQUALITY POLICY**

##### **Our Commitment to Equality**

Taunton Deane Borough Council values diversity and believes that all people have the right to be treated with dignity and respect. We aim to promote equality of opportunity in our role as a service provider, policy maker, employer, purchaser of goods and services and elected leader in the local community.

In promoting equality of opportunity, we will oppose all forms of discrimination, whether on grounds of disability, gender, race, sexuality, age, marital status, religion, national origin or any other condition or requirement which may place a person or group at a disadvantage.

##### **Specific Equality Objectives**

###### **As an employer, we will:**

- Ensure that no employee or job applicant receives less favourable treatment than another on the grounds of disability, gender, race, sexuality, age, marital status, religion and national origin.
- Ensure that advertising and recruitment processes are accessible to all sections of society, as part of our commitment to developing a workforce that reflects the community we serve.
- Ensure that objective job-related criteria apply to all of our employment policies and practices. Appointments and promotions to Council posts will be based on merit, qualification and experience.
- Create and maintain a workplace where all employees are treated with dignity and respect, and where the need to achieve a balance between work and personal/home responsibilities is recognised
- In recruitment of employees, seek to eliminate any assumptions, preferences or judgements that do not relate to the potential abilities of individuals to perform the required job. This principle will apply to every stage of the recruitment process.
- Ensure equality of opportunity for promotion and advancement. A vital element in this is ensuring equal access to training.

- Ensure that all employees understand and receive training as appropriate to promote and encourage equal opportunities.
- Monitor recruitment, promotion and training opportunities and take up, staff absence, harassment, pay, grievances and exit from employment.

**As a provider of services we will:**

- Continuously improve services to ensure that they are accessible and provided fairly to everyone in our community.
- Take action to identify groups in Taunton Deane with specific needs and requirements in accessing our services.
- Integrate equality considerations into everything we do, through the development of service specific equality action plans and targets.
- Monitor the effectiveness of our services in promoting equality of opportunity and address any particular obstacles or difficulties identified.
- Ensure that our complaints procedure is accessible to all service users, and that complaints about unfairness and discrimination are treated in a way that does not promote fear of victimisation and/or recrimination.

**As a purchaser of goods and services we will:**

- Communicate our Equality Policy to contractors delivering services on our behalf, and include equality factors in the awarding and monitoring of contracts.

**As an elected leader in the community we will:**

- Promote good relations within the community and seek to eliminate discrimination, harassment and abuse of any group or individual.
- Raise awareness and promote the Councils equality commitments among staff, members, partner agencies and the wider community
- Develop robust methods to ensure that consultation exercises carried out by the Council are accessible to all groups within our community.

**Implementing the Equality Policy**

To support the implementation of this Policy, the Council will:

- Develop a detailed Corporate Equality Plan (CEP), which translates commitments into specific actions, with targets and timescales for moving

through the levels of the Equality Standard for Local Government. The CEP will also include procedures for self-assessment, audit and scrutiny using national and local performance indicators.

- Monitor progress and revise targets in all areas of action – reporting on a regular basis to elected members and senior management.
- Deliver and keep under regular review the Council’s statutory Race Equality Scheme and other equality related strategies and plans.
- Allocate specific resources to improve equality practice as appropriate.

## **Legal requirements**

The Council recognises its statutory obligations and will comply with all relevant equality based legislation and codes of practice, including:

- Equal Pay Act 1970
- Race Relations Act 1976
- Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000
- Human Rights Act 1999
- Disability Discrimination Act 1995
- Sex Discrimination Act 1975

## **Responsibility for the Equality Policy**

The Council has established a framework to ensure that equality is integrated in all that we do. Specifically, a multi-departmental officer team has been set up to ensure that our equality commitments are delivered. The Chief Executive acts as equalities ‘champion’, working with senior management to ensure that active steps are taken across all services to implement this Policy. Most importantly, all employees have a role in implementing and supporting all aspects of this policy.

At elected member level, specific responsibility for overseeing this Policy rests with the Community Leadership Review Panel and the Executive Councillor with responsibility for Community Leadership. However, all Councillors have a responsibility to support the commitments and specific objectives of this Policy.

December 2003

## **COUNCIL MEETING 16 DECEMBER 2003-12-08**

### **REPORT OF COUNCILLOR MRS. LEWIN – HARRIS - COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP**

#### Neighbourhood and Parish Wardens

It is good news that the future of both the Neighbourhood and Parish Wardens now looks secure. From April next year they will be known as Police Community Support Officers. They will have some extra powers, such as the power to issue fixed penalty notices for cycling on pavements, litter or dog fouling. They will also be able to require the name and address of a person acting in an anti-social manner and to confiscate alcohol from a young person. They will keep to their current patrol areas and the local steering groups will continue.

I am grateful to the Avon and Somerset Constabulary for their offer to fund 75% of the cost of these extra PCSO's, leaving Taunton Deane to fund the other 25%. This agreement with the police means that Taunton Deane will now have the benefit of 8 CPSO's – double the number originally proposed.

The work of the Wardens is widely appreciated in their local communities and I know that residents are pleased that they will be able to continue with that work.

#### Community Planning

Work continues on the community planning in the Wellington area, which includes Wellington itself and the villages of Nynehead, Bradford on Tone, Oake, Langford Budville, Sampford Arundell and West Buckland.

A steering group has been formed and the public consultation is well under way. Members of the Community Initiatives unit organised a consultation event last Saturday at Wellington Football Club. There was quite a range of displays and residents were encouraged to come along and have their say. All staff in the unit were present and I do thank them all for turning out on a Saturday and putting a lot of effort into the organisation.

The Consultation period for the Draft Blackdown Hills Strategy, which is a combined Management Plan and Community Strategy for the area has just come to an end and the final Strategy will be produced next year.

Meanwhile, the interest in Parish Plans is increasing. Nynehead, Stoke St Gregory and Waterrow are ahead of the game with Parish Plans either published or about to be published. Bishops Lydeard is well under way, and I understand that Trull, Norton Fitzwarren, Bishops Hull, West Hatch, Stoke St Mary, Chipstable and Lydeard St Lawrence are all expressing interest. I have been closely involved in the development of the Bishops Lydeard, Cotford St Luke and Cothelstone Parish Plan and can say from first hand experience that it is a rewarding experience, though the time and commitment needed should not be underestimated. I do believe that villages that

produce a Parish Plan that gives clear evidence of the needs and wishes of residents will benefit when it comes to the allocation of scarce resources and the capacity to pull down funds from elsewhere.

#### The Local Strategic Partnership

I mentioned in my report to Full Council in October the need to find ways to add value to the work of the LSP and to address the issue of funding. A couple of meetings will shortly take place with some of our partners and I would hope to be able to update you verbally at Full Council with the broad outcomes of those meetings. The aim is to ensure that the LSP is not seen as TDBC's project and that other partners are equally involved. The decision that the proceeds from the extra council tax on second homes will be available to the LSP to help deliver its priorities is very welcome.

#### Tackling Anti-social behaviour

This subject has moved quickly up the political agenda both nationally and locally as it has become more and more evident that communities are fed up with those who spoil the ability others to live in their own homes and go about their business in peace and quiet.

I recently attended a very interesting Problem Solving Seminar organised by the Police. The day was aimed at Parish Councillors and Neighbourhood Watch Co-ordinators and included presentations on various tools or ideas that may be helpful in dealing with anti-social behaviour in our communities.

If you have a problem with vehicles speeding through your village or area, Community Speed Watch could well be for you (is speeding through villages anti-social behaviour? I think it is.). The scheme involves volunteers monitoring speed using a hand held speed detection device and recording details of offending vehicles. These details are passed to the police who send warning letters to offenders. Repeat offenders are considered for targeted intervention by the police, or the community itself might decide to "name and shame" offenders. Evidence from other areas shows that Community Speed Watch can be an effective way of reducing speed in local communities. Further information can be obtained from the Community Speed Watch co-ordinator through your local Beat Officer.

The Police have recently appointed a Local Action Team co-ordinator whose job it is to encourage and help communities to set up Local Action Teams to identify local problems and design action plans to deal with them. The idea is to tap into and use the knowledge and experience of local people and for the police and community together to find ways to tackle problems. A meeting about forming a Local Action Team is due to be held in Holway on 15 December, organised by the community beat manager and local councillors.

Another initiative by the Police is the appointment of an Antisocial Behaviour Co-ordinator. The role of Tiina Huovinen is to identify the nature of the antisocial behaviour problems that we face and to organise a co-ordinated response between

different agencies. She will also help set up and monitor Acceptable Behaviour Contracts and Anti-Social Behaviour Orders.

**Councillor Joanna Lewin-Harris**