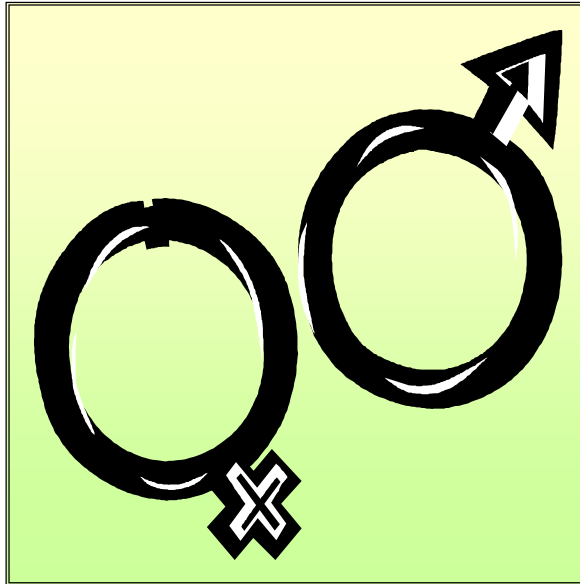


Uttlesford District Council
Gender Equality Scheme



June 2007

External Consultation Period: 28 March 2008 – 9 May 2008

If you require further information or would like this scheme in another format or language please contact:

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UTTLESFORD DISTRICT COUNCIL EQUALITY AND INCLUSION POLICY GENDER EQUALITY SCHEME

Promoting equality of opportunity in a diverse organisation is one of the Council's core values. The Council has a long term commitment to promoting gender equality and whilst the Gender Equality Scheme is a stand alone scheme it is an integral part of the Equalities and Inclusion Policy and can be found at Annexe C in the policy document. Please also see section 6 within the policy document.

This document focuses on the issue of Gender equality and has been produced in response to the Equality Act 2006, which amends the Sex Discrimination Act 1975. We recognise the need to promote gender equality and are committed to achieving positive outcomes on the whole range of equalities issues. The Gender Equality Scheme should be seen as forming part of a broader equalities policy putting it at the centre of policy making, service delivery, regulation and enforcement and employment practice.

1.0 The Sex Discrimination Act 1975 and The Equal Pay Act 1970

- 1.1 The Sex Discrimination Act 1975, as amended by The Equality Act 2006 places on public authorities a general statutory duty to eliminate unlawful discrimination and harassment and to promote equality of opportunity between men and women. The Act also covers discrimination against people who are undergoing or intending to undergo gender reassignment.
- 1.2 Under the Equal Pay Act 1970, it is illegal to pay one sex less than the other for work of equal value. Below are some statements, which describe how the council will work to achieve the legislative requirements.

2.0 The General Duty

- 2.1 The general duty is the overall duty to eliminate discrimination and harassment and to promote equality. It places an enforceable legal duty on the council when carrying out all its functions, to have due regard to the need:
 - to eliminate unlawful discrimination and harassment
 - to promote equality of opportunity between men and women.

3.0 The Specific Duties

- 3.1 Underpinning the general duty there are specific duties that must be implemented in addition to what is done to fulfil the general duty.
- 3.2 The Council has a specific duty to:
 - i. produce and implement a Gender Equality Scheme and action plan identifying its gender equality goals and actions to be implemented within 3 years (unless unreasonable/impracticable) This document forms our Gender Equality Scheme.

- ii. work in consultation with stakeholders (ie employees, service users, trade unions and others).
- iii. monitor and review progress by producing a yearly report with a full review of the scheme at least every three years
- iv. develop, publish and regularly review an equal pay policy, including measures to address promotion, development and gender balance within the Council to ensure there is no gender pay gap.
- v. conduct and publish equality impact assessments of all major current and proposed policies, and publish its criteria for conducting such impact assessments.

3.3 The duty applies to the Council in three ways:

- i through all policy-making functions
- ii through the Council's role as an employer
- iii through the Council's role as a local service provider (including work carried out by our contractors in relation to service provision).

3.4 In our Gender Equality Scheme we intend to clarify our arrangements for doing this and let you know how you can access the results of these monitoring exercises.

3.5 The Equality Act 2006 sets out our approach to the general and specific duties over a three year period. Our timetable for assessing our services will be spread over this time scale.

4.0 Our Vision

4.1 Our vision is to be the pre-eminent small district council by 2011. Our commitment is that we will have maintained and built upon our record as an inclusive place, where all people, whether resident or visitor are treated fairly, equally and with respect and where diversity is acknowledged as one of the Districts key strengths. Uttlesford is a rural district and we recognise the importance of social inclusion in all forms and aim to ensure that a continuing community spirit is embraced.

5.0 Our Scheme Objectives

5.1 This Scheme states our commitment to fulfil our statutory duties under the Equality Act 2006 by eliminating unlawful gender discrimination and harassment, promoting equality of opportunity between men, women, boys and girls within the community and ensuring that equality for people of different gender groups are embedded into the culture of the Council.

- 5.2 This Scheme is part of our wider commitment to equality and diversity issues, but focuses specifically on gender equality.
- 5.3 This Scheme identifies the ways in which we plan to influence practice, it complements our mainstream activities with regard to service provision for people of different gender groups and provides a platform for us to identify;
- Our priorities in relation to gender equality.
 - How we plan to improve the accessibility of services.
 - The timescale to achieve improvements.
 - What we expect the outcomes to be.
- 5.4 This Scheme has been devised and developed in consultation with the community, councillors and staff. It is our intention to inform the whole community on how we will deal with gender issues, including the services we commission, staff, voluntary organisations, specialist groups and the public. We are also keen to monitor and evaluate in which areas the Scheme is successful and those which require improvement.

6.0 Our Strategy

- 6.1 We aim to be sensitive to the needs of the diverse communities that we serve and to provide facilities and services that are free from unlawful discrimination. We recognise our position as a large provider of services and employer in the District and our particular role in the community.
- 6.2 In addition to the intentions contained in our other equalities policies and schemes, we also intend to promote equality of provision in council services and equal treatment of all our employees and job applicants without reference to gender, HIV status, marital status or sexual orientation.
- 6.3 All services we provide directly or by our contractors, partners or related agencies, are covered by the council's commitment as are all permanent, temporary and casual employees and all job applicants. Additionally, our service providers are committed to producing their own service equality statements, giving details of how their services comply with equal opportunities best practice.
- 6.4 We are committed to providing services to the community which reflect the needs and diversity of all our customers and service users. We recognise that discrimination in society exists and seek to provide services fairly to all.
- 6.5 We have an equal opportunities policy, and an equal opportunities in employment policy, which confirm our commitment to tackling discrimination in the services we provide and in the way we treat our staff.
- 6.6 To fulfil our commitment to equal opportunities we will:
- Engage in meaningful consultation with the communities we serve.

- Ensure our workforce is sensitive to the needs of service users and customers, and act on their comments, suggestions and complaints.
- Ensure as far as possible that our services reflect the diverse needs of the community.
- Demonstrate achievements in this area against agreed performance indicators, which are identified in the action plan.

We believe it should be the responsibility of managers and supervisors to:

- Develop and implement equal opportunities action plans.
- Review the effectiveness of the equal opportunities policy and all related action plans, and communicate their findings to senior management.
- Ensure that within their areas of responsibility the standards established within this policy and related policies are followed.

All employees are bound by this commitment and must:

- Co-operate with any measures introduced to ensure equal opportunity.
- Report any suspected discriminatory acts or practices.
- Not persuade or attempt to persuade others to practice unlawful discrimination.
- Not harass, abuse or intimidate others on account of their gender, HIV status, marital status, sexual orientation, or on account of their age, colour, disability, ethnic origin, faith, nationality or race.

7.0 Our priorities

- To challenge any gender discrimination or harassment in our District by ensuring all staff are able to recognise and challenge any patronising or discriminating attitudes and behaviours, and to identify and rectify any gender-related discrimination in our Service provision.
- Deal promptly with issues of harassment and sexual harassment of staff, service users, contractors and others, that may be occurring and to challenge those situations according to agreed procedures.
- To promote and implement gender equality of opportunity in our district by actively seeking to consult relevant groups, and acting where possible, upon their recommendations.
- To create a culture amongst members and officers where there is awareness and understanding of gender equality issues offering high quality training as necessary.
- To implement the findings of our Equal Pay Review and to ensure that employees are rewarded equally and fairly.
- To support and value transgender people as staff and potential staff by identifying and removing barriers to recruitment and retention.
- To make every effort to ensure our workforce represents the gender make up of our district by reviewing the wording and placement of our recruitment practices and initiatives.
- To ensure our service users reflect the gender make up of our district.
- To support and value transgender people who use our services, by identifying and removing any barriers.

8.0 How we act as an Agent of Procurement

8.1 We define our contractors as other agents and/or partners through whom we provide services for the Council and to the residents of Uttlesford.

8.2 Under the Equality Act we must ensure that our contractors neither discriminate within their employment practices nor through the delivery of services. The responsibility for ensuring compliance with relevant legislation and guidance remains with us and we must ensure that we are fulfilling the general duty even when discharging our functions through others.

8.3 We intend to review our current procurement structure and processes and ensure we have a clear policy on how procurement is managed. We will ensure that contractors are aware of the scheme and of what we require of them in the way they carry out business on our behalf.

8.4 We are working towards ensuring that:

- Contracts are delivered in non-discriminatory ways.
- Contracts promote equality of opportunity for staff, the public and businesses.
- Services delivered meet the needs of all the communities concerned.
- Gender groups demonstrate the same levels of customer satisfaction with services provided.
- Contractors reflect the diversity of the District's community and are drawn from this where possible.
- Contractors demonstrate their commitment to gender equality and show how they are achieving it within their organisation.

9.0 How we act as a Partner

9.1 Similar considerations concerning equal opportunities will be taken into account when we form partnerships with other organisations as and when we procure services from them. We must ensure that any organisation we form a partnership with complies with the general and specific duties when they are applicable.

10.0 How we act as an Employer

10.1 We will carry out impact assessments of our employment policies, procedures and practice and implement any changes required.

10.2 We are committed to, and working towards, the provision of full equality of opportunity for our staff. We strive to eliminate all forms of discrimination and harassment. We recognise that this requires our commitment to remove any potentially unfair treatment, and also requires us to review our policies and where appropriate to take positive action to redress any previous inequalities produced by past discrimination and harassment.

10.3 All employees are expected to contribute to the achievement of this objective and we will ensure that individuals are aware of their personal and professional responsibility to support equal opportunities in employment.

10.4 The Chief Executive will take active steps to ensure this commitment is implemented throughout the organisation and that policies connected with it are monitored, evaluated, reviewed and, where necessary, amended, on a regular basis.

10.5 To fulfil our commitment to equal opportunities in employment we will:

- Make the best possible use of the skills, talents and abilities of all employees.
- Encourage and nurture the twin concepts of respect for individual rights and diversity in the workforce.
- Demonstrate achievements in our promotion of gender issues against agreed performance indicators set out in our action plan.

To ensure adherence to our Equal Opportunities Policy¹ in respect of employment matters it is the responsibility of managers and supervisors to:

- Assist in the development and implementation of equal opportunities action plans and the impact assessment process.
- Review the effectiveness of the equal opportunities policy and all related action plans and communicate their findings to senior management.
- Ensure that within their areas of responsibility the standards established by this document and other related policies, such as those on harassment, are followed.

The Council expects that all employees will:

- Cooperate with any measures introduced to ensure equal opportunity.
- Report any suspected discriminatory acts or practices.
- Not persuade or attempt to persuade others to practice unlawful discrimination.
- Not victimise others for reporting or providing evidence of discrimination.
- Not harass, abuse, or intimidate others.
- Not lobby job applicants in an attempt to discourage them from applying for or accepting a particular job.

10.6 We have a specific Harassment and Bullying Policy & Procedure². We are committed to creating a working environment where employees do not suffer harassment or bullying on any grounds. Sexual harassment is not tolerated by the Council and specific procedures deal with such allegations. All employees have the right to be treated with dignity and respect and have an equal responsibility to treat each other and members of the public with dignity and respect.

11.0 Monitoring in the Workplace

11.1 We currently monitor our workforce in line with current legislation which fulfils one of the Equality Act specific duties. We collect data including information on ethnic origin, gender and disability relating to:

- Staff in post,
- Applicants for jobs,
- Staff involved in grievance and disciplinary procedures,

We also currently record details of

- Staff who take part in performance review,
- Staff development, learning needs and training provision
- Staff who leave the authority

We are aware that we do not currently monitor on the full gender remit, and we will consult the workforce to ascertain their views on the need to enhance the level of monitoring in this respect.

The results of this monitoring will be used to inform the development of corporate employment policy and to support the impact assessment process. They will also be published in an annual report to members.

12.0 Training

12.1 We believe that our most valuable resource is our workforce. We recognise the strength that can be found in diversity and are therefore committed to equal access to development opportunities for all staff.

We recognise the importance of equality and diversity training in helping officers and elected members of the Council understand their duties and responsibilities towards the public and each other. We aim to create a culture where diversity is truly valued and is seen as an asset to deliver all the Councils objectives.

12.2 We already have employment policies and practices in place to support and monitor gender equality and eliminate all forms of harassment including sexual harassment and discrimination in the workplace.

12.3 We have an induction process and performance review scheme in place to ensure that we work with staff on an individual basis to understand their personal training and development needs and identify appropriate actions.

We have an ongoing programme of awareness raising on the issues of equality and diversity and on the implications of the Equalities Act. 2006.

13.0 Internal Complaints

13.1 Any breaches of our Equal Opportunities in Employment Policy will be dealt with through the Council's Disciplinary Policy.

- 13.2 Any employee who has a concern with regard to their employment, treatment or terms and conditions,(with notable exceptions detailed in the Grievance Policy), should normally make use of the Council's Grievance Procedure³ in the first instance. Staff concerned over the treatment of others should use either the Harassment and Bullying Policy and Procedure, or the Confidential Reporting Code⁴, as appropriate.
- 13.3 Candidates for employment who believe they have been subjected to unlawful or unfair discrimination during a selection procedure should raise the matter formally under the terms of our formal Complaints Procedure⁵.
- 13.4 Whilst we will make every effort to resolve complaints via our internal mechanisms we also recognise the right of employees and candidates for employment to pursue a case through the provisions of the relevant equal opportunities or anti discrimination legislation.
- 13.5 Our Harassment and Bullying Policy and Procedure sets out our policy and procedure for resolving complaints by employees of harassment, intimidation and bullying in the workplace, which may relate to their gender including transsexuals, sexual orientation, real or suspected HIV/AIDS, or which may relate to their colour, race, ethnic origin or nationality, faith/religion or political beliefs, disability, status as ex-offenders, health, physical characteristics, age, membership or non-membership of a trade union, or social class. Complaints about harassment/bullying will be taken seriously and as far as possible managed speedily and confidentially. Every effort will be made to resolve issues informally in the first instance. Where this is not possible a formal investigation will commence.
- 13.6 We have a 'whistle blowing' procedure, which extends the protection for employees who want to report bad practice without fear of being victimised as a result.

14.0 Involving People

- 14.1 At the heart of the Equality Act is the requirement to involve people of different gender groups in producing the Scheme including the Action Plan. We have an ongoing commitment to identify relevant people and groups and, once identified, we will work to give people of different gender groups the opportunity to comment on how services are best developed and delivered.
- 14.2 We want to involve people of different gender groups including transgender people where possible, by contacting individuals and organisations of such groups within and around the district.

15.0 Plan of Action

- 15.1 Gender Groups are defined in the UDC Equalities and Inclusion Policy as including men, women and transgender people and those who are undergoing or intending to undergo gender reassignment.

15.2 As part of the Gender Equality Scheme, we have produced an action plan which will reflect the;

Priorities of people of different gender groups.
Our strategic priorities.
Specific outcomes to be achieved.
Timescales in which these can be achieved.

15.3 A number of themes have been considered from information gathering exercises. From these themes a number of implementation plans have been produced. These plans acknowledge both the priorities of people of different gender groups and our strategic priorities as follows;

- Working to identify different gender groups and representatives of diverse groups in the District.
- Making sure that the views of people of different gender groups are represented, ensuring that their views are listened to, and are actioned.
- Accessibility of our information, services, and job opportunities in relation to equality. We wish to close the gaps in people of different gender groups' experiences and opportunities. In this way we aim to remove the barriers to access that some people often experience so that information, services, and job opportunities are equally available to everyone in the community.
- Improving services to ensure that they are more inclusive by taking positive steps to eliminate discrimination and harassment and provide services which are sensitive to the needs of people of different gender groups.

16.0 Equality Impact Assessments

16.1 In line with the Equality Standard for Local Government, our Equality Impact Assessment framework will help ensure that our activities;

Do not disadvantage people of different gender groups,
Identify potential barriers in advance and
Best promote equality of opportunity.

16.2 We recognise that this is an area which requires a lot of commitment in terms of staff resources and time. To this end it has been agreed that each of our service areas will have its own timetable for undertaking Equality Impact Assessments. Where the assessment identifies a negative impact or missed opportunity to achieve a more positive impact, we will look at what can be done to rectify the situation.

16.3 We will review the Scheme, the Equality Impact Assessment and Actions Plans annually.

17.0 The Gender Equality Scheme seeks to

- Encourage and promote the fair employment of people of different gender groups within the organisation and the community.

- Monitor our pay structure and employment policies for compliance with the Equality Act.
- Ensure procedures are in place to tackle crime and anti social behaviour motivated by gender issues by linking with organisations, the police and fire services.
- Signpost people to services and groups within the community and by providing a central information source to serve the district.
- Ensure that we can respond to the information needs for anyone within our community and ensure that the information provided is in the correct format and/or language for the user in order to promote inclusion.

18.0 Responsibilities for the Gender Equality Scheme

- 18.1 We aim to ensure full commitment to, implementation of, and responsibility for this Gender Equality Scheme.
- 18.2 Overall responsibility for the establishment and approval of the Scheme is held by the Full Council. The Performance Select Committee is responsible for the results of its implementation, and for monitoring the more detailed aspects of this.
- 18.3 Responsibility is held by our Strategic Management Board and supported by other officers of the Council. Heads of Division are responsible for the delivery of commitments made in the Scheme on a service-by-service level and for carrying out impact assessments and action planning.

19.0 Action Plan

Timetable in accordance with the consultation programme

Requirement	Evidence/Action	Who to do	Resource	Timetable
Initial consult on draft Gender Equality Scheme	Pass to Consultative bodies	Jane Elsom/Victoria Borges/Sophie Walker to liaise	Gender EQ sub group and ESWG	5 January 2008 – 16 February 2008
Public and internal consultation period on Gender Equality Scheme	Suitable formats to be available, suitable venues, transport etc	Communications Group	ESWG	5 January 2008 – 16 February 2008
Gender Equality Scheme	All amendments incorporated	ESWG, SMB, HoDs	ESWG, SMB, HoDs	April 2008
Approval of Gender Equality Scheme	Gender Equality Scheme	Full Council	Members	May 2008

Measure the promotion of gender equality within the employment field both within the organisation and the community	Link with Access to work, Social Services, Job Centre Plus, business and community organisations	Present through seminars, the Economic Group of the LSP, ESWG	ESWG and Communications Group	2009
Arrange a further sub-group to review/develop this Scheme annually	Continuing involvement with the above groups	Feedback through LSP and ESWG	ESWG to monitor	
Ensure procedures are in place to tackle crime and anti social behaviour motivated by Gender/transgender issues by linking with organisations and the police services	Link with internal groups within the authority and the LSP	Community Safety Officer and ASBO Officer and subgroup steer	ESWG to monitor	2009
Signposting people to services and groups within the community	The Council for Voluntary Services Uttlesford has an officer who could assist with this work along with the work being done through u-connect and the CRM system	Information between the two areas needs to be shared for the benefit of both organisations and the community	ESWG subgroup, Customer Service Centre Manager and LSP representative	2009
Ensuring that the District Council can respond to the information needs for anyone within its community of different gender groups	Although this will not necessarily sit within the requirement for us to produce documentation in alternative formats, it may be that we need to respond to requests for specific information which relate to the requirements of gender groups.	All documentation to be reviewed. This will form part of the impact assessment work carried out by the authority. A strategy is already in place to support such requests. This will be monitored.	ESWG, HoDs, Claire Croft	Ongoing
Impact Assessments	All policies and procedures to be impact assessed	HoDs	SMB, ESWG	Divisional timetables

Annual Review of Gender Equality Scheme	Statutory Requirement			June 2008
Annual Report to Members	Gender monitoring data	HR		May 2009
Publish annual report				May 2009

¹ Personnel Policy Note No.11

² Personnel Policy Note No.13

³ Personnel Policy Note No.3

⁴ Personnel Policy Note No.61

⁵ Corporate Complaints Management Policy (UDCP 001)

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