

Subject:	Annual Equality Report 2011-12	Status:	For Publication
Report to:	Performance Scrutiny Committee	Date:	25 th February 2013
Report of:	Head of People and Policy	Portfolio Holder:	Finance and Resources
Key Decision:	<input type="checkbox"/> Forward Plan <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	General Exception	<input type="checkbox"/> Special Urgency <input type="checkbox"/>
Equality Impact Assessment:	Required: No	Attached:	No
Biodiversity Impact Assessment	Required: No	Attached:	No
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1.	RECOMMENDATION(S)
1.1	That the Performance Scrutiny Committee considers the content of the Council's Annual Equality Report for 2011-12 attached at Appendix A and B, and agree any specific actions or issues that need to be taken forward arising from the content of this report.
1.2	That the Performance Scrutiny Committee continues to monitor the Council's progress on equality and sufficient publication of equality information in line with current legislative and best practice requirements to ensure that the Council is operating fairly and equitably.

2. PURPOSE OF REPORT

2.1 The purpose of this report is to present the Council's Annual Equality Report to the Performance Scrutiny Committee.

2.2 It is important to note that the Council's achievements and progress in relation to equality as an employer and service provider and its equality data as presented in this annual report are open to public scrutiny and challenge.

3. CORPORATE PRIORITIES

3.1 The matters discussed in this report impact directly on the following corporate priorities:

- **A clean and green Rossendale** – creating a better environment for all.
- **A healthy and successful Rossendale** – supporting vibrant communities and a strong economy.
- **Responsive and value for money local services** – responding to and meeting the different needs of customers and improving the cost effectiveness of services.

4. RISK ASSESSMENT IMPLICATIONS

4.1 Non-compliance with the Equality Act 2010 and associated Equality Duties. This includes potential legal challenge and possible associated financial and reputational costs if equality duties are not complied with.

4.2 Possible investigation by the Equality and Human Rights Commission if equality information published is not considered sufficient.

5. BACKGROUND AND OPTIONS

- 5.1 Rossendale Borough Council is committed to ensuring that it is operating fairly and equitably in both its employment practices and service delivery, in line with its Equality Policy, current legislation and codes of practice. The Council is required to publish equality information on at least an annual basis. The Annual Equality Report set out in Appendix A and B provides an overview of the Council's key progress and achievements during 2011-12 in relation to equality and diversity. It also presents the Council's key equality data. Below is a summary of some headline messages from this data.
- 5.2 From a qualitative perspective, the report highlights a wide and varied range of projects and support that the Council has been involved on within the community, with some real positive outcomes being achieved.
- 5.3 Taking an appropriate and proportionate approach, we now carry out 'About You' equality monitoring for employees and Councillors across all protected characteristics as recognised by the Equality Act 2010. This is undertaken on a voluntary basis and participants have an option to make an informed choice not to answer any or some of the questions asked. Gathering and analysis of employee intelligence will enable the Council to identify possible issues of inequality and take appropriate action.
- 5.4 Due to the Council's size, much of the data we actively collect relates to small numbers of people, particularly when disaggregated by protected characteristic. Where the number people with a particular protected characteristics is fewer than 10, in line with best practice and guidance sought, we have replaced this number with an asterisk (*).
- 5.5 From a quantitative perspective, the equality data shows a varying picture of our workforce; it has a relatively even split in terms of gender, but it is not significantly diverse, and is slightly less diverse than the composition of the local population. The Council also has low numbers of younger people in its workforce. The Council does not employ anyone under the age of 20 years and those aged 20-29 years account for 12.7% of the workforce. The majority of our workforce is aged 50-59 years. 2.8% of people who chose to disclose this information identified themselves as disabled. The average basic pay is slightly higher for women.
- 5.6 There are more female (54%) Councillors than male (46%), and again, the Councillor profile is a little less diverse than the local population. The majority of our Councillors are aged 60-69 years. Again, with low representation of younger people. The majority of respondents chose specifically not to disclose information about disability; however, of those that did disclose this information, 20% said that they did have a disability. Further, based on information disclosed, the data shows that gay, lesbian and bisexual people are under represented for both employees and Councillors.
- 5.7 Gathering and analysis of customer intelligence enables the Council to identify any issues of inequality and possible service improvements. In terms of collection and analysis of equality data and customer satisfaction data across service areas this is dependent on the nature of the service provided and appropriateness and relevance of undertaking such activity. People and Policy have undertaken a mapping exercise to gain a central corporate understanding of what activity takes place and where this is reported to, and continue to work with service areas to ensure an appropriate and relevant approach to customer satisfaction and equality monitoring. It is intended that this will better inform future iterations of the Annual Equality Report.
- 5.8 In addition, the Council's Quarterly Performance Report also provides regular updates on equality related activity within the Council's business plan and issue specific equality impact

assessments.

5.9 **The complete Annual Equality Report should be read for full details. See Appendix A.**

COMMENTS FROM STATUTORY OFFICERS:

6. SECTION 151 OFFICER

6.1 As noted in the report, the progress made in this area assists the Council in mitigating the risk of legal challenge and therefore the associated financial risks.

7. MONITORING OFFICER

7.1 No additional comments to be made in relation to this report.

8. HEAD OF PEOPLE AND POLICY (ON BEHALF OF THE HEAD OF PAID SERVICE)

8.1 The Equality Act 2010 requires the Council to have due regard in the exercising of its functions in relation to the three aims of the Equality Duty, for the need to:

- Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Act.
- Advanced equality of opportunity between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and people who do not share it.
- Foster good relations between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not share it.

8.2 The amount of regard that is “due” is set out in the Act and will depend on the circumstances of the case. Under the general equality duty there is a requirement to engage with people with protected characteristics and to have an adequate evidence base for Council decision-making. The duty to inform, consult or involve requires that the council must involve communities and those directly affected at the most appropriate and proportionate level in ‘routine functions, in addition to one-off decisions.’ Further, under the duty of Best Value the Council is required to consult representatives of a wide range of local people; this should include local voluntary and community organisations and small businesses in such consultation.

9. CONSULTATION CARRIED OUT

9.1 Management Team; Portfolio Holder; Performance Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

10. CONCLUSION

10.1 Since being awarded ‘achieving’ authority status in March 2010, the Council has continued to ensure it is working to achieve positive outcomes for its communities and has maintained strong and clear leadership on the importance of equality as a core part of Council business, reflected in progress and activity across the Council.

Background Papers

Document	Place of Inspection
Annual Equality Report 2011-12	Attached as Appendix A and B