

Democratic Services summary and rationale of the Screening for relevance and Information audit.

Rationale:

For all the functions eliminating discrimination, harassment or victimisation; advancing equality of opportunity between different groups; and fostering good relations were deemed to be high. The rationale behind rating them so was that they are very relevant to the work Democratic Services undertakes as it provides services to councillors who deal with members of the public as well as civic engagements. However, this differs for the protected characteristics. Where relevance has been marked low (Governance) this is due to the fact that that function deals primarily with convening committees and meetings and supporting those meetings. Nevertheless, Governance ensures the recruitment process for panels/ committees/ working group members take account of equality and diversity – members have been offered Equality & diversity training as part of their ongoing member development programme. It also:

- ◆ Ensures that meetings are accessible for all representatives of the community, including disabled access
- ◆ Provision of appropriate facilities – e.g. physical access, differing formats of information (including translation on request to another language, larger font size, Braille) and training for staff.
- ◆ Ensures that every member, including co-opted members, signs up to the LBRuT Code of Conduct for Councillors
- ◆ Draft and disseminate protocols for use at public meetings.

The scrutiny function is member led and conducts reviews on varying issues. The level to which the protected characteristics are considered depends upon the review topic. For example, a review into maternity services will have a disproportionate focus on women of a certain age group (race, religion and belief will also be taken into account in such a review) vis-à-vis the other protected characteristics and the issue is not likely to affect men or older members of society.

Next steps:

Following on from the information audit and screening for relevance it was evident that Democratic Services does not have a large amount of non-anecdotal evidence that it can draw upon. The main reason for this is that it is an anomaly vis-à-vis other services provided by the council. Nevertheless the following steps are to be undertaken to mitigate this and close the information gap:

- ◆ Two EINAs to cover Democratic Services – one for the Governance and Scrutiny and one for Member's Services.

Following on from the EINAs there may be a number of changes that need to take place in order to ensure the service's adherence to the duty.

- ◆ There will be a change to the monitoring of members and Co-opted members will be monitored – all new members and co-opted members will need to be monitored against all of the protected characteristics.