

# Finance & Corporate Services

---

## Equality and Diversity action plan 2011/12

## **Our aims and values**

---

Finance & Corporate Services will promote Equality & Diversity in everything we do to improve the life for everyone living, working and visiting the London Borough of Richmond upon Thames.

### **As a service provider we will;**

- Promote equality of opportunity and eliminate discrimination in the planning and delivery of our services in terms of age, disability, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation and religion/belief.
- Promote good relations between communities.
- Ensure that residents have equal opportunity to participate in the democratic process.
- Tackle harassment relating to a person's age, disability, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation and religion/belief.

### **As an employer we will;**

- Develop, review and promote policies and practices that ensure equality of opportunity and eliminate discrimination for our workforce in all areas of employment.

Our commitment is supported by a number of legal duties that require us to promote equality and eliminate discrimination including:

- The Equality Act 2010
- Race Relations Act 1976
- Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000
- Disability Discrimination Act 1995
- Disability Discrimination Act 2005

- Human Rights Act 1998
- 2004 Employment Regulations on Religion and Faith

### **How we deliver our commitment**

Below we describe the processes and procedures we have put in place to embed the delivery of our commitment to promote equality in relation to the nine protected characteristics within everything that we do in Finance & Corporate Services:

- Undertake equality impact assessments of both new and existing policies and services.
- Ensure that our service plans include relevant diversity and equality objectives and targets.
- Ensure all new members of staff participate in Council equality induction training processes.
- Involve communities, staff and stakeholders in the design, review and scrutiny of our services and employment practices.
- Ensure that our policies are compliant with equality legislation.
- Provide information and access to our services.
- Monitor the equality profile of people using and benefiting from our services to enable us to identify groups which are accessing services.
- Use our procurement powers to make sure that organisations providing services on our behalf work in line with this policy.

## Finance & Corporate Services

---

The directorate has six divisions;

### 1. Accountancy which covers;

- This 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 which covers;

The ICT Team 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;**

The role of the Internal Audit Service 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 and Electoral Services;**

The Legal Services Department 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.

#### **6. Revenues & Benefits;**

The Revenues and Benefits Service 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.

**Area of action;**

**Commitment to equal opportunities in employment and training**

	Equality strand	Action	By when	By whom	Outcome/objective	Date completed
1.1	All protected characteristics	To continue to ensure each service area provides ongoing monitoring of staff training (i.e. what training each staff member should be taking and has taken to date)	Staff appraisals – annual appraisal and bi-annual review.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Service Managers/ team leaders.</li> </ul>	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	Obtain feedback from disabled staff on a regular, ongoing basis with regard to how they view “accessibility” via appraisal feedback.				
1.3	Disability	Ensure that front line staff are trained to: <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.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Each service area manager</li> </ul>	<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>	
1.4	All protected characteristics	Ensure all managers with recruitment responsibilities attend recruitment and selection “refresher” training sessions.	Every three years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>HR/ DMT</li> </ul>	To ensure all management staff are up-to-date as possible with current legislation and E & D policies.	

1.5	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>	
1.6	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>	<p>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.</p>	
1.7	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>	<p>To guarantee that all staff and customer's have access to information that enables them to record/report incident of harassment and discrimination.</p>	
1.8	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>		
1.9	Disability	Review the online training accessibility	June 2011	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>ICT Manager</li> </ul>	<p>The online training will meet the accessibility standard and all members of staff will have equal access to training sources.</p>	
2.0	Disability	The new starter ICT form will be revised to include an 'ICT special needs' question.	June 2011	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Corporate Web Team</li> </ul>	<p>All ICT 'special needs' will be identified in advance of the start date therefore all requirements will be provided on the new starters first day of employment.</p>	

**Area of action;**

**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>• April 2011</li> <li>• As required</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To be decided</li> </ul>	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>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Finance &amp; Corporate Services Equalities &amp; Diversity steering group.</li> </ul>	This will assist managers with the EINA process and will the help all staff with equalities and diversity issues.	
2.3	Ethnicity	Ensure that staff and customers are aware of the availability of translation services.	As required	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Service heads</li> <li>• All staff in the F &amp; CS directorate</li> </ul>	Ensure that diversity in interaction with internal and external customers is met.	
2.4	Ethnicity Disability	Create and monitor requests for documents to be produced in large print, Braille and differing languages	As required	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Service heads</li> </ul>	Ensure that all customer translation needs are met in whatever format is required.	
2.5	Ethnicity Disability	Officers to continue to use the i-world alert system to ensure that documentation is created as requested.	As required	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Revenues &amp; Benefits Officers</li> </ul>	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.	

2.6	All protected characteristics	Continue to develop closer links with Landlords and Housing Needs as a Social Housing provider.	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Revenues &amp; Benefits management team.</li> </ul>	Keep landlords fully informed of ongoing benefit changes to promote awareness of the changes that may affect their customers. Develop close links with Housing Needs to get a better understanding with issues surrounding homelessness.	
2.7	All protected characteristics	Promote online self-service provisions.	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Revenues &amp; Benefits management team</li> <li>Corporate Contact Centre.</li> </ul>	Customers have a fully accessible 24 hour service.	
2.8	All protected characteristics	Annual Council Tax forms will all included a leaflet promoting the take-up of Housing & Council Tax benefits.	March 2012	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Systems Control team</li> </ul>	Ensure that all of our customers are aware of the benefits that they may be entitled to and promote the use of our online facilities and information.	

**Area of action;**

**Commitment to equalities monitoring information**

	Equality strand	Action	By when	By whom	Outcome/objective	Date completed
3.1	All protected characteristics	All service areas to establish and maintain equality monitoring as they relate to the protected characteristics in the following areas: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Customer complaints/incident reports as they relate to all protected characteristics.</li> </ul>	Quarterly Executive reports	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Executive Support Officer</li> </ul>	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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Service Heads/DMT</li> </ul>		

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Recruitment and exit interviews with their staff</li> </ul>	Monitor on a bi-annual basis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Service Heads/DMT</li> </ul>		
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Customer Contact Manager</li> </ul>	Incidents of harassment and discrimination are prioritised and removed.	
3.3	All protected characteristics	Maintain records of the percentage of recovery rates on active claims which have been reduced from the standard deduction.	Monthly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Management Information Officer</li> </ul>	Revenues & Benefits will establish a base figure, and monitor the % of claims who have had the rate of recovery reduced.  This will ensure that Revenues & Benefits are taking into consideration the financial and wellbeing of our customers	
3.4	All protected characteristics	Monitor the amount of DHP applications received and how many are successful	Monthly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Management Information Officer</li> </ul>	As above	
3.5	All protected characteristics	Record the percentage of liability orders granted sent directly to the Bailiffs.	Annually	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Recovery Manager</li> </ul>	This percentage will reflect effort made to check all cases before sending to the bailiff – protecting vulnerable people and encouraging the setting up of special arrangements where people are finding it hard to pay.	

**Area of action;**

**Commitment to consult and monitor**

	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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Service leads</li> </ul>	<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	Review and standardise all equality monitoring forms in F & CS to include all of the 'protected characteristics'.	April 2011	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Performance &amp; Equalities Officer</li> </ul>	The data collated from the monitoring forms will be more ranging and will lead to improved service delivery.	
4.3	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 2011/12</a>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lead officers</li> </ul>	A clear evidence list of which equality groups and stakeholders were involved in consultation in the EINA and equality action planning process.	
4.4	All protected characteristics	Complete documented processes for all Finance & Corporate Services equalities performance indicators.	August 2011	<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.	
4.5	Disability	A representative from ICT will attend all future SDAG meetings	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>ICT representative</li> </ul>	The needs of SDAG members will be feedback and considered in future ICT meetings.	
4.6	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>	Revenues & Benefits aims to become a more inclusive organisation.  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.	
4.7	All protected characteristics	Undertake telephone surveys.	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Customer Contact staff</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The data collated from the monitoring forms will be more wide- ranging and will lead to improved service wide delivery.</li> <li>The telephone survey system does not have the ability to record E&amp; D monitoring data.</li> </ul>	

4.8	All protected characteristics	Include Equalities & Diversity issues within the post-audit questionnaires to clients.	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Internal Audit</li> </ul>	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	Ensure that Equality & Diversity issues are discussed as part of all initial planning/scoping meetings	As required	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Internal Audit</li> </ul>	Initial meeting document and planning document (P1) includes the identification of E & D issues.	
<b>Area of action;</b>						
<b>Commitment to self assessment</b>						
	Equality strand	Action	By when	By whom	Outcome/objective	Date completed
5.1	All protected characteristics	Ensure all equality action plans rising IINAs, EINAs and E&D groups are scrutinised and approved by each AD of each service area, DMT, CEDG, Council Support groups and ESSG (high impact IINAs/EINAs only) before going to SEEB for review.	See <a href="#">Refer to Eina schedule for 2011/12</a> for the timetable	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lead officers</li> </ul>	To provide the opportunity for plans to be shared and scrutinised by directorate and Corporate Council E & D groups and senior management if each service area for further E & D actions as required.	
5.2	All protected characteristics	Circulate minutes of CEEB/ Finance & Corporate Services E & D steering group meetings to DMT.	Monthly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Performance &amp; Equalities Officer</li> </ul>	<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>	

5.3	Woman Ethnicity Sexual Orientation Disability	<p>Ensure that a representative from</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Women's Network Group</li> <li>• Black Workers Support group</li> <li>• LGBT Group</li> <li>• Staff Disability Action Group</li> </ul> <p>is invited to attend the Finance &amp; Corporate Services E &amp; D steering group meeting.</p>	Monthly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Performance &amp; Equalities Officer</li> </ul>	As above	
5.4	All protected characteristics	Complete Initial screening for relevance template for Equalities Act 2010 public sector duty requirements.	May 2011	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Finance &amp; Corporate Services Equalities &amp; Diversity leads.</li> </ul>	The audit and assessment and screening exercise will enable us to be clear against the new public sector equality duty and the nine protected characteristics. It will provide the foundation for future priorities and work.	

**Area of action;**

**Commitment to disability access**

	Equality strand	Action	By when	By whom	Outcome/objective	Date completed
6.1	Disability	Ensure that adequate measures are in place to accommodate all disabled staff and customer's needs and put a reviewing and monitoring system in place to ensure review is conducted on a regular basis.	Reviewed when new policies/services are put in place via IINAs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Service heads</li> </ul>		
6.2	Disability	Adhere to the public standards for web design and ensure that all pages pass web accessibility tests.	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Corporate Web Team editors</li> </ul>	The public web pages and RIO will be accessible to all users.	
6.3	Disability	All ICT applications will be measured for accessibility; this will be documented as part of the ICT programme assessment process.	Monthly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ICT programme board</li> </ul>	ICT applications will be fully accessible and available to all members of staff.	

**Area of action;**

**Commitment to procurer of goods and services**

	<b>Equality strand</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>By when</b>	<b>By whom</b>	<b>Outcome/objective</b>	<b>Date completed</b>
<b>7.1</b>	All protected characteristics	Demonstrate that all practicable steps are being taken to allow equal access and treatment in employment and service delivery for all, as appropriate to the nature of the contract concerned	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Annual check</li><li>• As appointed</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Service Heads</li></ul>	Obtain contractor's and potential contractor's Equalities & Diversity policies and or their commitment to compliance with our policy.	

## Timetable of new Einas to be undertaken in 2011/12

---

Title of Eina	Description of Eina	Section that will undertake the EINA
Legal Services Shared Service		Legal Services
Internal Audit Shared Services		Internal Audit
Revenues & Benefits	Description is pending Member decision	Revenues & Benefits
Redesigning Homepage and Landing Pages on <a href="http://www.richmond.gov.uk">www.richmond.gov.uk</a>	The homepage and landing pages are being redesigned to ensure that they meet accessible standards.	Corporate Web Team
Accountancy INA	Post restructure INA	Accountancy