

CABINET

16 November 2005

BLACK AND MINORITY ETHNIC STRATEGY FOR HOUSING SERVICES 2005-2008

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF COMMUNITIES

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RECENT REFERENCES:

None

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

This report presents the revised Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) Strategy for Housing Services. It sets out the achievements of the first strategy which centre on improving our information and understanding of the ethnic community and their service needs. It also outlines the objectives of the revised document, the main aims of which are to ensure our practices serve to promote equal access to housing services for all customers and to ensure all customers receive the same standard of service. The detailed Action Plan for 2005-08 is set out in Appendix 5 of the Strategy.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

That the Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) Strategy for Housing Services be approved.

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BLACK AND MINORITY ETHNIC (BME) STRATEGY FOR HOUSING SERVICES 2005-1008

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF COMMUNITIES

DETAIL:

1 Introduction

- 1.1 This document is a revision of the Equality of Access and Treatment in Service delivery – Housing Services Black and Minority Ethnic Strategy 2002-2005.
- 1.2 It sets out the principles, aims and objectives of the Housing Service in meeting the needs of the Black and Minority Ethnic community it serves.
- 1.3 The 2005-2008 Strategy presents progress made towards the objectives of the first strategy and outlines where we go from here.
- 1.4 The document complements the Council's Equality and Diversity Policy.

2 2005-2008 Strategy

- 2.1 Although Winchester City Council has only a small BME community 2.2% of the total population (source 2001 Census) it is as important to consider the needs of these smaller communities as it is for larger BME communities.
- 2.2 The main aims of the Strategy are to:
 - Ensure our practices serve to promote equal access to housing services for all customers
 - To ensure all customers receive the same standard of service.
- 2.3 The objectives of the previous strategy have been largely achieved. These objectives and actions were centred around collecting information about our ethnic community, to improve our understanding of who and where the ethnic community was, what service they currently receive and what their needs are, in addition to developing the systems to evaluate the equality of the service delivery. However more still needs to be done to ensure systems provide robust information on the areas for action and get a clearer picture of the issues that are important to the ethnic community.
- 2.4 The objectives of the 2005-2006 Strategy are informed by the results of
 - Census 2001
 - Tenants Satisfaction Survey 2004
 - Housing Needs Survey 2002
 - and Jigsaw, the user group for Black and Minority Ethnic customers.

3 Jigsaw

- 3.1 One of the objectives from the first BME Strategy was to engage with the BME community in discussing the housing service, with the aim of identifying barriers to service take up and the improvements necessary to ensure that these customers receive the same service as the rest of the community.
- 3.2 A user group was established a couple of years ago which called itself `Jigsaw`.
- 3.3 The group members identified the key areas they wished to discuss and their objectives for the future which emanated from these discussions feature prominently in the 2005-2008 Strategy.
- 3.4 The next stage is for the Group's facilitators to meet formal or informal groups in their own environment to discuss housing issues and increase group membership.

4 Race Equality Impact Assessment

- 4.1 In accordance with good practice a race equality impact assessment has been carried out on the 2005-2008 Strategy and the initial report is contained in Appendix 2. The officer level People Issues Group are currently discussing how the Council will meet it's assessment responsibilities, however in the meantime the report has been prepared for this Strategy with reference to the guidance provided on the Commission for Race Equality's website.
- 4.2 In 2000, the Government gave most public authorities in Britain a legal duty to promote race equality (referred to as the race equality duty). This means that in carrying out our functions we must have due regard to how we will:
 - Eliminate unlawful racial discrimination
 - Promote equal opportunities
 - Promote good race relations between people from different racial groups
- 4.3 The help authorities meet this duty the Government gave most of them specific duties including producing and publishing a Race Equality Scheme (RES). At Winchester this was broadened to include our responsibilities to all diversity groups and is entitled `The Equality and Diversity Policy' and is stored on the Intranet under Human Resources, Policy Documents, Organisational Development.
- 4.4 A race equality impact assessment is a way of systematically and thoroughly assessing and consulting on, the effects that a proposed policy is likely to have on people, depending on their racial group.
- 4.5 The assessment extends to monitoring the actual effects of the policy once it is put into practice.
- 4.6 The main purpose of a race equality impact assessment is to pre-empt the possibility that the proposed policy could affect some racial groups unfavourably. This involves fully assessing those policies identified as being relevant to the duty to make sure they do not have adverse effects on any racial groups and producing a report.
- 4.7 The report explains that the main thrust of the Strategy is to ensure that all ethnic groups are treated fairly. In publicising the existence of the Strategy care needs to be taken to ensure that clear messages are delivered, that the purpose of the BME Strategy is to

facilitate access to the same standard of service for all users and not preferential treatment. The Strategy supplements the wider remit of the Council's Equality and Diversity Policy and fits within the spectrum of other measures taken to ensure that the particular needs of any users are considered.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS:

4 RELEVANCE TO THE CORPORATE STRATEGY

- 4.1 The aims of this Strategy are central to the delivering the vision of the corporate Strategy
 ` Winchester City Council:... wants people to be able to live, work and enjoy life in the District with a real sense of belonging.'
- 4.2 In addition it works towards achieving Social Inclusion, one of the Corporate Strategy's key service areas on which it focuses, to ensure that everyone can play a full part in the life of their community.

5 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:

- 5.1 Work is undertaken within existing resources.

6 TACT COMMENT

"TACT congratulates the author of this report, Janette Palmer, on the concise and informative way it has been presented.

The subject matter has been closely monitored and actions implemented as a result, and this has the full acceptance of TACT.

We also indicate our commitment to have TACT involved at any future Jigsaw meetings, or Information Sharing Sessions that may occur in the future."

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS:

Equality of Access and Treatment in Service delivery – Housing Services Black and Minority Ethnic Strategy 2002-2005

Minutes and papers of the Jigsaw Group and working papers held in the Landlord Services Division.

APPENDICES:

(Because of their size, copies of the Appendices are attached for Cabinet Members only, with a copy available in the Members' Library and to view on the Council's Internet Site).

Appendix 1 – Black and Minority Ethnic Strategy for Housing Services 2005-2008

Appendix 2 - Race Equality Assessment Report