

Subject:	Annual Equality Report 2014-15	Status:	For Publication
Report to:	Overview & Scrutiny	Date:	21 st September 2015
Report of:	Corporate Officer	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: Yes/No	Attached:	Yes/No
Biodiversity Impact Assessment	Required: Yes/No	Attached:	Yes/No
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1.	RECOMMENDATION(S)
1.1	That the Overview & Scrutiny Committee considers the content of the Council's Annual Equality Report for 2014-15 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 Overview & 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 Overview & 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.
- Appendix A – Annual Equality Report 2014-15 detail
 - Appendix B (1-3)– Equality Data

3. CORPORATE PRIORITIES

- 3.1 The matters discussed in this report impact directly on the following corporate priorities:
- **Regenerating Rossendale:** This priority focuses on regeneration in its broadest sense, so it means supporting communities that get on well together, attracting sustainable investment, promoting Rossendale, as well as working as an enabler to promote the physical regeneration of Rossendale.
 - **Responsive Value for Money Services:** This priority is about the Council working collaboratively, being a provider, procurer and a commissioner of services that are efficient and that meet the needs of local people.
 - **Clean Green Rossendale:** This priority focuses on clean streets and town centres and well managed open spaces, whilst recognising that the Council has to work with communities and as a partner to deliver this ambition.

4. RISK ASSESSMENT IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 All the issues raised and the recommendation(s) in this report involve risk considerations as set out below:
- 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.

- 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 actions and achievements during 2014-15 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 (**Appendix A**) highlights that despite some difficult financial challenges and changes, the Council has been able to continue to support a range of projects and support services within the community, with some real positive results. Although the Council will continue to ensure it is compliant with its required duties, it should be noted that as financial challenges and changes within the Council continue, this could have an impact on the extent of the Council's involvement in this agenda in future years.
- 5.3 Taking an appropriate and proportionate approach, we continue to carry out 'About You' equality monitoring for employee, Councillors and some services where appropriate, 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 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.
- 5.5 Due to the Council's size, much of the data we actively collect in relation to our workforce 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 either replaced this number with an asterisk (*), have obtained permission or have determined that no individuals can be easily identified.
- 5.6 From a quantitative perspective, the equality data shows:-
- In terms of gender diversity, the majority of the workforce is male; 62% male and 38% female.
 - 1.7% of our employees have disclosed that they have a disability.
 - 0.05% of employees identified as BME¹ (Black or Minority Ethnic).
 - A third (33%) of our employees are aged 50-59 years.
 - Those aged 19-24 years account for only 6% of our workforce.

¹ For the purposes of this report BME includes 'other white' and mixed/multiple heritage'.

- All employees identifying as disabled were able to access training and development opportunities during 2014-15.
- Of those people that have chosen to identify as gay, lesbian or bisexual, there appears to be an underrepresentation of this group for both employees and Councillors.
- Average basic pay for females is £23,537pa
- Average basic pay for males is £23,075 pa
- Overall average is £23,249 pa
- There have been no employee complaints in relation to discrimination during this period.
- 3 requests for flexible working (outside of standard flexible working conditions) were received during 2014-15.
- No equality challenges on the equality impact assessment process, which informs the Council's decision making, were made during 2014-15.
- The Council successfully implemented a health and wellbeing project called Up and Active that aims to provide and signpost health and wellbeing activities to minority groups in two wards of the Borough. This project is a clear example of a successful equality and diversity project.
- The Council also helps organize and run a very successful financial literacy session for young people to give them important information on finances, loan sharks and credit.

5.7 In addition, the Council's Quarterly Integrated Performance Report also provides regular updates on equality related activity within the Council's business plan and issue specific equality impact assessments are published with the relevant Council or Committee reports.

Please read the contents of the Report detailed in Appendix A and B for full details.

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. POLICY IMPLICATIONS AND CONSULTATION CARRIED OUT

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.

8.3 Consultation has been undertaken with Management Team, Portfolio Holder, Member Equalities Champion and Overview and Scrutiny in relation to Annual Equality Report.

9. CONCLUSION

9.1 The Council continues 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 its the decision making processes, progress and activity across the Council.

Background Papers

Document	Place of Inspection
Annual Equality Report 2014-15	Attached as Appendix A and B