

# Finance & Corporate Services

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## Equality and Diversity action plan 2012/13

## **Finance & Corporate Services** - the directorate has seven divisions;

1. **Accountancy which covers** Budget Preparation, Setting of Council Tax, Production of Council Tax Leaflet, Budget Monitoring, Payment & Supplier Invoices, Financial Reporting, Closing of Accounts, Production of the Statement of Accounts, Completion of statistical returns, Treasury management, Provision of computerised accounting and reporting system, Insurance and Pension fund investments.
2. **Customer Services which covers;**
  - The provision of all council services, both in person, by telephone, and by email.
  - Answering a majority of customer calls to the Council. Our contact centre handles telephone calls and emails regarding;
    - Council Tax and Benefits
    - Waste and Recycling
    - Street Scene
    - Planning
    - Trees
    - Parks and Open Spaces
    - Highways
3. **Information and Communication Technology** at Richmond works in partnership with Serco Solutions. ICT and Serco provide the computer and communications facilities required by the council. ICT services are provided by the following teams:
  - **Account Management Team:** delivery of core ICT services to staff and to members
  - **Corporate Web Team:** management and development of Richmond's websites and web applications.
  - **Information Systems Team:** manages several corporate ICT systems and information services, including the Land Charges service and the document scanning centre.
4. **Internal Audit Service** role at LBRUT is to make sure Council tax payers' funds are used for proper purposes, in accordance with agreed plans and priorities, and to ensure value for money is obtained. This also includes the management of risks associated with all the Council's activities. Internal Audit work is governed by the CIPFA Code of Practice for Internal Audit. This code, published in 2006, sets out the framework for internal audit and identifies the key objectives, status and processes for internal audit.

**5. Legal Services** is responsible for providing practical legal advice together with a comprehensive range of legal and related services to the officers and councillors of the London Borough of Richmond upon Thames and London Borough of Merton. This is a joint based service based in Merton and overseen by a Joint Management Board.

**6. Electoral Services** is responsible for maintaining the electoral roll and running any elections that take place in London Borough of Richmond upon Thames.

**7. Revenues & Benefits** is primarily responsible for:

- Collection of over £110m Council Tax from over 80,000 properties;
- Collection of over £60m Business Rates from over 5,500 properties;
- Administration and payment of over £50m Housing Benefit [HB] and Council Tax Benefit [CTB] to more than 10,000 claimants;
- Processing of over £1,200m in payments and income;
- Administration of residual ex GLC and other mortgages and staff loans.

## Commitment to equal opportunities in employment and training

|     | Equality strand               | Action   | By when   | By whom  | Outcome/objective   | Date completed |
|-----|-------------------------------|--|---|--|---|----------------|
| 1.1 | Disability                    | Obtain feedback from disabled staff on a regular, ongoing basis with regard to how they view "accessibility" via appraisal feedback.   | Staff appraisals – annual appraisal and bi-annual review. | Each service area manager  | To ensure all staff have the opportunity to further develop their knowledge and understanding of how equality and diversity issues affect them in their every day working environment.  |                |
| 1.2 | Disability                    | <p>Ensure that front line staff are trained to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Know how to sympathetically support visitors with mental impairments.</li> <li>• Know how to sympathetically support visitors with disabilities.</li> </ul> | As new members of staff are appointed.                    | Each service area manager  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All customers contacting us will know that they will be heard and we will understand them and their needs.</li> <li>• Processes are in place to accommodate all customer needs.</li> </ul>   |                |
| 1.3 | All protected characteristics | Work with HR and the Facilities team to ensure that the provision of "reasonable adjustments" for staff with disabilities and learning difficulties are provided, at a minimum, within guideline timescales.   | Ongoing – as required                                     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• DMT</li> <li>• Service heads.</li> <li>• HR</li> <li>• Facilities Team</li> </ul> | <p>This will ensure that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All staff are aware of the relevant timescales and funding arrangements.</li> <li>• Monitoring arrangements are in place to trace DDA compliance</li> <li>• HR work in partnership to ensure DDA compliance</li> </ul> |                |
| 1.4 | All protected characteristics | Ensure that all managers are equipped to work effectively with staff with disabilities and learning difficulties including knowledge of legislation funding for reasonable adjustments and the implications of home, flexible and hot-desk working.      | Ongoing – as required                                     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• DMT</li> <li>• ICT</li> <li>• Service heads.</li> <li>• HR</li> </ul>             | This will promote awareness amongst managers of disability issues so that they are more aware of their legal responsibilities and take a more proactive approach.   |                |

|     |                               |   |                       |   |   |  |
|-----|-------------------------------|---|-----------------------|---|---|--|
| 1.5 | All protected characteristics | Ensure that F&CS staff and customers are aware of procedures to respond and record incidents of harassment and discrimination.                                      | TBD                   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Service Managers/ team leaders.</li> </ul>     | To guarantee that all staff and customer's have access to information that enables them to record/report incident of harassment and discrimination.                         |  |
| 1.6 | Ethnicity                     | Improve training opportunities for disabled and BME staff including secondments   | Ongoing – as required | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>DMT</li> <li>Service Heads</li> </ul>          | Increase in staff satisfaction – A target can be set from the workforce equalities report & staff survey results  |  |
| 1.7 | Age                           | Enhance the opportunities for young people to get quality work experience in the borough.   | TBD                   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>DMT</li> <li>Service Heads</li> </ul>          |   |  |
| 1.8 | All protected characteristics | To ensure that all Finance & Corporate Services staff attend the London Borough of Richmond Upon Thames' Rich Mix Module 1, within 6 months of joining the council. | Ongoing – as required | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Team Leaders</li> <li>Service Heads</li> </ul> | Ensure that all staff are aware of and accept personal responsibility for ensuring that diversity is embedded in the culture of the London Borough of Richmond upon Thames. |  |

### Commitment to communication

|     | Equality strand               | Action  | By when   | By whom   | Outcome/objective   | Date completed |
|-----|-------------------------------|---|---|---|---|----------------|
| 2.1 | All protected characteristics | Develop the E & D content on the Finance & Corporate Services web pages on Rio and <a href="http://www.richmond.gov.uk">www.richmond.gov.uk</a> to ensure that all information is correct and up to date. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li></li> </ul>  | To be decided   | To communicate E&D information updates to F & CS staff and customers.   |                |
| 2.2 | All protected characteristics | The Finance & Corporate Services Equalities & Diversity steering group will act as a source of information, advice and guidance for staff regarding EINAS and equality and diversity issues.              | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>As required; the Steering group have a programme of monthly meetings.</li> </ul> | Finance & Corporate Services Equalities & Diversity steering group. | This will assist managers with the EINA process and will the help all staff with equalities and diversity issues. |                |

|     |                               |  |               |  |  |  |
|-----|-------------------------------|--|---------------|--|--|--|
| 2.3 | Ethnicity<br>Disability       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensure that staff and customers are aware of the availability of translation services.</li> <li>Create and monitor requests for documents to be produced in large print, Braille and differing languages</li> </ul> | As required   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Service heads</li> <li>All staff in the F &amp; CS directorate</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensure that diversity in interaction with internal and external customers is met.</li> <li>Ensure that all customer translation needs are met in whatever format is required</li> </ul> |  |
| 2.4 | Ethnicity<br>Disability       | Officers to continue to use the i-world alert system to ensure that documentation is created as requested.   | As required   | Revenues & Benefits<br>Officers  | Ensure that all existing customer translation needs knowledge/data is used so that the customer is able to understand correspondence that is sent to them.   |  |
| 2.5 | All protected characteristics | Develop a F & CS equalities newsletter to increase staff awareness of the 'new' protected characteristics.   |               | Finance & Corporate<br>Services Equalities &<br>Diversity Steering group   | Improve staff knowledge of E & D related issues and develop their knowledge and understanding of how equality and diversity issues affect them in their every day working environment.   |  |
| 2.6 | All protected characteristics | Consider running staff presentations e.g. like the religion event that was organised a few years ago and get all staff involved.   | To be decided |  |  |  |

### Commitment to equalities monitoring information

|     | Equality strand               | Action   | By when                     | By whom                   | Outcome/objective  | Date completed |
|-----|-------------------------------|--|-----------------------------|---------------------------|--|----------------|
| 3.1 | All protected characteristics | <p>All service areas to establish and maintain equality monitoring as they relate to the protected characteristics in the following areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Customer complaints/incident reports as they relate to all protected characteristics.</li> </ul> | Quarterly Executive reports | Executive Support Officer | To ensure that the F & CS address all equality & diversity related complaints immediately if/when they arise in an effort to ensure staff and external customers feel secure in the knowledge that appropriate action will always be taken for all complaints and incidents reported to/about our service. |                |

|  |                               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Staff Grievances, disciplinary matters, capability cases, employment tribunals and complaints of an E &amp; D related nature.</li> </ul> | As required  | Service Heads/DMT   |   |                |
|--|-------------------------------|---|--|---|---|----------------|
| 3.2                                      | Ethnicity                     | Develop Frontline to prioritise work and working with the police. An example of would be racial remarks sprayed on walls.   | As required  | Customer Contact Manager  | Incidents of harassment and discrimination are prioritised and removed.   |                |
| <b>Commitment to consult and monitor</b> |                               |   |  |   |   |                |
|  | Equality strand               | Action  | By when  | By whom   | Outcome/objective   | Date completed |
| 4.1                                      | All protected characteristics | Continue to conduct, monitor and document customer/staff satisfaction surveys in all service areas in order to gather as up-to customer satisfaction data as possible.          | Quarterly reports to be provided to F & CS Equalities & Diversity steering group | Service leads   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All processes and procedures will fully integrate the needs of the customers based on the results of the surveys.</li> <li>Processes and procedures are changed to reflect the needs of the customers</li> </ul> |                |
| 4.2                                      | All protected characteristics | Ensure the involvement of stakeholders in the EINA process to produce outcomes for inclusion in equality action plans.  | <a href="#">Refer to Eina schedule for 2012/13</a>                               | Lead officers   | A clear evidence list of which equality groups and stakeholders were involved in consultation in the EINA and equality action planning process.   |                |
|  |                               | Add Eina action monitoring as a standing agenda item for future E & D steering group meetings   |  |   | Strengthen the EINA process if Finance & Corporate Services and ensure that the EINA process is followed through and scrutinised.   |                |
| 4.3                                      | All protected characteristics | Complete documented processes for all Finance & Corporate Services equalities performance indicators.   | August 2012  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Performance &amp; Equalities Officer</li> <li>E &amp; D leads</li> </ul> | Demonstrate that the data for the indicators are audited and validated.   |                |
| 4.4                                      | Disability                    | A representative from ICT will attend all future SDAG meetings  | Ongoing  | ICT representative  | The needs of SDAG members will be feedback and considered in future ICT meetings.   |                |

|     |                               |  |                 |   |   |
|-----|-------------------------------|--|-----------------|---|---|
| 4.5 | All protected characteristics | Listen and respond to the views of our customers through consultation with our stakeholders.   | Ongoing         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Revenues &amp; Benefits management team.</li> <li>Corporate Contact Centre.</li> </ul> | <p>Revenues &amp; Benefits aims to become a more inclusive organisation.</p> <p>All policies and procedures are updated to take into account the views of stakeholders and form closer links with the CAB and review links with newly formed voluntary organisations.</p> |
| 4.6 | All protected characteristics | Undertake telephone surveys.   | Ongoing         | Customer Contact staff  | The data collated from the monitoring forms will be more wide- ranging and will lead to improved service wide delivery.   |
| 4.7 | All protected characteristics | Ensure that Equality & Diversity issues are discussed as part of all initial planning/scoping meetings   | As required     | Internal Audit  | Initial meeting document and planning document (P1) includes the identification of E & D issues.  |
| 4.8 | All protected characteristics | To increase by 10 % the number of equalities monitoring forms completed by individuals interviewed under caution during the financial year 2012/13.  | March 2013      | Internal Audit  | Ensure that interaction with our clients meets satisfaction from our E & D perspective and consistent high quality service to all customers to all of our customers.  |
| 4.9 | All protected characteristics | To set Internal Audit E & D targets and objectives for the financial year 2012/13 to reflect the shared service with the London Borough of Kingston Upon Thames.   | To be confirmed | Internal Audit  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All processes and procedures will fully integrate the needs of the customers in both LB's and that the merger does not</li> <li>Processes and procedures are changed to reflect the needs of the customers</li> </ul>              |
| 5.0 | All protected characteristics | To review all Internal Audit and Corporate Anti Fraud Policies and Procedures following the commencement of the shared service with the London Borough of Kingston Upon Thames and to complete Initial Impact Assessments on these procedures during the financial year 2012/13. | To be confirmed | Internal Audit  |   |

### Commitment to self assessment

|     | Equality strand               | Action  | By when   | By whom  | Outcome/objective   | Date completed |
|-----|-------------------------------|---|-----------|--|---|----------------|
| 6.1 | All protected characteristics | Circulate minutes of CEEB/ Finance & Corporate Services E & D steering group meetings to DMT.         | Monthly   | Performance & Equalities Officer                                   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>DMT will be kept informed and this can be cascaded to their Service Heads.</li> <li>All staff will be aware of the E &amp; D work going on throughout the council and in their directorate.</li> </ul> |                |
| 6.2 | All protected characteristics | Develop a rolling action plan that is reviewed quarterly to ensure that E & D targets are up-to-date. | Quarterly | Finance & Corporate Services Equalities & Diversity Steering group | The current format of the E & D action plan is inflexible and changing the format would ensure the Equalities objectives and targets are measured and are relevant.   |                |

### Commitment to disability access

|     | Equality strand | Action  | By when | By whom                    | Outcome/objective  | Date completed |
|-----|-----------------|---|---------|----------------------------|--|----------------|
| 7.1 | Disability      | Adhere to the public standards for web design and ensure that all pages pass web accessibility tests.                             | Ongoing | Corporate Web Team editors | The public web pages and RIO will be accessible to all users.                    |                |
| 7.2 | Disability      | All ICT applications will be measured for accessibility; this will be documented as part of the ICT programme assessment process. | Monthly | ICT programme board        | ICT applications will be fully accessible and available to all members of staff. |                |

## Finance & Corporate Services Eina schedule 2012-13

|   | Level of prioritisation | Title and description of EINA   | Eina Lead                 | EINA Status  |
|---|-------------------------|---|---------------------------|--|
| 1 | High                    | <b>ICT restructure EINA</b> - Details of the ICT structure with revised structure charts.   | Adrian Boylan             | A staff restructure took place in ICT and Corporate Web Team in December 2011. |
| 2 |                         | <b>Front Office EINA</b> - Members of the public are seen by Revenues & Benefits staff at allocated desks in the atrium, Civic Centre. The EINA details the provision and services that are offered to customers.   | Allan Price               | No EINA has been completed in the last two years.                              |
| 3 |                         | <b>Visiting Officer EINA</b> - Inspectors etc conduct visits to both commercial properties and residents homes - details  | Kim Anderson              |  |
| 4 |                         | <b>Bailiff/Court process</b>  | Christine Pharro          |  |
| 5 |                         | <b>Contact Centre Service Eina</b>  | Dawn Cooper/Stacey Kendry |  |
| 6 |                         | <b>Electoral Services EINA</b>  | Stephanie Bishop          |  |
| 7 |                         | <b>IT provision to users with special needs</b> - Include disability, homeworking, maternity, age   | Adrian Boylan             |  |
| 8 |                         | <b>Localisation of CT Benefits</b> - The Spending Review announced measures to change the welfare system, ensuring that it promotes work and personal responsibility while controlling expenditure. The Localisation of Council Tax Benefits is part of this programme. | Mark Maidment             | Change in legislation  |

|    |               |  |                  |   |
|----|---------------|--|------------------|---|
| 9  |               | <b>Website accessibility</b>   | Chris McCulloch  | No EINA has been completed in the last two years. |
| 10 |               | <b>Back Office EINA</b> - service EINA - focus on c/tax discounts, benefit claimants etc | Jacky Warren     |   |
| 11 | <b>Medium</b> | <b>Fraud &amp; Investigations</b> - Interview under caution policy review                | Veronika Siggers |   |
| 12 |               | <b>Fraud visits/investigations</b> - Service review                                      | Veronika Siggers |   |
| 13 | <b>Low</b>    | <b>Corporate Income Service EINA</b>   | Edward Fisk      |   |
| 14 |               | <b>ICT</b> - Each section to undertake a E& D risk assessment and analysis               | Adrian Boylan    |   |
| 15 |               | <b>ICT strategy</b> - Policy review  | Adrian Boylan    |   |