



LANCASTER CITY COUNCIL
Promoting City, Coast & Countryside

DISABILITY EQUALITY SCHEME [DRAFT]

If you require further information or would like this information in large print, braille, audio and in other languages, please contact:

Lisa Banks
Principal HR Officer
Lancaster City Council
St Leonards House
St Leonards Gate
Lancaster
LA1 1NN

Email: lbanks@lancaster.gov.uk

Tel: 01524 582179

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1. **Foreword**

We have high expectations of becoming an excellent Council that will promote opportunities to and support people within the district who have a disability. We recognise that we will need to work in partnership with other organisations within the District to achieve this aim. We also believe that a diverse workforce will underpin the success of the Council.

The Disability Equality duty that came into force on the 4th December 2006 will help us to succeed in our expectations. The Disability Equality duty provides a framework within which the Council needs to achieve a number of actions and objectives.

The Disability Equality Scheme is just one of the tools which will help the Council deliver its services well and enable the Council to positively promote a diverse workforce.

This document sets out what we need to do under the Disability Equality Duty, what we have already achieved and what we need to do in the future.

This is the Council's first Disability Equality Scheme and it will provide the basis for how we assess and improve our service delivery in relation to people who have a disability. We are committed to developing processes that include the active involvement of people with a disability, which will help ensure we can meet the needs of everyone within the District.

Ian Barker
Leader of the Council

Gina Dowding
Cabinet Portfolio Holder

Mark Cullinan
Chief Executive

2. Introduction

The general duty to promote Disability Equality is being brought in by the government (in December 2006) to align the Disability Discrimination Act 2005 with the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000. The duty will become a compliance issue when the Council carries out any of its functions.

The Council will need to comply with the duty by:

- Eliminating unlawful discrimination;
- Promoting equal opportunities;
- Eliminating disability related harassment;
- Promoting positive attitudes towards disabled persons;
- Encouraging participation by disabled persons in public life.

The general duty to promote Disability Equality will therefore become a central part of the Council's functions. It will be considered in planning, policy-making, service delivery, regulation, enforcement and employment.

Lancaster City Council is looking at making the environment more accessible generally by the removal of physical barriers where possible and making 'reasonable adjustments' in terms of buildings, service delivery and employment.

This scheme has been prepared to meet the general duty and will be the subject of consultation with local disabled groups (through One Voice) and disabled employees.

If you wish to know more about the Disability Discrimination Act 2005 and the codes of practice that relate to it, then please contact the:

Disability Rights Commission (DRC)

Telephone: 08457 622 644

Fax: 08457 778 878

Textphone: 08457 622 644

E-mail: enquiry@drc-gb.org

Web: <http://www.drc-gb.org>

Freepost MID 02164
Stratford-upon-Avon
CV37 9HY

This scheme is part of a number of three-year equality schemes, which address the Council's overall Equality and Diversity Strategy. This document is available at www.lancaster.gov.uk

3. What is Disability?

A disability is a consequence of barriers that prevent people with impairments from accessing information and services. Barriers take little or no account of people who have impairments and may be:

- Attitudes of people
- Built environment problems
- Information and communication issues
- Organisations' and institutions' rules and policies

The Disability Discrimination Act 2005 defines a disabled person as a person with 'a physical or mental impairment, which has a substantial and long term adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day to day activities'.

An impairment is an injury, illness or congenital condition that causes, or is likely to cause, loss or difference in the way the body or mind works.

For the purpose of the Act, whether or not a person is disabled is generally determined by reference to the effect that impairment has on that person's ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.

A disability can arise from a wide range of impairments that can be:

- Sensory impairments, such as those affecting sight or hearing;
- Impairments with fluctuating or recurring effects such as rheumatoid arthritis,
- Progressive conditions, such as motor neurone disease
- Organ specific, for example respiratory conditions such as asthma,
- Developmental, such as autistic spectrum disorders (ASD),
- Learning difficulties such as dyslexia
- Learning Disabilities,
- Mental health conditions and mental illnesses,
- Long term medical conditions such as Cancer and HIV
- Mobility and physiological impairments caused by accident

Perceptions within society affect how people with impairments can take part in everyday life. It is not always possible to know who has a disability and how the disability effects the individual because:

- Some people have more than one disability
- Some people have disabilities that can not be seen
- The popular perception that people with disabilities always use wheelchairs is inaccurate.

4. Arrangements for meeting the Disability Duty

4.1 Arrangements for Access to Information & Services

A key priority for the Council is access to information and services. Here is a summary of some of the services, policies, procedures and practices that contribute to making information and services accessible to the Disabled community:

- Customer Service Centres
- Access to Services Review included an Equality Impact Assessment that involved focus groups with disabled people
- Consultation Strategy

- Community Strategy

4.2 Arrangements for Consultation / Involvement

Lancaster City Council's Consultation Strategy states a commitment to ensure that its consultations are accessible to everyone in the district.

The strategy states that 'in order to facilitate effective consultation with people with disabilities we will, wherever possible:

- Ensure that all venues for consultation events are fully accessible.
- Ensure that transport is provided where necessary.
- Ensure that all forms of communication meet the needs of visually impaired people, (i.e.: helpful font size and paper colour etc).
- Liaise with voluntary and community groups whose members have disabilities.
- Encourage the active participation of carers and advocates.
- Provide appropriate facilities for all meetings (i.e. Induction loops, sign language facilities etc.).
- Attend day centres; residential care homes and community venues and groups with a variety of consultation approaches.'

Services will be required to plan for involvement and consultation through their:

- Annual Budget
- Business Plan
- Best Value Performance Plans
- Lancaster City Councils Approach to Managing Projects (LAMP) provides a standard set of documentation to use with any projects within the Council.

Services will be required to consult on equality impact assessments and identify priority areas through existing structures and by using good practice approaches.

In terms of this disability equality scheme, the Council will be consulting more fully over the next twelve months. This will inform changes in priorities this year and in future years. Please see appendix B for the Consultation Plan.

4.3 Arrangements for Scrutiny

This will be carried out in a variety of ways through the existing Council mechanisms:

- User Groups
- Service/Organisational reviews/Best Value Performance Indicators (BVPI)
- Overview and Scrutiny Committee
- Budget and Performance Panel
- Performance Review Teams
- Management Team Performance Management Group

The Council scrutinises its own performance on a quarterly basis through Performance Review Team meetings that include review of relevant statutory performance indicators. The indicators that are relevant to disability are listed in Section

5.1. Further information can be obtained from the Council's Corporate Plan and Corporate Performance Plan, both of which can be found on the Council's website www.lancaster.gov.uk

The Disability Rights Commission, the Audit Commission (AC) and other Government Inspection bodies can inspect the Council at any time.

The Disability Rights Commission reviews the Council's performance in terms of the Disability Discrimination Act 2005. The Audit Commission reviews the best value performance indicators as well as the Comprehensive Performance Assessment. In future the Audit Commission will focus on three issues; resourcing and mainstreaming of diversity, diversity and customer experience and community leadership.

4.4 Arrangements for Self-Assessment

At officer level, implementation of Equality and Diversity issues within the Council will be overseen by the Equalities Steering Group and facilitated using:

- Service's Equality Groups
- Equalities Officer Group

The monitoring and review of objectives and actions will be carried out by the:

- Equality and Diversity Steering Group
- Equalities Performance Review Meeting
- Management Team's Performance Management Group

4.5 Arrangements for Monitoring

Lancaster City Council is committed to monitoring its workforce on an annual basis and setting Best Value Performance Indicator targets to increase the representation of workers with a disability employed within the Council:

- Percentage of staff employed with a disability
- Top 5% of earners who have a disability
- Profile of applicants being processed through recruitment

4.6 Arrangements for Complaints

All complaints are logged and corporately handled by the Complaints Officer.

Contact: Complaints Officer,
Information and Customer Services
Lancaster City Council
Town Hall
Dalton Square
Lancaster
LA1 1PJ

Phone: 01253 582192
Email: complaints@lancaster.gov.uk

Or complete an online comments and complaints form at:

www.lancaster.gov.uk/complaints/

Employees can complain using either:

- Grievance and Disputes Procedure
- Preventing Harassment at Work Procedure.

4.8 Arrangements for Publications / Communication

Lancaster City Council believes it is important that all our customers are able to access our information and services. All Council publications should be written clearly and simply for people to understand.

The Customer Service Policy for Staff states the Council's commitment to ensure:

'Information can be made available in large print, Braille, audio and in other languages.'

The above statement will be promoted using the following means:

- Website
- Council Tax Leaflet
- Your District Council Matters
- Housing News
- Electoral Registration information sent to residents' homes
- All public consultations
- Job Applications
- BT telephone book – Council advertisement
- Any other publication staff feel is appropriate

Publications will be made available in the following format if requested:

- Audio
- Braille
- Large Print
- Dyslexic Friendly Formats
- Translation

For face to face contact the following services are available:

- Translation
- Sign Language
- Hearing Loops

For telephone contact the following services are available:

- Translation
- Minicom/ Textphone

5. Overview of the current position

The Council is continually improving the services that we deliver to our communities. Our vision is to 'promote city, coast and countryside, we will achieve lasting opportunities for all in a safe and healthy district that's proud of its natural and cultural assets.'

Our priorities are to:

- To deliver value for money, customer focused services.
- To make our district a cleaner and healthier place.
- To reduce crime and the fear of crime.
- To lead the regeneration of our District.
- To support sustainable communities.
- To continue to improve the Council.

Central to our approach are our values. These are:

Putting the Needs of the Public First

We will treat everyone respectfully and professionally and provide services that respond to changing needs.

Community Leadership and Partnership

We will bring the community together to deal with the major issues facing our district and work with our Partners to deliver real improvement.

Improving Services

We will constantly seek to improve the services that we provide to the community.

To improve the quality of life for children and young people

We will adopt the five outcomes from Every Child Matters as guiding principles in the design and delivery of our services to young people in the district.

Equality of Opportunity

We are committed to providing services that recognise different needs within our community and aim to reduce inequalities.

Open, Responsive and Accountable Government and Sound Decision Making

We want transparent decision-making, public consultation, two-way communication and public involvement so our services meet the needs of our citizens.

Sustainable Development

We consider the long-term impact of our decisions on the environmental, social and economic makeup of our district.

Sound Financial Management

We are committed to effective, efficient and prudent management of the Council's financial affairs.

Good employment Practice

We are committed to high standards of employment practice.

5.1 Achievements relating to Equality are:

- Full time Access Officer based in the Planning Services. This officer is responsible for ensuring that planned development meets the requirement of current disability legislation and regulation. He is also responsible for delivering Disability Equality and Awareness training, disseminating disability legislation and advising local organisations and other public bodies.
- Planning policy R21 is a local planning policy that enables the Council to refuse planning permission for development that does not provide access for all.
- Equality and Awareness training on induction. This training introduces new employees to the principles of Equality and Diversity. Since January 2006 about a hundred people have attended. Further information is provided in section 5.5.
- Equality and Awareness training (delivery and receipt of). This includes Child Protection Awareness, Deaf Awareness, Disability Awareness, Equality Awareness for front line staff and middle managers and visual impairment training. The Access Officer also provides training on request to Services. Further information is provided in section 5.5.
- Developing Customer Services Centres to help improve access to Council services.
- Best Value Performance Indicators allow the Council to measure itself against other Councils and set agreed targets. Section 6.1 provides further information on this area.
- Access Audits of local streets and Council Buildings. Lancaster was the first Council to treat the external managed environment as a 'facility' under the terms of the Disability Discrimination Act; the process was completed with community involvement.
- Awareness raising events
- Two ticks symbol highlights our commitment to be 'positive' about disabled people', more information is provided in section 5.3.
- Support for disability organisations both in grants and officer time and assistance.
- No planning or Building Control charges for access work to public buildings, planning or building regulatory applications for access features in both public and private buildings.
- Dropped Kerb programme is an annual rolling programme of dropped kerb provision funded from Highway budgets
- Charter Mark awarded to the Revenues Section in 2006 and to Morecambe Tourist Information Centre. Charter Mark is awarded to public sector organisations as recognition of excellence in public service. One of the six criteria that have to be met is "to be fair and accessible to everyone and promote choice".
- Your District Matters is the Council magazine that was in the final shortlist of the Chartered Institute of Public Relations Local Government Award. The magazine is used to promote access to services within the district and is available in different formats. Further information is available on www.lancaster.gov.uk in the Community Living Section.
- Improvements to the traffic free paths make it easier for people within the District to travel around whilst avoiding busy congested roads. The Transport and Travel section on www.lancaster.gov.uk provides further information.

5.2 Strategic Review of Disability Issues

The Lancaster District Community Strategy provides a vision for this District for the year 2020 and sets out steps towards achieving it. Partners on the Local Strategic Partnership helped to develop the strategy. The strategy states a commitment to

reduce the inequalities between different groups in our community. There are a number of targets within the strategy, some of which relate to disabled people:

- To increase the percentage of local authority buildings open to the public in which all areas are fully accessible to disabled people.
- To increase the percentage of pedestrian crossings with facilities for disabled people.
- Promoting leisure programmes that disabled people can participate in (including staff awareness and training).
- Improving public transport and road safety for people with a physical disability or sensory impairment.

A priority outcome within the Council's Corporate plan is to increase the awareness of equal opportunities and diversity issues. This is monitored quarterly at the Performance Review Team meetings, membership of which includes the Cabinet Member responsible for Equality and Diversity as well as the relevant member of Management Team and Service Heads. The Corporate Plan is also monitored at Management Team Performance Management Group Meetings and issues arising from Performance Review teams are fed into this meeting and then to the Leader of the Council.

5.2 Council Structures

To ensure the Council has the internal structures to support the Disability Equality Duty an officer Equality and Diversity Steering group will help develop the strategic direction of the council on Equality and Diversity issues, which will include issues around disability. The core members of this group will include the:

Chief Executive
Head of Legal and HR
Head of Corporate Strategy
Principal HR Officer

Membership to this group will be extended to include other officers when necessary.

The Steering Group will then meet with the larger Equalities Officer working group that will comprise representatives from all Services of the Council. The Service representatives will have an interest in Equality and Diversity and will ensure that issues are progressed in their services. The Steering Group will monitor each Service's progress against any agreed objectives or actions.

5.3 Employment Opportunities

Lancaster City Council has a Recruitment and Selection Code of Practice that supports the Council's Equal Opportunities Policy.

The Code of Practice gives guidance to those involved in the recruitment and selection of employees to ensure that they have the information necessary to make recruitment and selection decisions based on fair practices whilst complying with the Council's *Equal Opportunities Policy* and relevant employment legislation.

Lancaster City Council aims to provide equality of opportunity and equal access for all. The Council, in both its employment practices and in the delivery of its services

recognises the diversity of the people and the communities of the District and is committed to:

- Ensuring that clients, customers, job applicants and employees do not receive less favourable treatment on the grounds of race, colour, religion, nationality, gender, marital status, sexual orientation, disability or age.
- Tackling areas of potential discrimination to ensure that services, employment arrangements and employee training and development opportunities are offered equitably and appropriately.
- Sustaining progress on the implementation of equal opportunities.
- Consulting with service users, employees, community groups and partner organisations about the development and implementation of equality objectives.
- Carrying out service audits and maintaining and improving monitoring arrangements designed to identify areas for development of action plans to bring about equality of opportunity.
- Securing the support of internal and external partners and contractors for its equality objectives.
- Applying the Commission for Race Equality (CRE) Equality Standards within the Council and other agreed external measurement models to develop its equality plans.

In addition the Council is committed to the Employment Service's 'Two Ticks' symbol 'positive about disabled people'. This demonstrates to disabled job seekers and disabled employees that it has agreed to make 5 commitments designed to ensure that disabled people have every opportunity to access employment and develop their careers with the Council. The commitments are as follows:

- To interview all applicants with a disability who meet the minimum criteria for a job vacancy and consider them on their merits
- To ensure there is a mechanism in place to discuss at any time, but at least once a year, with disabled employees what can be done to make sure they can develop and use their abilities
- To make every effort when employees become disabled to ensure they stay in employment
- To take action to ensure that all employees develop the appropriate level of disability awareness needed to make these commitments work
- Each year to review the five commitments and what has been achieved, to plan ways to improve on them and to let employees and the Jobcentre Plus know about progress and future plans

5.4 Support for Disability Groups

The Council provides support to disability groups by the provision of grants, officer secondments, advice and guidance.

5.5 Disability Equality/Awareness Training

Staff

Lancaster City Council promotes a number of training courses within the Corporate Training Programme that support Disability Equality Awareness. These are:

- Deaf Awareness – one day programme
- Disability Discrimination Awareness – half day programme
- Equality and Diversity Awareness – half day programme for staff dealing directly with members of the public
- Equality and Diversity Awareness – one day programme for middle managers
- Visual Impairment Awareness – one day programme

The Disability Awareness sessions are provided by Lancaster City Council's Access Officer. The Access Officer also provides Equality and Diversity training to Services on request. Services will continue to identify training needs relating to disability equality through service / team training plans and individual officers' development action plans.

The quarterly corporate induction programme includes a session for new staff and managers on equalities and diversity. How we deliver Equality and Diversity training programmes will be assessed, reviewed and revised as required.

The Council's Access Officer often provides ad-hoc briefings to Services/Teams as required.

Human Resources (through Corporate training programme) or outside consultants can deliver training on Disability Equality as requested by Services. Training courses such as customer care, recruitment and selection and management training will be assessed to ensure that they sufficiently cover equality issues including disability. Access to these courses will also be assessed to ensure there are no barriers to attendance.

Members

Elected Members have had awareness raised on equality issues through specific equality and diversity sessions during 2002-5 and their development programme is ongoing during 2005-8. Equality and diversity awareness will be delivered in specific sessions as well as integrated throughout the subject areas of the rest of the programme, and will form part of the induction training for new Members following the local election in May 2007.

5.6 Procurement

Lancaster City Council's Procurement Strategy stresses the importance of Equality and Diversity. Suppliers are required to demonstrate how they comply with Disability Discrimination Act 2005.

6. Measuring the Council's Performance

6.1 Best Value Performance Indicators

These provide the council with a tool on which to measure itself against other councils and to set year on year targets relating to each of the indicators. The Best Value Performance Indicators relating to Equality and Diversity are:

BVPI 2 a – The level of the Equality Standard for Local Government to which the authority conforms:

Year	Target	Actual
2005/2006	1	1
2006/2007	2	
2007/2008	2	

BVPI 11c – The percentage of the top paid 5% of staff who have a disability:

Year	Target	Actual
2005/2006	Not set	2.17%
2006/2007	2.17%	
2007/2008	2.17%	

BVPI 16a – The percentage of local authority employees declaring they meet the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 disability definition:

Year	Target	Actual
2005/2006	3.50%	6.2%
2006/2007	6.5%	
2007/2008	6.5%	

BVPI 16b – The percentage of economically active disabled people in the Authority area declaring they meet the Disability Discrimination Act 1995:

Year	Target	Actual
2005/2006	N/A	15.88%*
2006/2007	N/A	
2007/2008	N/A	

*Based on the 2001 Census

BVPI 156 -The percentage of authority buildings open to the public in which all public areas are suitable for and accessible to disabled people:

The percentage of authority buildings open to the public in which all public areas are suitable for and accessible to disabled people in 2005/2006 was 75%.

It has not been possible to set targets for future years because of the Council's Access to Services Review. Once the Council has made a decision about Access to Services, relevant and achievable targets can be set.

Further information about BVPI's is available on the Council's website under Best Value at www.lancaster.gov.uk

6.2 Access Audits

The Council is committed to the principle of equal access and to ensure that every service is as free of barriers to access as possible.

To find out what improvements were required, access audits of Council properties with public access were started in 2004 and these continue. The purpose of the audits is to identify the important actions required to meet requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act 2005.

The Council also has plans to audit *all* its property (owned by the Council) over the period 2006 – 2007.

7. Partnership Working

Lancaster City Council recognises that the Equality and Diversity agenda has to be delivered in partnership with local organisations. The Council will continue to work within established consultation routes and work to develop firm partnerships with local groups and organisations. It fully accepts that this scheme is a work in progress and will strive to make partnership arrangements a core aspect of this and future schemes.

7.1 Lancaster District Local Strategic Partnership - Equality and Diversity Building Block (EDBB)

The EDBB is a thematic group that considers equality and diversity issues and is one of the seven thematic groups (known as building blocks) which collectively make the Lancaster District Local Strategic Partnership.

Lancaster City Council is represented on the Equality and Diversity Building Block by two Councillors. The current membership of this group is:

- Lancaster City Council
- Lancashire County Council
- Morecambe Bay Primary Care Trust
- Lancaster District Council for Voluntary Services
- Morecambe and Heysham Citizens Advice Bureau
- National Coalition Building Institute
- Lancaster University
- Lancashire Constabulary
- St Martin's College
- Victim Support
- Education Sector
- Social Services Mental Health Sector

This meeting allows local organisations to work in partnership, raise and discuss issues and propose potential solutions. The meeting has hosted a number of presentations from organisations, one of which was One Voice (an organisation that acts as a platform for disabled people).

8. Delivering the Duty

8.1 Resources

Lancaster City Council has committed:

- Chief Executive as Officer Champion for Equality and Diversity
- Principal HR Officer as Equality and Diversity Lead
- Training Programmes to promote Equality and Diversity Awareness
- To provide communication and publication material in different formats

Lancaster City Council is aiming to mainstream and integrate resources within the Services plans.

8.2 Timetable

Please refer to Appendix B.

9. Evaluation and Review

This scheme will be reviewed three years from the date of publication.

Appendix A - Lancaster City Council's Disability Equality Scheme Action Plan

Action	Lead	Target / Timescale
BVPI 2a – To agree the level of the Equality Standard for Local Government to which the Council aspires.	Human Resources	To achieve Level 2 by 30 th November 2007
As above BVPI 11c – To agree targets for the percentage of the top 5% of staff who have a disability	Human Resources	2.17% by 31 st March 2007
BVPI 16a – to agree targets for the percentage of local authority employees declaring they meet the Disability Discrimination Act 2005 definition	Human Resources	6.5% by 31 st March 2007
Equality Impact Assessments to be carried out	Directors / Heads of Service / Equality and Diversity Steering Group	On going through an agreed rolling programme.
Equality Action plans to be developed and implemented	Directors / Heads of Service / Equality and Diversity Steering Group / Equalities Officer Working Group	On going through an agreed rolling programme.
Monitor and Review progress made in statutory and non-statutory requirements	Equality and Diversity Steering Group / Equalities Performance Review Team / Management Teams Performance Review Meeting	On going
Ensure the Consultation Strategy is	Equality and Diversity Steering Group /	Insert date

suitable for Disabled People and their organisations.	Corporate Strategy	
Ensure that disability is considered in all new policies and procedures	Corporate Directors / Heads of Service / Equality and Diversity Steering Group	On going
Ensure that disability is considered in all new developments and improvement schemes	Corporate Directors / Heads of Service / Equality and Diversity Steering Group	On going
Monitor and take action following complaints.	Information and Customer Service	31 st March 2008
Ensure Access to services and information is accessible to people with disabilities	Corporate Directors / Heads of Service / Equality and Diversity Steering Group	31 st March 2008
Ensure the monitoring, continued identification (using access audits) and removal of physical barriers to service	Property / Planning / Heads of Services	On going
Review the Corporate Equality Awareness Training to ensure that it is equipping staff with the right skills and knowledge	Human Resources	31 st March 2008
Create and maintain a database for disabled employees reasonable adjustments	Human Resources	31 st March 2008
Create and maintain a voluntary database which captures disabled employees requirements	Human Resources	31 st March 2008

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Appendix B - Draft Disability Equality Scheme (Consultation)

Key Stakeholders	Action	Lead	Timescale	Completed
Council Elected Members				
Cabinet Portfolio Holder	Draft DES to Cllr Dowding and Diversity Cabinet Liaison Group	Lisa Banks	December 2006	Achieved
Cabinet	Present final DES after full consultation and feedback for agreement	Cabinet Portfolio Holder	March 2007	
Members	Notified by email	Lisa Banks	March 2007	
Council Senior Officers				
Equality and Diversity Steering Group	Draft DES and final version for discussion and agreement	Lisa Banks	January 2007	Achieved
Management Team	Final Draft for Comment	Mark Cullinan	February 2007	
Heads of Service	Draft version sent for consultation and final version sent for compliance	Lisa Banks	February 2007	
Council Employees				
Employees encouraged to comment using Consultation Finder	Document to be posted on Consultation Finder	Lisa Banks	February 2007	

Key Stakeholders				
Trade Unions	Draft consulted using Council procedure	Lisa Banks	February 2007	
Access Officer	Draft version for comments	Lisa Banks	January 2007	Achieved
Corporate Strategy	Draft version for comments	Lisa Banks	January 2007	Achieved
External				
One Voice	Draft version for comments	Lisa Banks	February 2007	
Consultation Finder	Draft version for comments	Lisa Banks	February 2007	