

Appendix 1

'Reaching out to everyone'

Summary of Wychavon's Diversity Policy & Race Equality Scheme

Diversity is about recognising and valuing difference. A range of factors contributes to the diversity of Wychavon's population. The district has a higher than average proportion of elderly residents and a noticeable presence of Gypsy and traveller communities. Although the area is relatively affluent, there are a few hotspots of deprivation and rural isolation is a problem for some.

In January 2005 we made a formal commitment to the diversity agenda and achieved level one of the Equality Standard for local government. To get external recognition for our diversity work and progress through the Equality Standard we need to put a 'comprehensive equality policy' in place. As well as continuing to improve the services we provide to our local communities, the policy will help us prepare for likely changes in national legislation resulting from the Single Equalities Bill, such as duties to promote disability and age equality.

▪ **Our Diversity Policy**

Our diversity policy is our 'comprehensive equality policy'. It pulls together the various strands of our work that contribute to diversity and equality in one place. It sets out our approach to diversity on three levels: within the council; in the way we engage with and understand the needs of our communities; and in the way we deliver our services.

We recognise that everyone is different but this doesn't mean that people should be disadvantaged as a result. We will not discriminate in any way according to people's ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, age, disability, religion or faith.

The policy addresses the main themes of the Equality Standard for local government. The action we're taking on each is summarised below.

- **Leadership and commitment:** in 2003 we changed our third corporate priority to 'Reaching out to everyone', clearly spelling out our commitment to diversity. The policy reinforces this high level commitment and explains the role our in house equalities group play in driving this work forward.
- **Consultation, community development and scrutiny:** our plans, strategies and key services are shaped by residents' views elicited through consultation. Our 'reaching out to everyone' initiative gives community groups the chance to find out more about our services and give feedback on them. Our dedicated Community Outreach Officer reports views back to the relevant services.

We're working with our partners to improve quality of life for everyone in Wychavon through our community plan. In recognition of the geographical differences in the district, we set up three area based Local Strategic Partnerships (LSP). Most districts only have one.

We assess the impact of all our policies and key decisions as part of the council's formal decision making process. We are introducing annual diversity improvement sessions to help each service unit assess the diversity impact of their work and identify improvement actions. We will feed these into our diversity action plan and annual service delivery plans.

- **Service delivery and customer care:** our customer and service charters set out what residents can expect from us and how we will treat them. We are working towards Chartermark accreditation for the whole council. As part of our Chartermark assessment, we will be judged against criteria relating to fairness, access and customer choice. The Community Contact Centres and our e-Government work provide people with greater choice about how they access our services.

People can report incidents of racial and other types of harassment to us and we will take action as appropriate. Often this simply involves notifying another organisation.

- **Employment and training:** our personnel policies set out our commitment to fair employment, equal opportunities, training and development. We will run an annual diversity training programme for staff and councillors.

We are starting to look at how we address diversity in our procurement decisions and our work with key contractors.

We will monitor progress against our diversity policy and action plan as part of our Signals of Success quarterly performance reports. And we will publish an annual diversity update giving a snapshot of our work over the previous year.

▪ **Our Race Equality Scheme**

Our updated Race Equality Scheme (RES) forms a distinct strand our diversity policy. It meets the Best Value Performance Indicator requirement for us to have a separate scheme in place.

The 2001 census showed that 1.2% of Wychavon residents are from ethnic minority communities. These figures exclude the district's Gypsy and traveller population, which potentially constitutes the largest ethnic minority group in Wychavon.

The RES sets out how we're meeting our general duties under the Race Relations Amendment Act to: eliminate racial discrimination; promote equality of opportunity; and promote good race relations between different racial groups.

It highlights some of things we've done since we published our first RES in 2002, including:

- our Agriculture and Food Labour panel's work on casual labour and migrant workers
- the annual Evesham Eastern Festival
- promoting Ethnic Access Link interpretation services on all our key publications
- 'Equal Rights for Everyone' Gypsy and traveller newsletter.

The RES also shows how we're meeting our specific duties on race equality, these include assessing the impact of our services and policies, consultation, access to information and services, training and employment issues. We've taken a pragmatic approach to race equality and as far as possible have built our work on this strand of equalities into our overall approach to diversity. We will report progress on our RES as part of our annual diversity progress report.

Our diversity policy and RES are on our website at www.wychavon.gov.uk or are available from Rob Mace: e-mail robin.mace@wychavon.gov.uk.