

<b>Committee</b> Cabinet	<b>Date</b> 7 July 2010	<b>Classification</b> Unrestricted	<b>Report No</b>	<b>Agenda Item No</b>
<b>Report of:</b> Service Head, Scrutiny and Equalities  <b>Originating Officer(s)</b> Frances Jones & Hafsha Ali Service Head, Scrutiny and Equalities		<b>Title:</b>  <b>Single Equality Framework 2010-11</b>  <b>Wards Affected All</b>		

## 1. SUMMARY

1.1 This report presents Cabinet with the Council's draft Single Equality Framework 2010/11. Replacing the annual Single Equality Framework, the Single Equality Framework is the Council's new corporate strategy for promoting diversity and equality. The Framework will help to achieve the vision of One Tower Hamlets by prioritising equality outcomes that require intervention at a strategic level and ensure that we have the capacity to deliver our vision. The Framework pulls together an ambitious programme of equalities work across the Council, including:

- The activities required for the implementation of the Council's Race, Disability, Gender, Religion/Belief, Sexual Orientation and Age Equality Schemes;
- The actions that are necessary to maintain the highest level of the Equality Framework for local government and respond to the findings of the Council's assessment against the Framework which took place in January 2010 and;
- The organisation's response to the requirements of the Equality Act (2009).

The Council's Workforce to Reflect the Community action plan also forms part of the Single Equality Framework.

## 2. RECOMMENDATION

2.1 That Cabinet approves the Single Equality Framework 2009/10 which is set out in Appendix 1.

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### LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT, 1972 SECTION 100D (AS AMENDED) LIST OF "BACKGROUND PAPERS" USED IN THE PREPARATION OF THIS REPORT

**Brief description of background papers:**      **Name and telephone number of holder and address where open to inspection**

Single Equality Framework 2009/10 agreed

by Cabinet on 2 July 2009

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### **3. BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 Tower Hamlets is one of the most culturally diverse and vibrant boroughs in the country. The rich cultural heritage of people living and working in the borough has been something that the Council has valued and celebrated. While diversity brings tremendous strengths to Tower Hamlets, it also brings real challenges. There continue to be groups in the local community who are not yet able to access all the opportunities and life chances that are available. Some people continue to face discrimination at work and in the community.
- 3.2 The Council's Vision, developed in the Community Plan 2020, and to be achieved with our partners and with the active participation of all those who have a stake in the borough, is to improve the quality of life for everyone who lives and works in the borough. Underpinning this vision is the desire to build One Tower Hamlets –an ambition to reduce poverty and inequality, bring local communities closer together, and provide strong leadership by involving people and giving them the tools and support to improve their lives.
- 3.3 The Council has also sought to be at the very forefront of developments on equalities and community cohesion, benchmarking progress against best practice from across the country. This commitment and the achievement of real progress on the ground have been recognised by central government.
- 3.4 The Council has placed equality at the core of all planning and service delivery and has developed an effective approach to equality action planning and monitoring. In March 2002 the then Policy and Implementation Committee agreed to bring together the separate Stephen Lawrence Action Plan and the Equality Action Plan into a single integrated document. The aim was to create a strong focus for driving equalities through the organisation and achieving real change on the ground. The Single Equality Framework provided a mechanism for the identification and monitoring of equality priorities by bringing together a comprehensive picture of the work taking place across the Council to respond to identifies equalities issues. The new Single Equality Framework builds on the progress made through the implementation of annual Single Equality Frameworks since 2002.
- 3.5 A combination of factors made 2010/11 an appropriate time to revise our strategic approach to equality to ensure that our analysis, methods and practices continue to be effective:

#### **3.5.1 Legislative changes**

Almost a decade on from the introduction of the first public sector equality duty much has been achieved in terms of embedding the promotion of equality in the structures and processes of service delivery and employment in the public sector. At a national level these changes have resulted in significant improvements in equality outcomes for target groups.

However the legal duties were developed in response to the needs of individual equality strands and this has led to variation in the protection and rights afforded to different equality groups. The Equality Act 2010, which has been passed but not yet commenced, recognises the need to address inequality in a more integrated way, responding to diversity within groups and the complex needs and experiences of inequality facing people in Britain. The provisions of the Act harmonise the rights afforded to equality target groups, require public organisations to identify and respond to the effects of socio-economic inequality as well as putting in place specific measures to safeguard the rights of pregnant women and disabled people.

### **3.5.2 Equality Framework for Local Government**

The Equality Framework for Local Government replaced the Equality Standard in 2009. The Framework moves beyond an assessment of legal compliance to measure how well local authorities understand and respond to the profile of inequality in their local areas. In January 2010 the Council was the second local authority nationally to be awarded 'excellent' status against the Equality Framework for Local Government. The assessment report described that:

*'Equality and diversity underpins everything that the Council does with partners and stakeholders in the provision of services to its community. London Borough of Tower Hamlets has an in-depth and sophisticated knowledge about its community which informs service delivery, very strong political and managerial leadership on equality and diversity; good levels of equality and diversity resources and expertise; a national reputation for diversity and innovative community engagement'.*

### **3.5.3 Continuous improvement**

Since the introduction of the Single Equality Framework in 2002 we have seen significant improvements in some key equality outcomes including educational achievement as well as notable improvements in access to services by equality target groups. However, deep seated inequality and deprivation remain a reality for many people in Tower Hamlets. Local and national research makes it clear that to address these issues which prevent people realising their potential requires a step change in the way we tackle inequality.

At a national level, the 2007 Equalities Review stated that "It is not true that things will automatically get better with time. Some equality gaps are simply not closing...These inequalities threaten to undermine our social fabric at a time when it is already challenged by rapid and widespread economic and technological change... In some areas there is progress but it is painfully slow. Despite the often heroic efforts of individuals, the nature of a particular inequality can be so persistent, or the problems in an institution so deep, that conventional means or incremental progress are ineffective in bringing about significant change."

### Figure 1.3: Momentum measures 1

At the current rate of change we will:

Elect a representative House of Commons	2080
Close the gender pay gap	2085
Close the ethnic employment gap	2105
End the 50+ employment penalty	not in this lifetime
Close the disability employment gap	probably never
Close the ethnic qualification gap	definitely never (things can't only get better)

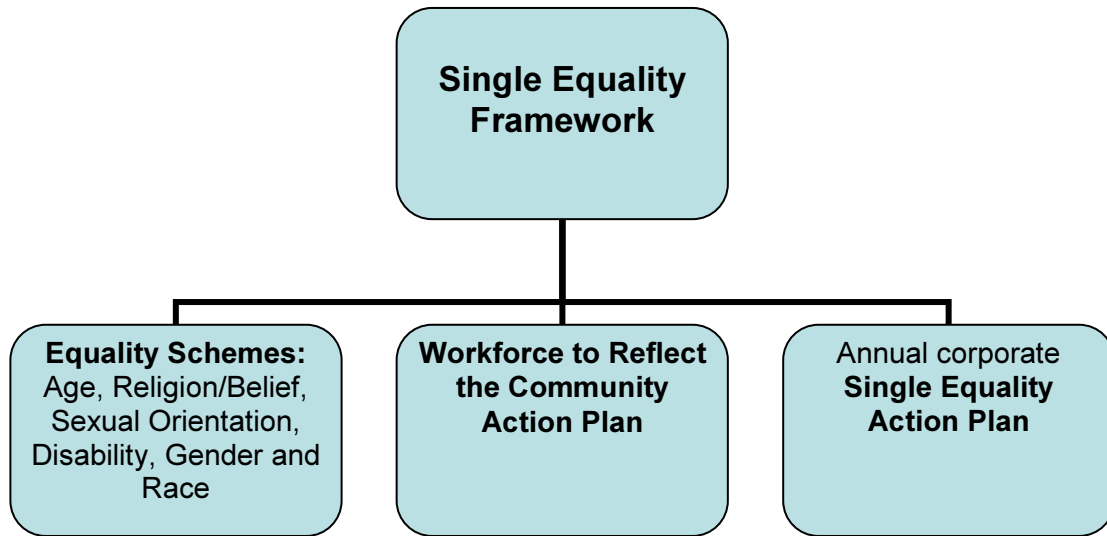
A recent report of the National Equality Panel (NEP) finds that “despite the elimination and even reversal of the differences in educational qualifications that often explain employment rates and relative pay, significant differences remain between men and women and between ethnic groups. If we do not step up the progress it is anticipated that the pay gap between men and women in the UK will not close until 2085 and it will take almost 100 years for people from ethnic minorities to get the same job prospects as white British people“. Tackling these complex and multi layered problems requires an approach to equalities which goes beyond mitigation of adverse impact and involve the marshalling of resources across the public, voluntary and private sectors.

#### 3.5.4 Public sector transformation and efficiency

The Single Equality Framework has been developed in the context of significant reductions in public sector funding, an increased emphasis on efficiency and transformation in the provision of public services. Across the public sector there is a move away from a standardised model of service provision towards personalisation, shaping services provided to citizens in response to individual needs. This change presents a great opportunity to redesign services to better meet the needs of diverse populations and thereby tackle inequality. It also raises risks for the most vulnerable who are least able to access the benefit of greater personal choice and control. The recession and reduction in public sector funding will also have a significant impact on the resources available to tackle inequality. The Single Equality Framework seeks to reshape our approach to equalities to move away from supplementary layers of activity to a more embedded approach to ensure that a focus on equality is at the centre of transformation and informs the allocation of resources from strategic to operational levels.

## 4. The Single Equality Framework

- 4.1 The Single Equality Framework brings together actions to promote equality at a Directorate, corporate level and through partnership working. It also includes the actions we will take as an employer to promote equality and develop a workforce that reflects our community.



## 4.2 Equality Schemes

4.2.1 In preparation for the introduction of the Single Equality Duty we developed individual Equality Schemes for each equality strand during 2009-10. In these Schemes we analysed evidence of inequality between individuals and groups in the borough. Drawing on the Equality Measurement Framework categories the Equality Schemes offer a description of inequality which distinguishes between inequality of access and outcome. For example we know that many new communities in the borough are less able to access public services as they may not be aware of the services that exist, may experience language barriers and may not be eligible for some services. To ensure that we respond to this inequality of access we have a duty to engage with these communities to identify and minimise barriers and improve access. However we also know that for some groups and individuals, tackling inequality of outcome is not a case simply of improving access to services but requires a more holistic response to a range of factors. Mapping inequality across the equality strands in this way has helped us to identify areas of persistent and systemic inequality which arise from a complex interplay of factors and require a holistic and long term response. These areas are set out in Table 1 (see below).

**Table 1:** Priority areas of inequality to be addressed through Equality Schemes, 2009-12

Priority area	Age	Disability	Gender	Race	Religion/Belief	Sexual Orientation
A Prosperous Community: Worklessness	Reduce number of 16-18 year olds not in education, employment or training	Increase number of disabled people in employment	Reduce rate of economic inactivity among working women	Reduce levels of unemployment and worklessness amongst Bangladeshi and Somali residents	Reduce rate of economic inactivity among Muslim women	
A Prosperous Community: Educational			Improve under performance of boys relative to girls at GCSE	Narrow the achievement gaps between different ethnic groups and the national average		Tackle homophobia in schools
A Great Place to Live: Housing		Increase access to independent living opportunities for disabled people		Address shortage of suitable social housing which has a disproportionate impact on BME families	Address shortage of suitable social housing which has a disproportionate effect on Muslim families	
One Tower Hamlets: Community Cohesion	Strengthen inter-generational cohesion	Give disabled people a voice in decision making		Increase the number of people of different backgrounds who feel that ethnic differences are respected	Increase the extent to which people of different faiths say they get on well together	Reduce homophobia and promote understanding and respect for LGB people
A Healthy Community: Health	Reduce childhood obesity		Improve life expectancy for men through effective health promotion services	Promote healthy lifestyles in an effective way to BME communities		Improve access to primary care health services for LGB people

4.2.2 Under the new Single Equality Framework, the actions within the Schemes will be taken forward by services and actively monitored by Directorates through their Equality Focus Groups. The Corporate Equalities Steering Group will continue to have a oversight and challenge role to ensure that overall progress to deliver the Schemes is maintained.

#### 4.2.3 **Workforce to Reflect the Community Action Plan**

This annual action plan is an integral part of the Council's Single Equality Framework and specifically will provide the bulk of the actions relating to the Council as an employer. The action plan will therefore complement the Council's equality schemes and service provision activities also included in the Single Equality Framework.

#### 4.2.4 **Annual Single Equality Framework Action Plan**

The annual corporate action plan has two objectives:

- **To identify priority areas of persistent inequality and develop effective strategies to tackle them**

The Single Equality Framework enables us to look across all six Equality Schemes and identify areas of persistent inequality which arise from a complex interplay of factors. For example, to understand the pattern of educational achievement in the borough we need to look at the impact of gender, ethnicity, religion/belief, age and socio-economic background. Through the Framework we will investigate the determinants of unequal outcomes beyond individual equality strands and aim to understand the relationship between the strands and other circumstances that drive poor outcomes including socio-economic disadvantage. We will explore whether the interventions that we have in place can tackle the drivers of inequality to deliver the outcomes we look to see in the long term. To enable us to target these areas of persistent inequality the Single Equality Framework action plan will address a small number of priority areas each year. The priorities will be identified through:

- A mapping of evidence of inequalities identified within each of the six equality schemes that cut across the strands (see Table 1)
  - An analysis of the priorities within the Community Plan
  - An assessment of current interventions which suggests that there is scope to improve the effectiveness and efficiency
- **To ensure that the Council has the resources, structures and processes in place to achieve our commitments. The Council will use the Equality Framework for Local Government to improve the capacity of the organisation to tackle inequality.**

#### **4. DISSEMINATION OF THE PLAN**

- 4.1 The preparation of the Single Equality Framework has taken place through the Council's Corporate Equalities Steering Group which has representation from across the authority and includes the Trade Unions, and with the contribution of Directorate Equalities Focus Groups.
- 4.2 Once agreed by Cabinet, the Plan will be distributed widely and will also be published on the Council's Web site. Internally, the Plan will be taken forward through each of the Directorate Equalities Focus Groups, and will be reflected in team plans and individual staff performance and development plans. Copies of the Plan will also be made available through the Council's intranet.

#### **5. CONSULTATION**

- 5.1 The contents of the Single Equality Framework has been drawn together by the Council's Corporate Equalities Steering Group with contributions from all Directorates and reflecting the input from latest consultation, such as the Annual Residents Survey and external consultation groups, including the Tower Hamlets Interfaith Forum and the LGBT Forum, as well as partnership groups such as the Race and Hate Crime Interagency Forum and the Refugee and New Migrants Forum. The contents of the Plan are also informed from feedback through the staff survey, the local Trade Unions and corporate staff groups which have a specific focus on Disability, Sexuality and Ethnicity. Further input from these groups will be sought as part of the implementation process to ensure maximum impact is achieved from this work.

#### **6. MONITORING AND EVALUATION ARRANGEMENTS**

- 6.1 As well as the monitoring of implementation taking place through the Directorate Equality Focus Groups, and the Corporate Equalities Steering Group, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee formally reviews progress every six months. The Council also seeks out opportunities for external challenge and benchmarking.
- 6.2 In 2008-9 the Deputy Leader chaired the pilot Members' Diversity and Equality Working Group. Aimed to help develop the community leadership skills of Councillors, the Group considered a range of areas persistent inequality.

The Working Group involved partners and residents to explore real life scenarios. These highlighted the complexities involved and the importance of creating public space to air them. Arising from the Group Members



were involved in a public event where local young people discussed with central government officials the implications of the Preventing Violent Extremism agenda locally. They also participated in events during LGBT History Month including a debate about the future of the LGBT Community Forum. The work of the Group demonstrated how Members' on the ground experience can provide a vital counterweight to the development of strategic plans.

## **7. CONCURRENT REPORT OF THE ASSISTANT CHIEF EXECUTIVE (LEGAL)**

- 7.1. Cabinet is asked to agree the Single Equality Framework 2010-11. The Plan sets out the Council's commitment to promoting diversity and equality and how the Council will deliver on that commitment.
- 7.2. The Council is subject to general equality duties in relation to race, gender and disability, details of which are as follows. The Council is required in carrying out its functions to have due regard to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination on grounds of gender, race and disability. The Council must also have regard to the need to eliminate harassment on grounds of gender and disability. The Council must in addition have regard to the need to: promote equality of opportunity in these areas, promote good relations between persons of different racial groups; take steps to take account of disabled persons' disabilities, even where that involves treating disabled persons more favourably than other persons; promote positive attitudes towards disabled persons; and encourage participation by disabled persons in public life. Insofar as the Single Equality Framework is targeted at race, gender and disability, the plan may be regarded as giving effect to the Council's legal obligations.
- 7.3. The Council is not presently subject to general equality duties in respect of other protected characteristics. In the absence of general equality duties, the Council is still subject to obligations not to discriminate on grounds of age, sexuality and religion or belief. The Single Equality Framework may in part be supported by the Council's need to comply with the statutes and regulations listed in the first section of the Plan.
- 7.4. To the extent that the Single Equality Framework contains broader goals of promoting diversity and equality, then it may be viewed as a matter of good administration, consistent with the Equality Framework for Local Government, and in pursuance of the Council's goal of One Tower Hamlets set out in the Community Plan. The Council is empowered under section 2 of the Local Government Act 2000 to do anything which it considers likely to promote the social, economic or environmental well being of Tower Hamlets, provided the action is not otherwise prohibited by

statute. The power may be exercised in relation to, or for the benefit of: (a) the whole or any part of Tower Hamlets; or (b) all or any persons resident in Tower Hamlets. In exercising the power, regard must be had to the Community Plan. The report and the Single Equality Framework set out details of the One Tower Hamlets goal and how working towards that goal will benefit people living in Tower Hamlets. Cabinet may view the Single Equality Framework as being supported by its well-being power.

7.5. The Equality Act 2010 has been passed, but not yet commenced. The Act seeks to harmonise the law on equality. It proposes to introduce a public sector equality duty that will require the Council in the exercise of its functions to have due regard to the need to: (a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and other conduct prohibited under the Act; (b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who have relevant protected characteristics and those who do not; and (c) foster good relations between those who share relevant protected characteristics and those who do not. The relevant protected characteristics are: age; disability; gender reassignment; pregnancy and maternity; race; religion or belief; sex and sexual orientation. The Act also proposes to introduce a duty on the Council to have due regard in the exercise of its functions to the desirability of exercising the functions in a way that is designed to reduce the inequalities of outcome which result from socio-economic disadvantages. The Single Equality Framework appears consistent with these duties.

7.6. It will be for officers to ensure that individual actions carried out under the Framework are conducted lawfully, taking legal advice where necessary.

## **8. COMMENTS OF THE CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER**

8.1 Equalities issues should be embedded into service delivery, and they are taken into account when budgets are set. In 2010-11 some of the funding identified in the Action Plan attached to the report, currently available to the Council to support the Single Equality Framework such as the Working Neighborhoods Fund (WNF) programme will come to end. In addition, the government has recently announced 2010-11 in-year savings for certain categories of grants.

8.2 There are no additional financial implications arising from adopting the Single Equality Framework 2010-11. However, if additional costs arise from implementing the Plan, given constraints on future grant funding, they must be contained within revenue budget provisions in directorates.

## **9. ONE TOWER HAMLETS**

- 9.1 The Single Equality Framework 2010-11 represents an important step in progressing the Council's commitment to building One Tower Hamlets as a place in which people live together and where they are treated with respect and fairness regardless of their differences. The Plan demonstrates that a commitment to tackling inequality and promoting cohesion is at the heart of the Council's agenda and sets out the work due to take place to integrate diversity and equality fully into all aspects of service delivery and employment practice. The 2010-11 Plan also explores the inter relationship between work on equalities and community cohesion. The aim of the Action Plan is to create an environment in which everyone who lives and works in our borough is treated with dignity and respect and where everyone can improve their life chances and access the increasing opportunities on offer.
- 9.2 The Single Equality Framework aims to tackle the barriers currently preventing some of the most disadvantaged people in our community from accessing the life opportunities on offer and aims to enable them to actively participate in creating and sharing prosperity in the borough. It also sets out the role of elected members and other community leaders in bringing about the change required to drive forward real improvement in relation to equality and cohesion.

## **10. SUSTAINABLE ACTION FOR A GREENER ENVIRONMENT**

- 10.1 Efforts will be made to ensure that in delivering the commitments of the Single Equality Framework the impact on the environment is kept to an absolute minimum. This includes the use of recycled paper in any documentation, and careful consideration of the methods used to engage with local communities, partners and staff.

## **11. RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS**

- 11.1 The Council is seeking to implement an ambitious diversity and equality agenda in the context of changes in national legislation and standards. Progress to date has been very positive, but there is still much to be done if all the Council's targets are to be achieved and all the new legislative requirements are fully complied with. Any slippage could potentially undermine this.
- 11.2 The Single Equality Framework provides a focus for all the Council's equalities work, and a means by which Members can ensure that each of the progress milestones are achieved. The arrangements in place to review progress during the year through the Corporate Equalities Steering Group, Corporate Management Team and finally by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee are considered to be effective ways of keeping this work on track.

11.3 Diversity and equality performance indicators will help keep the focus firmly on delivery and outcomes. The emphasis on consultation will mean that the Council's performance in this area will be judged by the experiences of service users on the ground.

11.4 The Council will continue to work closely with the Improvement and Development Agency (IDeA) to ensure that local practice in implementing the Equality Standard and all equalities issues is informed by best practice taking place in other parts of the country.

## **12. APPENDICES**

Appendix 1 - Single Equality Framework 2010-11