

**DERBYSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL**

**CABINET**

**11 January 2018**

**Report of the Strategic Director - Commissioning,  
Communities and Policy**

**ARRANGEMENTS FOR EXTERNAL VALIDATION AGAINST THE  
EXCELLENT LEVEL OF THE EQUALITY FRAMEWORK FOR LOCAL  
GOVERNMENT**

**(Health and Communities)**

**1. Purpose of the Report**

To seek approval from Cabinet for the authority to undergo an external assessment for the “Excellent” level of the Equality Framework for Local Government.

**2. Information and analysis**

**Background**

The Equality Framework for Local Government (EFLG) is a performance, improvement and benchmarking tool which many local authorities in England and Wales have adopted to map progress of their organisation in terms of equality and diversity. It was launched in April 2009, replacing and building upon the former Equality Standard for Local Government.

The Framework is based on three levels of achievement: ‘Developing’, ‘Achieving’ and ‘Excellent’ and aids:

- Legal compliance (against the Equality Act 2010)
- Excellent standards of customer care – targeting of services, increased value for money etc.
- Transparency in decision-making, ensuring that decisions are justified and evidenced through Equality Impact Assessments

The Council reached the “Achieving” level of the EFLG in 2009 following an external validation process. The Local Government Association (LGA) changed the external validation process in 2009 and since that time all validation has comprised a self-assessment and a peer challenge. The peer challenge is carried out by the LGA using trained peers who have experience of delivering an equalities and diversity agenda in their own councils.

## **Peer challenge**

The peer challenge is in two parts. Firstly the Council submits its self-assessment, narrative and supporting evidence to the peer team. The second stage is a three day on-site visit. During this time, the peer team will meet with a range of internal and external stakeholders including partners, community and voluntary organisations, Elected Members and employees to gain supporting information. The team may also visit projects or activities taking place in the community.

The EFLG consists of 29 areas of judgement under five key themes, these being:

- Knowing your communities
- Leadership, partnership and organisational commitment
- Community engagement and satisfaction
- Responsive services and customer care
- A skilled and committed workforce

The peer challenge is not an inspection. It offers an external assessment of an organisation's own judgement of itself against the Equality Framework benchmark. Based on all it has learned during the challenge, the team will determine whether the award of 'Excellent' should be made. The team will feed back its decision, observations and recommendations at the end of the visit.

A light touch self-assessment has been carried out by the Council's Diversity and Inclusion Board. This has shown significant progress in relation to equality and diversity since 2009. Based on an initial check against the EFLG criteria, using the LGA's template, it is considered that the Council can currently satisfy assessment at the 'Excellent' level of the framework. This would enable the Council to demonstrate the progress it has made to employees and the public, and help identify future areas for improvement following a peer challenge by the LGA.

## **Next steps**

The Council will need to prepare a narrative self-assessment for submission to the peer team that includes a statement of its progress (at corporate, department and service area level) against the requirements of the "Excellent" level of the EFLG. The narrative will need to set out the case to be awarded the 'Excellent' level of the EFLG and will provide peers with a clear and detailed account of the Council's equality achievements and outcomes.

The narrative will be complemented by a suite of evidence, including case studies, which all demonstrate how the 'Excellent' level criteria of the EFLG have been met. Preparation of the self-assessment will require further work, by all departments, to ensure that robust evidence to demonstrate that the Council is working across all areas of inequality, is collected.

Following initial discussions with the LGA, the three day peer visit has been pencilled in for 9 – 11 May 2018. During the on-site challenge, the peer team will undertake interviews and group meetings with managers, employees, councillors, partners and other stakeholders from the community. Work will need to be undertaken to prepare a suitable schedule and to ensure that the appropriate people are available to participate.

A key element of preparing the submission will be demonstrating that the Council has an up to date Equality Strategy and Policy. A revised Strategy and Policy has been drafted and a draft for consultation will be presented to Cabinet in a separate report.

### **Indicative Timetable and costs**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Activity</b>
October 2017	Discuss and agree provisional timetable with LGA Peer Challenge Team
By January 2018	Draft self-assessment
By end February 2018	Gather and collate evidence
	Submit self-assessment and evidence to LGA
By end March 2018	Identify employees/participants for peer challenge meetings
March 2018	Planning meeting – LGA Lead to finalise on site timetable
April 2018	Briefings to staff/participants
9 – 11 May 2018	On site peer challenge

### **3. Equality Considerations**

The implementation of any actions in relation to the Council's adoption of the definition will be developed to be compatible with the requirements of the Equality Act 2010 and our duties within this to promote equality as a public body.

### **4. Financial considerations**

The current cost of the peer challenge is £7,400 plus peer expenses (travel and accommodation) payable to the LGA. The costs can be met from existing budgets within Policy and Research. The Council may also need to pay some small level travel expenses for customers and representatives from community organisations asked to participate in the peer challenge.

### **5. Other Considerations**

In preparing this report the relevance of the following factors has been considered: legal, prevention of crime and disorder, human resources, environmental, health, property and transport considerations.

## **6. Key Decision**

No

## **7. Call-in**

Is it required that call-in be waived for any decision on this report? No

## **8. Officer Recommendations**

It is recommended that Cabinet:

1. Approve proposals to undertake an external peer challenge for the “Excellent” level of the Equality Framework for Local Government between 9–11 May 2018.

**Emma Alexander**  
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