

Sedgefield Town Council Council Race Equality

Scheme

Introduction

All Local Councils have a statutory general duty to work to eliminate unlawful racial discrimination, and to promote equal opportunities and good race relations. The duty is not optional and Local Councils have to meet it even if the ethnic minority population in their area is small.

All Local Councils and authorities are central to the services that are closest to people's everyday lives for example housing, education, benefits, environmental services, health, leisure services etc. How Local Councils approach race equality has the potential to remove barriers between communities and make sure that everyone has access to public services. The Commission for Racial Equality has therefore, produced information which describes the main results or outcomes that will distinguish a local council that is meeting its duty well and this also outlines some of the ways in which a local council can show that it is meeting the duty. Both Members and Council staff will be able to use the information to see if their own work, and the work of their Council as a whole, is making a difference to meeting the duty to promote race equality and good race relations.

Services and Policies

The overall aim of the general duty is to make race equality central to the way local councils work, and all services, policies and procedures should reflect this. Sedgefield Town Council, therefore, has to identify relevant functions and policies, place them in order and priority and ensure everyone is involved.

Scheme

The Scheme consists of a strategy and an action plan to meet the general duty and any specific duties.

The scheme will come into effect on 30 November 2002 and will be reviewed regularly.

The scheme will be published on the Sedgefield Town Council website and in printed form, and will be distributed to all staff, members, and available to the public.

IMPLEMENTING THE RACE RELATIONS (AMENDMENT) ACT 2000 WITH RESPECT TO CURRENT POLICY

1 BACKGROUND

The Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 came into being as a direct result of the recognition of institutional racism. The rationale behind the Act is that identified public bodies should be able to **continuously demonstrate** that they are completely fair and unbiased in matters of race.

2 REQUIREMENTS OF THE ACT

The aim of the Act is encompassed within what is known as the General Duty. An authority must:

- Eliminate unlawful racial discrimination
- Promote equality of opportunity
- Promote good race relations between people of different racial groups

To achieve this, the Act requires that special consideration must be given to the effect on ethnic minorities in the way that:

- Policy is formulated and implemented
- Services are delivered
- Employment policies are applied

To ensure compliance within Sedgefield Town Council, the Council is accountable for publishing the way this consideration has been applied in each of these areas, for relevant policies and services. Therefore, the Act needs to be integrated into day-to-day operations of the Council. It will affect all employees and Members in the way they conduct their duties.

The General Duty will also apply to private, voluntary, and partnership bodies carrying out a public authority's functions.

Implementation of the full requirements of the Act must occur regardless of the size of the ethnic minority population served.

The Commission for Racial Equality has enforcement powers under the Act to ensure it is implemented.

3 HOW THE ACT WILL APPLY TO PROPOSED POLICIES

The Commission for Racial Equality has defined policies as:

'The formal and informal decisions about how a public authority carries out its duties and uses its powers.'

To comply with the Act, a Racial Impact Report, a summary of which must be included must be produced within the main proposed policy report. The Racial Impact Report should be available as a separate document.

This process will only apply to Key Decisions as published with the council agenda. It is incumbent upon Members to have considered that the Act has been implemented correctly for these policies that come before them.

The Racial Impact Report should contain information on:

- How an assessment was made on the effect of the policy as regards ethnic minorities
- Details of any consultation process undertaken
- Once implemented, how the policy will be monitored (and results published), for effects on ethnic minority groups, if it is deemed relevant to the General Duty to promote race equality.
- How the results of assessment and any consultation (contained within the Racial Impact Report) will be published

4 THE RACIAL IMPACT REPORT

The Commission for Racial Equality advises the following should be contained within the report, and published:

Assessment

- A description and explanation of the proposed policy together with a brief account of how the likely effects were assessed, including any consultation carried out at this stage
- A summary of the results of the assessment
- Any available technical reports, and how to get them
- A review of the proposed policy (or policy options) in the light of the assessment
- A statement on what it is planned to do next

Consultation

- Why the consultation was undertaken
- Details about how it was undertaken
- A summary of the replies received from people consulted
- An assessment of the proposed policy (or policy options) in the light of the responses received
- A statement on what it is planned to do next

Monitoring

- An explanation of monitoring and why it is important
- The monitoring system and methods to be used

5 PUBLISHING THE RACIAL IMPACT REPORT

- Written details on every assessment, consultation and monitoring exercise should be available to anyone who asks for them. However, summaries (such as that contained within the main proposed policy report) should be published and distributed.
- Any existing method of publication can be used, but it may be preferable to publish results separately as part of the assessment, consultation and

monitoring processes e.g. the results of an assessment can form the basis of a formal consultation.

- Whatever communication method is used, it must reach people from different racial groups. Information may have to be translated into languages other than English, and in formats that people with disabilities can use.
- Posting information on a website is a cost effective method of reaching a wide audience, but not everybody has access to a computer.
- Notices can be placed in the press or other media – both mainstream and ethnic minority – informing people where they can find more detailed information.
- Copies of Racial Impact Reports and summaries must be passed to the Equalities Officer enabling relevant information to be included in the Race Equality Scheme.

STC Race Equality Policy and Statement

THE RACE EQUALITY SCHEME

A Race Equality Scheme is a strategy and action plan summarizing Sedgefield Town Council's approach to race equality. The intent is to demonstrate how STC will meet its duties under the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000.

STC'S COMMITMENT TO EQUALITIES

The Race Equality Scheme forms part of STC's commitment to a general equality strategy in accordance with its Equality Policy.

1 RACE EQUALITY VALUES AND STRATEGIC AIMS

- The race equality values and strategic aims of the council are encompassed within its Equality Policy.
- Ownership of equality issues lies with the Town Clerk and Chairs/Vice-Chairs of each committee. It is the responsibility of each to ensure the implementation of the Race Equality Scheme within their committee.
- The Town Clerk is responsible for publication of the Race Equality Scheme and update it based on information received.

2 HOW THE COUNCIL WILL MEET THE GENERAL DUTY UNDER THE RACE RELATIONS (AMENDMENT) ACT 2000

2.1 The council has a legal obligation to:

- Eliminate unlawful racial discrimination
- Promote equality of opportunity
- Promote good race relations between persons of different racial groups

These requirements are known as the General Duty, and to meet the duty the council will:

- Identify which of its policies and services are relevant to race equality
- Prioritise them.
- Assess their impact on race equality
- Consider making changes to them to meet the General Duty
- Examine its employment policies in a similar manner

- Monitor relevant policies, and services
- 2.2 Where the results of monitoring exercises indicate an adverse impact on ethnic minorities, proportionate action will be taken to eliminate the inequality.
- 2.3 The aim of the council is to ensure achievement of the General Duty by following and fully introducing the processes and arrangements covered by the specific duties.

3 HOW THE COUNCIL WILL MEET THE SPECIFIC DUTIES.

- 3.1 The Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 places an obligation on the council to publish a Race Equality Scheme. This is known as a specific duty. The Scheme covers other specific duties.

A Race Equality Scheme shall state, in particular –

- (a) Those of its functions and policies, or proposed policies which STC has assessed as relevant to its performance of the duty imposed by section 71(1) of the Race Relations Act.
- (b) STC's arrangements for –
- (i) assessing and consulting on the likely impact of its proposed policies on the promotion of race equality;
 - (ii) monitoring its policies for any adverse impact on the promotion of race equality;
 - (iii) publishing the results of such assessments and consultation as are mentioned in sub-paragraph (i) and of such monitoring as is mentioned in sub-paragraph (ii);
 - (iv) ensuring public access to information and services which it provides
 - (v) training staff in connection with the duties imposed by section 71(1) of the Race Relations Act and this Order.

STC will within a period of three years from 31st May 2002, and within each further period of three years, review the assessment referred to earlier.

- 3.2 A concern for STC is that within its administrative area there is a very low ethnic minority population and no recognisable organisations that represent them. This presents a barrier for undertaking assessment, consultation and monitoring exercises. To overcome this, the council is looking at effective ways of reaching

the small communities that do exist and discovering their views on council services generally

4. Functions, policies and proposed policies

Current policies and functions identified as relevant need to be listed.

Proposed policies are those regarded as Key Decisions, and change throughout the year. Key Decisions are published with the council agenda and minutes each month. Agendas are posted on the Council notice board:

5. Assessing and consulting on proposed policies to promote race equality

The agreed course of action to cover this will be compiled.

6. Publishing results of assessments, consultations and monitoring

It is the intention of the council to follow the Commission for Racial Equality guidelines on publication. Written details on every assessment, consultation and monitoring exercise should be available to anyone who asks for them. This may be in the form of a racial impact report, or in the case of current policy where no impact was identified, how this was concluded. Summaries should be published and distributed more widely e.g. through the Sedgefield Extra and annually in the Race Equality Scheme, and Annual report.

7. Ensuring public access to information and services.

One of the three objectives in establishing a Town Council website is to provide citizens with information about the council and the services it provides. The site can be accessed at www.sedgefield.net

The website will contain a copy of the Race Equality Scheme supplying information on how the council is meeting its duties under the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000, and using the Sedgefield Extra, the council communicates information to people who live and work in its administrative area.

8. Review the Race Equality Scheme

The Town Clerk will administer the scheme.

This will consist of:

- Annual publication of monitoring results and policy review

- Ensuring the scheme is updated on an annual basis
- A concern for the council is finding a way to engage the ethnic minority community. With no recognized groups to approach the council is seeking to encourage individuals to come forward.
- To engage the ethnic minority population of Sedgefield in consultation the council will invite people to come forward through their Councillors and by publicizing such through articles in the Sedgefield Extra.

Implementing the Strategy

WHAT THE RACIAL IMPACT REPORT MUST DEMONSTRATE ASSESSMENT

Questions to be addressed during the assessment phase are:

- Will the policy have a different impact on any racial group?
- Will it contribute to good race relations?

Some approaches to assessment can be:

- Relevant past data
- Relevant research findings
- Population data, including census findings
- Comparisons with similar policies in other authorities
- Survey results
- Ethnic data from monitoring processes e.g. service delivery
- One-off data gathering exercises
- Specially commissioned research

The findings should say whether and how the policy should be revised in the light of the assessment.

CONSULTATION

If a robust assessment process demonstrates there is no adverse impact on ethnic minorities and that it will not harm race equality, there is no need to enter into consultation. Where the assessment process shows there may be an impact, the results would form the basis for consultation and the method of consultation.

The aims and objectives of consultation should be to ensure:

- People's views are used to shape the decision making process
- The exercise represents the views of those who are likely to be affected by the policy
- The consultation method is suitable for both the topic and the groups involved
- The exercise is in proportion to the effect that the policy is likely to have
- The consultation's aims are clearly explained

- The consultation exercise is properly time-tabled
- The consultation methods are monitored and if necessary, amended
- The consultation's findings are published

In addition to relevant stakeholders, anyone in the area who has an interest in promoting race equality should be invited into the consultation process. This may include individuals, community groups, associations, and corporate teams. Those consulted should include:

- Groups who are new to the country such as refugees and asylum-seekers
- Long-standing groups with a history of poor relations with public authorities such as Gypsies and Travellers
- Women
- Young People
- Ethnic minority businesses
- Relatively isolated families or individuals
- People who live in one area and work in another, so have needs in both

Methods of consultation include:

- Consultation meetings
- Focus groups
- Reference groups
- Citizens' juries
- Public scrutiny
- Surveys

The Commission for Racial Equality recommends the following practices:

- Hold meetings in local neighborhoods; because this is the level at which most people have concerns.
- Keep the meetings informal, as people can feel uncomfortable and shy in formal situations.
- Hold separate meetings for particular ethnic minority communities, and also for particular groups within those communities, such as young people, women, Gypsies and Travellers.

- Ask local ethnic minority community associations and racial equality councils to help you organize these meetings, possibly jointly.
- Use community venues wherever possible, and check that dates, times and venues (for example licensed premises) do not clash with religious customs or festivals.
- Use focus groups, reference groups and citizens' juries, so that you can explore particular issues in greater detail with selected individuals.
- Use written questionnaires or interview surveys to reach a wider audience, or a particular cross-section of the local population.
- Translate all relevant consultation material into the main community languages, and arrange for interpreters at meetings.
- Set up lay advisory groups for regular discussion and consultation and choose members for their particular skills or experience.

Consideration should be given to ensuring trade unions representing Council staff are aware of the policy on which consultation is taking place and are given the opportunity to comment.

If the assessment or consultation shows that the proposed policy is likely to have an adverse impact or harm race equality, the General Duty will not be met. In this case, the following questions need to be addressed:

- Can another way be found to meet the objectives of the policy?
- Can the policy be justified by its overall aims? If so, can the policy be adapted to compensate for any disadvantage?
- If some racial groups have distinct needs, can these be met, either within the proposed policy or by separate means?
- Is the policy harming good race relations?

Following consultation, significant changes to proposed policies should be resubmitted to the consultation process.

MONITORING

For policies affecting the General Duty, a monitoring system must complement the policy. In cases where the policy would result in service delivery, a system for recording ethnic data of service users must be implemented.

Monitoring systems should show what difference reviewing a policy has had (current policy) or how the policy affects ethnic minorities.

ASSESSING A POLICY OR SERVICE FOR COMPLIANCE WITH THE GENERAL DUTY

- Check that the policy is current, or in the case of a service that it is still provided. If the policy or service has been revised, ensure the current policy or service is that which is examined.
- Draft a statement of the aims and objectives for the policy or service.
- Make a list of the groups who are meant to benefit; for example under fives, unemployed people, homeless people, or people who receive fuel payments.
- Check whether the policy or service affects all racial groups equally. Look for any significant differences between the information available on the different racial groups in the population and the information you hold on the people served by the policy or service.

Sedgefield Town Council: RACE RELATIONS (AMENDMENT) ACT 2000 CURRENT POLICY / SERVICE ASSESSMENT FORM

POLICY/ SERVICE REVIEW DATE

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF POLICY / SERVICE

GROUPS THAT BENEFIT

SIGNIFICANT EFFECTS OF POLICY / SERVICE ON DIFFERENT RACIAL GROUPS

(Use data from any monitoring system that may be in place)

EVIDENCE FOR SIGNIFICANT EFFECTS OF POLICY (If none, it may be necessary to consult those who may be affected)

POSSIBLE REASONS FOR SIGNIFICANT EFFECTS

IS MONITORING SYSTEM REQUIRED AND IN PLACE?