

PERFORMANCE PORTFOLIO DECISION SCHEDULE



Friday 27th March 2009

at 3.00 pm

in Committee Room A
Civic Centre, Hartlepool

Councillor Hargreaves, Cabinet Member responsible for Performance will consider the following items.

1. **KEY DECISIONS**

No items

2. **OTHER ITEMS REQUIRING DECISION**

- 2.1 Review of Locally Set Fees in the Registration Service – *Assistant Chief Executive*
- 2.2 Revised Qualification Based Training Policy – *Chief Personnel Officer*
- 2.3 Members' ICT Project – *Chief Personnel Officer*

3. **ITEMS FOR INFORMATION**

- 3.1 Equality Mark Level 3 Assessment – *Chief Personnel Officer*

4. **REPORTS FROM OVERVIEW OF SCRUTINY FORUMS**

No items

PERFORMANCE PORTFOLIO

Report to Portfolio Holder

27TH MARCH 2009

Report of: Assistant Chief Executive

Subject: REVIEW OF LOCALLY SET FEES IN THE
REGISTRATION SERVICE

SUMMARY

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

The purpose of the report is to request an increase in the locally set fees for services provided by the Register Office.

2. SUMMARY OF CONTENTS

It is proposed that most fees are increased between 2% and 5%, broadly in line with inflation over the year, and take account of the levels of fees set by neighbouring authorities. There are a number of exceptions explained in section 3 of the report, some of which are a consequence of decisions taken by the Portfolio holder in 2007.

3 RELEVANCE TO PORTFOLIO HOLDER

The Registration Services form part of this portfolio.

4 TYPE OF DECISION

Non-key

5 DECISION MAKING ROUTE

Portfolio holder only.

6 DECISION(S) REQUIRED

Approve the changes to non statutory fees and financial procedures as outlined in section 3 and Appendix A.

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Report of: Assistant Chief Executive

Subject: REVIEW OF LOCALLY SET FEES IN THE
REGISTRATION SERVICE

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1 The purpose of the report is to request an increase in the locally set fees for services provided by the Register Office.

2. PROPOSED INCREASES IN LOCALY SET FEES EFFECTIVE 1ST APRIL 2009

2.1 There are six distinct groups of locally set fees: marriages and civil partnerships in Approved Premises, including The Willows which is in the Register Office; alternative civil ceremonies such as baby naming and renewal of vows; individual Citizenship ceremonies; Approval of Premises for Civil Marriage and Civil Partnerships; the Nationality Checking Service and Express Same Day Issue additional fee for certificates.

2.2 It is proposed that most fees are increased between 2% and 5%, broadly in line with inflation over the year, and take account of the levels of fees set by neighbouring authorities. There are a number of exceptions explained in section 3, some of which are a consequence of decisions taken by the Portfolio holder in 2007. See Appendix A for full details of the fee increases.

2.3 Locally set non statutory registration service fees in Hartlepool are set to recover the true cost of providing the individual services whilst ensuring that the services remain affordable to all; fees remain competitive in the North East and indeed nationally based on available data. A comparison table is attached at Appendix C.

3. EXCEPTIONS

- 3.1 The exceptions to this approach are outlined below.
- 3.2 For fees for marriages in the Willows during normal office hours Monday to Friday, a 3 year phased increase was agreed at Performance Management Portfolio on 29/01/2007 and subject of an update at Performance Management Portfolio on 26/02/2007. The update report and recommendations agreed a phased increase in fees over a 3 year period. The decisions from these meetings are included as appendix D. This approach was agreed to bring charges for these services up to a more realistic level in relation to costs. The proposed increase of 12.7% for this third year completes the 3-year phased process. Fees for ceremonies in The Willows during normal working hours, including Saturday morning, are not set to recover the full true cost of the service but rather achieve a fair and reasonable balance in the market. They remain below the average of neighbouring authorities. This increase does not affect the statutory fee for a simple ceremony in the Register Office.
- 3.3 The fee for marriages in the Willows on Saturday morning to 11.30am and outside office hours Monday to Friday is proposed to increase by 12.3%. This again is to bring charges to a more realistic level. The fee remains below average compared with neighbouring authorities.
- 3.4 The Saturday fee for marriage ceremonies between 12.00 noon and 12.30 has not been recommended for increase this year. This is because it is recommended that the Saturday morning to 11.30am and this fee be equalised as one fee for all ceremonies up to 12.00 noon in 2010/11. This will simplify the fee structure. This is a phased approach to equalising the two fees.
- 3.5 The market is seeing fees increase on the prime marriage days Friday and Saturday. In line with the Portfolio holder's decision in 2007 no separate fee has been set for Friday but it is recommended that this be reviewed separately from Monday to Thursday fees in 2010/11.
- 3.6 The advanced ceremony booking fee and express service delivery charge have been both left unchanged. They are for relatively small amounts of money and it suggested they are only reviewed periodically to avoid small inconvenient increases.

21 Performance 27.03.09 Review of locally set fees in the registration service.doc

- 3.7 There was no increase in the Nationality Checking Service fee in 2008/9 although the fee structure was simplified. Therefore an increase of 6.7% is recommended this year. If numbers of service users remains steady this will recover the cost of the service yet remains competitive in the region.
- 3.8 All the proposed increases are contained in Appendix A and a full list of fees in Appendix B.

4. STATUTORY FEE CHANGES BY CENTRAL GOVERNMENT

- 4.1 Central Government have not yet made any announcement about changes to the statutory fees for 2009/10.

5. RISKS

- 5.1 The income has reduced in recent years, estimated to be down in 2008/9 to £121,000 from the peak in 2005/6 of £128,000, but has recovered from a low of £115,000 in 2006/7. This is in part because changes to passport regulation have worked through the system resulting in less demand for birth certificates and marriage numbers continue to fall year on year. This has been offset to some extent as new services such as Nationality Checking Service have been introduced... In 2008/9 the changes to maternity services further reduced income by approximately £8,000 as the fees for registration and certificate issue will go to Stockton BC because the maternity facility is now located in Stockton, although Hartlepool Registration Service will continue to have undertake most of the work. The development of the new hospital on a Hartlepool site would help the service.
- 5.2 Provision of the registration service in Hartlepool is kept review in order to address this and other issues. Setting the fees at an appropriate level will help maintain income levels and contribute towards addressing the Council's overall budget situation. Total fee income is a significant element of the business plan covering approximately 50% of gross costs.
- 5.3 The Service Delivery Inspection report by General Register Office in December 2008 rated the service as Good and highlighted the good

quality of customer care. They did however recommend seeking legal opinion on the non statutory charge levied for 'Express Same Day Issue' of certificates. Legal Services have been consulted and the opinion given was that this, and other non statutory fees, were all covered by the provisions of the 2003 Local Government Act and were therefore lawful subject to a duty to secure that taking one financial year with another the income generated from charges does not exceed the cost of the provision of the services in question. The fee is set at £3.00; this is set to contribute to staffing costs. Other authorities are also charging for such a service (e.g. Newcastle). The £3 charge is at the lower end of charges being levied. Take up of the service is high and customer reaction has not been negative.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 6.1 That the Portfolio Holder approve the changes to non statutory fees and financial procedures as outlined in section 3 and Appendix A.

7. CONTACT OFFICER

- 7.1 Peter Spires
Registration Services Manager
01429 236369

Appendix A

Recommended changes to registration service fees effective 1st April 2009.

N.B. All marriage and civil partnership fees exclude the statutory certificate fee of £3.50 per certificate.

Marriages and Civil Partnerships in approved Premises

	2008/9 Fee	Proposed 2009/10 Fee	Percentage increase
Office Hours Monday to Friday:	£256.50	£266.50	3.9
Out of Office Hours Monday to Friday: and all day Saturday:	£296.50	£306.50	3.4
Sundays and Bank Holidays:	£376.50	£386.50	2.7

Marriages and Civil Partnerships in The Willows

(Approved Premise, formerly The Register Office Marriage Suite)

	2008/9 Fee	Proposed 2009/10 Fee	Percentage increase
Office Hours Monday to Friday:	£55.00	£62.00	12.7
Out of Office Hours Monday to Friday: and Saturday to 11.30 am.:	£81.50	£91.50	12.3
Saturday from 12.00 noon to 12.30 pm:	£116.50	£116.50	0
Saturday from 1.00 pm:	£196.50	£206.50	5.1
Sunday / Public Holiday	£301.50	£311.50	3.3
Advance ceremony booking fee	£15.00	£15.00	0

Alternative Civil Ceremonies
(i.e. Naming, Renewal, Commitment)

	2008/9 Fee	Proposed 2009/10 Fee	Percentage increase
Office Hours Monday to Friday:	£150.00	£155.00	3.2
Out of Office Hours Monday to Friday: and all day Saturday:	£205.00	£212.00	3.4
Sundays and Bank Holidays:	£240.00	£245.00	2.1
* Inspection of other premises	£35.00	£36.00	2.9

Individual Citizenship Ceremonies
In the Willows or Register Office

	2008/9 Fee	Proposed 2009/10 Fee	
Office Hours Monday to Friday:	£55.00	£57.00	3.6
Out of Office Hours Monday to Friday: and all day Saturday:	£77.00	£80.00	3.9
Sundays and Bank Holidays:	£155.00	£160.00	3.1

Individual Citizenship Ceremonies
At an approved premise

	2008/9 Fee	Proposed 2009/10 Fee	
Office Hours Monday to Friday:	£93.00	£96.00	3.2
Out of Office Hours Monday to Friday: and all day Saturday:	£108.00	£112.00	3.7
Sundays and Bank Holidays:	£185.00	£190.00	2.7

Group citizenship ceremonies are held quarterly at no charge

* Alternative civil ceremonies and citizenship ceremonies may also be held in other suitable external premises subject to a brief inspection by the Registration Service Manager in line with the guidance by our partner organisation, Civil Ceremonies Ltd., for an additional fee of **£36.00**.

Approval of premises for marriage and Civil Partnership.

	2008/9 Fee	Proposed 2009/10 Fee	Percentage increase
Initial application / renewal application	£875.00	£900.00	2.9
Appeal against refusal to grant	£235.00	£240.00	2.1

Nationality Checking service.

	2008/9 Fee	Proposed 2009/10 Fee	Percentage increase
Adult single application	£45.00	£48.00	6.7
Each child under 18 applying jointly with, or separately from, parents	£15.00	£16.00	6.7

Birth Marriage and Death Certificate issue.

	2008/9 Fee	Proposed 2009/10 Fee	Percentage increase
Within five working days - Statutory fee, set by Central Gov't	(£7.00)	(£7.00)	n/a
Express Same Day Issue additional fee	£3.00	£3.00	0

A full list of recommended fees for 2009/10 is attached at Appendix B

Appendix B**Hartlepool Registration Service Fees 2008/9**

(1 April 2009 to 31 March 2010)

All marriage and civil partnership fees quoted show local fee plus statutory certificate fee and total fee for a ceremony with one certificate.

Marriages and Civil Partnerships

Register Office £40.00 + £3.50 = £43.50
(Monday to Friday & Saturday morning – statutory fee)

The Willows (decommissioned ceremony room)

Monday to Friday £62.00 + £3.50 =
£65.50

Saturday (up to & including 11.30pm) £91.50 + £3.50 =
£85.00

Saturday (from 12.00noon – 12/30 pm) £116.50 + £3.50 =
£120.50

Saturday (from 1.00 pm) £206.50 + £3.50 = £210.00

Sunday /Public Holiday £306.50 + £3.50 = £310.00

Approved Premises

Monday to Friday £266.50 + £3.50 = £270.00

Saturday £306.50 + £3.50 = £310.00

Sunday /Public Holiday £386.50 + £3.50 = £390.00

Total fees as above include one statutory certificate.

Additional certificates are available at £3.50 each, on the same day.

Advance booking fee

£15.00

Other Civil Ceremonies (inc: Naming Ceremonies and Renewal of Vows)**The Willows**

Monday to Friday	£155.00
Saturday	£212.00
Sunday /Public Holiday	£245.00

Approved Premises

Monday to Friday	£155.00
Saturday	£212.00
Sunday /Public Holiday	£245.00

Other suitable external premises

Monday to Friday	£190.00
Saturday	£247.00
Sunday /Public Holiday	£280.00

Civil Ceremony fees include one certificate. Additional certificates available at £3.50 each

Approved Premises Licence Fee

Approving premises as venues for Marriage and Civil Partnerships

£900.00

Renewing approval as venues for Marriage and Civil Partnerships

£900.00

Appeal against refusal to issue approval

£245.00

Citizenship Ceremonies – Individual.

*Including new **Citizenship Renewal Ceremonies***

The Willows (decommissioned ceremony room)

Monday to Friday	£57.00
Saturday	£80.00
Sunday /Public Holiday	£160.00

Approved Premises

Monday to Friday	£96.00
Saturday	£112.00
Sunday /Public Holiday	£190.00

Fee applies to an individual ceremony for one person or for all members of one family.

Nationality Checking Service

Adult application (per adult)	£48.00
Each child under 18	£16.00

Life Events certificate Issue

Certificates issued at statutory fees in five working days.

Express same day service additional fee over and above the statutory fee	£ 3.00
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Other Suitable Premises

Inspection of premise for a one off ceremony	£35.00
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Appendix C

Comparison of main non statutory fees for Marriages and Civil Partnerships – authorities used for comparison include Durham, Stockton, York, Gateshead, Sunderland, North Tyneside and Stockport

Hartlepool fees 2009/10

The Willows (decommissioned ceremony room)		Comparison	Average of fees on other authorities 2008/9 (No 2009/10 fees available for comparison)
Monday to Friday	£62.00 + £3.50	Below average	£75.00
Saturday (up to & including 11.30pm)	£91.50+ £3.50	Below average	£126.67
Saturday (from 12.00noon – 12/30 pm)	£116.50 + £3.50	About average	£112.00
Saturday (from 1.00 pm)	£206.50+ £3.50	About average	£177.50
Sunday/Public Holiday	£306.50 + £3.50	Above average	£231.00 (Service not available in all districts surveyed)
Approved Premises			
Monday to Friday	£266.50 + £3.50	About average	£288.33
Saturday	£306.50 + £3.50	About average	£332.17
Sunday/Public Holiday	£386.50 + £3.50	About average	£385.83

Appendix D

Previous decisions

29/1/2007

Review of non statutory fees in the Registration

Service (*Assistant Chief Executive*)

Type of decision

Non key.

Purpose of report

To request an increase in the locally set fees for non statutory services provided by the Register Office.

Issue(s) considered by the Portfolio Holder

The report described the current services and the appendices indicated the current fees and the proposed increases in fees for 2008/9. It was proposed that most fees be increased between 3 and 5%, broadly in line with inflation. The exception to this was a proposal to increase the fees for midweek marriage and civil partnership ceremonies in The Willows, formerly The Register Office marriage suite, be set to recover an increased proportion of the true cost of the service, in line with fees already set for Saturdays. The current fee being £40 and the proposed increase for 2007/08 was £56.50.

The Portfolio Holder expressed concern in relation to the proposed higher than inflation indicated above and as an alternative agreed the following:

Decision

The Portfolio Holder approved that fees for additional non statutory services be increased as outlined in the Appendix A to the report from 1st April 2007 **with the following exception**; Fees for midweek marriage and civil partnership ceremonies in The Willows be set to recover an increased proportion of the true cost of the service, and that authority be delegated to the Assistant Chief Executive to oversee the phased-in rise over a three year period as opposed to the proposal in the report that a one off increase of 35% be implemented from April 2007. The Portfolio Holder requested that a report on progress of this issue be brought to a future Portfolio meeting.

26/2/2007

Update on statutory fees in the Registration Service

(Assistant Chief Executive)

Type of decision

Non-key

Purpose of report

To provide the Portfolio Holder with an update on the revision of the locally set fees for non statutory services provided by the Register Office.

Issue(s) considered by the Portfolio Holder

The report briefly described the levels of fees set for mid week ceremonies in the Willows Ceremony Suite at Hartlepool Register Office and the impact on the budgets for 2007/08, 2008/09 and 2009/10.

Decision

The Portfolio Holder noted the phased fee increase and the predicted effect on the budget over the three years, 2007/08, 2008/09 and 2009/10.

PERFORMANCE PORTFOLIO

Report to Portfolio Holder

27th March 2009



Report of: Chief Personnel Officer

Subject: REVISED QUALIFICATION BASED TRAINING POLICY

SUMMARY

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1 To seek approval from the Portfolio Holder for the revised Qualification Based Training Policy.

2. SUMMARY OF CONTENTS

2.1 This report provides details of the corporate policy on post entry training.

3. RELEVANCE TO PORTFOLIO MEMBER

3.1 The Portfolio Holder is responsible for Workforce Development activity.

4. TYPE OF DECISION

4.1 Non-key

5. DECISION MAKING ROUTE

5.1 Portfolio meeting only.

6. DECISION(S) REQUIRED

6.1 Portfolio Holder approves the revised policy.

Report of: Chief Personnel Officer

Subject: REVISED QUALIFICATION BASED TRAINING POLICY

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To seek approval from the Portfolio Holder for the revised Qualification Based Training Policy.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 For a number of years, the Council has had a qualification based policy and procedure in place which is applied if an employee requests and is granted approval to undertake a recognised qualification outside of the normal corporate training programmes.
- 2.2 The process has a number of stages. Any development required that has been identified as part of the appraisal process has to be sourced externally if it cannot be provided as part of the corporate workforce development provision.
- 2.3 The current Qualification Based Training Guide was approved by the Portfolio Holder in 2007. At your meeting in February 2009, you requested that the policy be updated to reflect a requirement to refund any sums expended if the employee leaves within two years of completing the course. As a result of the training procurement project, two agreements now exist for qualification based training, one for if the qualification is delivered in-house e.g. by Adult Education and another for where a qualification is delivered externally e.g. at a university or college. The documents are very similar and the additional clauses have been added to both documents; however when a qualification is to be delivered externally a different set of information is required hence the introduction of the two agreements.
- 2.4 The proposed policy is attached at Appendix 1 along with the internal QBT agreement form. The external QBT agreement form is attached as Appendix 2. Both have been revised and checked with the Council's legal division, who have approved the additional wording / clauses added as a result of your request.
- 2.5 The actual wording that has been included on page 16 in Appendix 1 is:

If the employee leaves the Employer's employment within two years of completing the course for any reason other than the reasons

specified in clause 6 he/she will be required to refund all sums paid by the employer in respect of fees, subsistence, travel, books and other sundry payments identified in the table above for which the council has paid or is liable. For the avoidance of doubt, such refunds will be required where the Employee is leaving within 2 years to take up employment with another authority or is leaving as a result of taking voluntary retirement or voluntary redundancy.

- 2.6 This new policy will come into effect from 1st April 2009 for new agreements which commence after this date. Existing QBT agreements will continue under the old arrangements until they expire.

3. **RECOMMENDATION**

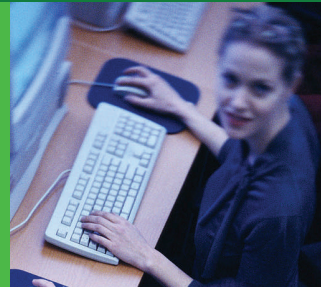
- 3.1 That the Portfolio Holder approves the revised Qualification Based Training policy.

3. **CONTACT OFFICER**

Lucy Armstrong
Corporate Workforce Development Manager
01429 523476 or lucy.armstrong@hartlepool.gov.uk



"creating tomorrow's
workforce today"



Qualification Based Training Guide 2009 (In-house Provision)

Content

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QBT In-House Provision—Application Form Part 1,2 & 3	
QBT In-House Provision—Approval Criteria	
QBT In-House Provision—Form of Undertaking	

Purpose

The aim of the Hartlepool Borough Council Qualification Based Training Policy is to assist employees in the continuation of their education by taking courses of study which will lead to qualifications appropriate to the future needs of both Hartlepool Borough Council and the individual, as seen at the time of their application.

Scope

This applies to all employees working at Hartlepool Borough Council.

Any aspect of the system can be modified by agreement between the Workforce Development Manager and relevant Director to take account of special individual circumstances. A summary of this decision must be kept in writing on the individuals personal file.

Responsibilities

Qualification based training involves a partnership between the in-house provider, student and the department. The role of each as described below is intended as a guide which departments may vary as required ensuring all aspects are covered, but the main responsibility for taking the initiative, lies with the student.

Training Provider

Provides appropriate instructions, staff resources and advice to enable students to study for and complete/gain qualification.

Student

- Identifies training need in appraisal/supervision
- Completes in-house [QBT Application Form Part 1](#) and forwards to line manager
- Completes and returns to Departmental Workforce Development Representative completed in-house [QBT Form of Undertaking](#)
- Attends all training sessions unless there is valid reason not to do so
- Completes all work required on time and to the best of their ability
- Raises any issues as soon as they arise to college staff, line managers, workforce development representative as appropriate
- Informs line manager as soon as possible regarding books required, residential or alterations to arrangements
- Must report any non attendance to their line manager as soon as possible and where appropriate in line with the procedure for sickness reporting and other appropriate procedures
- Makes best use of additional support

Responsibilities

Manager

- Identifies training need in appraisal/supervision
- Considers request for support
- Completes in-house [QBT Application Form Part 2](#) and forwards to Workforce Development Representative
- Discuss career/training plan with individual and Workforce Development Representative
- Ensures time off to attend course of study
- Monitors and reviews progress (in 1 to 1's and supervision)
- Makes additional learning opportunities/support available wherever possible
- Advises Workforce Development Representative of any changes/problems
- Checks attendance regularly

Departmental Workforce Development Representatives

- Ensures necessary departmental documentation is completed
- Ensures that qualification meets individual CPD requirements, job role, departmental objectives, equality across department and funding is available
- Collate completed QBT Application Forms and present to DMT for approval at an agreed time
- Organises course of study with in-house provider
- Ensures forms of undertaking are completed and returned (copy to be sent to Workforce Development Section)
- Receives absence and progress reports and notifies manager
- Records all monies paid out through invoices.
- Keeps training records

Departmental Management Team

- Completes in-house [QBT Application Form part 3](#) and approval criteria.

Corporate Workforce Development Section

- Monitors and reviews the qualification based training system
- Works with in house providers to influence the courses provided
- Offer training in best practice and the operation of this guide
- Reclamation of fees in accordance with the Form of Undertaking

Decision Making

Decision Making

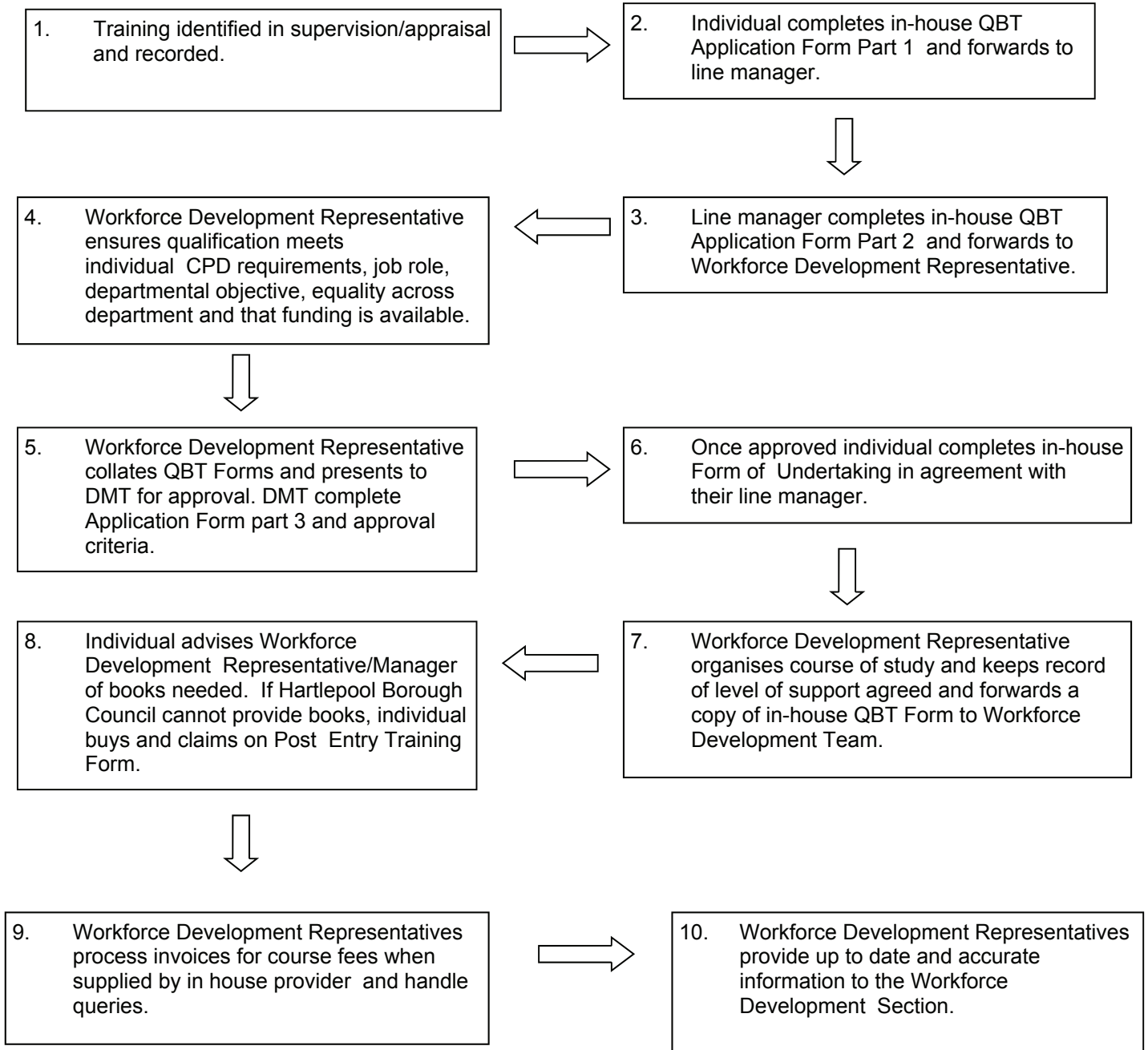
Power to approve support for qualification based training rests with the relevant Director. Variations from this scheme must be agreed jointly by the Workforce Development Manager and relevant Director. (They can also jointly modify the support available in individual cases where there are special circumstances).

Approval from the Portfolio holder for Performance is necessary if:

- The Workforce Development Manager/Director cannot agree
- The course is in some way unusual or outside the normal scope of the scheme
- The cost of the programme is unusually high
- The study method is open learning
- The course leads to qualification at Masters level or above

Application/Approval Process

Stages in Approval/Application Process



Course Fees

The Authority will normally pay all course fees, examination fees, registration fees, required by the course of study.

Membership Fees

Membership fees and charges for professional assessment will also be paid if these are an essential requirement of the course.

Travel and Subsistence

Travel and subsistence can be claimed for directly relevant course of study. See guidance: <http://hbcintranet/downloads/ReimbursementofTravelAccommodation&SubsistencePolicy.doc>

Managers must agree the amount of subsistence to be claimed for each attendance at college and this should be documented on the Form of Undertaking.

Travel and Subsistence allowances are not payable for attendance at any college in Hartlepool.

Training (inside normal work hours)

Paid time off to sit examinations will normally be granted and is calculated on the basis of travel time plus exam duration. For examinations lasting over two hours the figures should be rounded up to the nearest half day.

Paid time off to study for examinations will normally be granted and is equal to the amount of exam leave allowed. It must be taken no more than four weeks prior to the examination.

If a course involves a final project, one day's study leave will be granted (subject to manager's approval).

Residential/Block Training

Paid leave is also granted for compulsory residential elements of courses within the UK where these fall during the normal working week. Where such courses are held at the weekends individuals should discuss with managers.

Normal travel and subsistence allowances for employees apply for such events (where meals are provided subsistence cannot be paid).

All leave is granted subject to operational requirements, but it is not intended that it should be unreasonably refused.

Stationery

It is expected that students would be allowed to obtain reasonable amounts of stationery from departmental stocks (e.g. pens, paper, cardboard folders) in order to satisfy the requirements for their course.

Form of Undertaking

Students engaged on qualification-based training undertake to complete their course of study and then remain in local government service for two years. Before enrolling all students must complete an in house [QBT form of undertaking](#). Any student who abandons a course of study or leaves local government within two years of the course will be required to pay back money in respect of fees, subsistence, travel, books and other sundry payments for which the council has paid or is liable. Any student who abandons a course of study without valid reason will be required to pay back in full. Students who complete their course but leave within two years will be required to pay a proportion of all costs in line with the table overleaf.

Service following completion—Proportion Pay Back	
Up to Six Months	100%
Six to Twelve Months	75%
Twelve to Eighteen Months	50%
Eighteen to Twenty Four months	25%
Over Twenty Four Months	nil

Employees will not be required to repay any monies in respect of paid leave granted. Students who fail to meet course requirements e.g. by failing to complete assignments will not receive funding for retakes.

If a student has made a reasonable attempt to pass an examination but fails, the authority may fund one re-sit examination. If a student fails exams and does not retake them they must pay back as described above.

If students have to retake a full year the case will be reviewed with the Director before approval is granted.

Qualification Based Training—In-house provision

Application Form - Part 1

(To be completed by the applicant)

Approval for qualification based training/academic training will be considered by the Departmental Management Team upon receipt of this application form, which must be completed by yourself and your line manager.

Does the training need arise from

Business Case

1. Which competency/element does this course of study support?
2. What service benefits will result from this development activity?

In House Provision

Qualification Based Training—In House Provision Application Form - Part 2

(To be completed by the Senior Manager of the applicant)

Please complete and return to your Workforce Development Representative.

Date discussed with applicant

Is the course suitable

Yes

No

How will this application support your Service Plan Objectives?

If you have any reservations about supporting this application please state

Signature

Date

Application Form - Part 3

(Approval by the Departmental Management Team)

Has approval been given?

Yes

No

Reason for approval/refusal

Signature

Date

In House Provision

Qualification Based Training In-House Provision Approval Criteria

All academic training is assessed and approved by the Departmental Management Team and will not be considered unless the appropriate application form is completed by the individual requesting training.

Prior to approval the Department Management Team will consider approval of training against the following criteria.

1. Is the course relevant to the individuals job role?

Yes No

2. Is the course aimed at the appropriate level for the individual?

Yes No

3. Is the timing appropriate? *Consider the following:*

- Workload of the individual, Is this a good time to do an academic course
- Time away from work for study or day release, would this have an effect on service delivery?
- Is there a choice of start dates? Is the chosen date the most appropriate?

4. Has the individual completed a request form with their line manager and included valid reasons for attending?

Yes No

5. Is there external funding available for the training? i.e. train to gain

Yes No

6. Can the cost of the training be supported by the section/division?

Yes No

In House Provision

Hartlepool Borough Council In-House Provision Qualification Based Training and Financial Assistance

Form of Undertaking

In an agreement made on

Date

between the employer, Hartlepool Borough Council and the employee:

Name

Job Title

Department

Works telephone No.

Payroll No.

Address

To attend the course:-

Course Title

College/University

Hartlepool Borough Council will:-

Please detail below any support agreed with the Line Manager

Employee Signature

Date

In House Provision

Payments will be made either direct to the provider or to the employee on proof of payment. The full details of the payments are set out in the table below. (Please complete in full)

Item	Amount (if known)	Level of support
Course fees		
Registration fees		
Examination fees		
Travel		
Subsistence		
Essential text books		
Paid time off work		
Residential		
Study Leave		
Examination Leave		
Other support (Please specify)		

In consideration of the Employer providing assistance mentioned above.

The above named employee agrees as follows to:

1. Attend the whole course (unless there is a valid and mutually acceptable reason)
2. Work to the best of his or her ability to succeed in all aspects of the course. Notify the employer immediately of any changes in personal circumstances, work problems or problems with the course provider that may prevent successful completion of the course.
3. Ensure that absence or progress reports and examination/course results are shown to the employer whenever they are made available to the employee.

Refund of fees

4. If the employee fails to attend any part of the college course, fails to achieve the required standard for satisfactory completion of the course, he or she may be required to reimburse the employer for all sums paid to or on behalf of the employee as identified in the table above.
5. The employee hereby authorises reimbursement of any sums required in accordance with paragraph 4 to be made to the employer by the employer deducting the full amount from any wages, salary or other money payable by the employer to the employee.

In House Provision

6. Reimbursement will not be required if the employee was constructively dismissed, or the employer was unable to provide a permanent post.
7. If the employer waives the repayment of any part of the employers contribution , the employee will compensate the employer in full for any tax liability arising from the waiver.
8. If the employee leaves the Employer's employment within two years of completing the course for any reason other than the reasons specified in clause 6 he/she will be required to refund all sums paid by the employer in respect of fees, subsistence, travel, books and other sundry payments identified in the table above for which the council has paid or is liable. For the avoidance of doubt, such refunds will be required where the Employee is leaving within 2 years to take up employment with another authority or is leaving as a result of taking voluntary retirement or voluntary redundancy.

Director

Name

Date

Approval for qualification based training/academic training will be considered by the Departmental Management Team upon receipt of this application form, which must be completed by yourself and your line manager.

Name

Division

Job Title

How did the need arise Training Review

Appraisal

Change in Role

Business Case

1. Which competency/element does this course of study support

2. What service benefits will result from this development activity

Which qualification addresses the need identified above?

Existing qualifications (please detail your highest qualification to date and also any that directly relate to the subject area you are applying for)

Delivery arrangements/attendance

Day release

Evenings

No preference

Block release

Workbased (NVQ)

Other (please specify)

Budget available

Additional Information

Signature

Date

External Qualification Based Training Form Application Form - Part 2

(To be completed by the Senior Manager of the applicant)

Please complete and return to your Workforce Development Representative.

Date discussed with applicant

How will this application support your Service Plan Objectives?

If you have any reservations about supporting this application please state

Signature

Date

Application Form - Part 3

(Approval by the Departmental Management Team in principle)

Has approval been given?

Yes

No

Reason for approval/refusal

Signature

Date

Qualification Based Training Approval Criteria - Part 3 continued

All academic training is assessed and approved by the Departmental Management Team and will not be considered unless the appropriate application form is completed by the individual requesting training.

Prior to approval the Department Management Team will consider approval of training against the following criteria.

1. Is the course relevant to the individuals job role?

Yes No

2. Is the course aimed at the appropriate level for the individual?

Yes No

3. Is the timing appropriate? *Consider the following:*

• Workload of the individual, Is this a good time to do an academic course

• Time away from work for study or day release, would this have an effect on service delivery?

• Is there a choice of start dates? Is the chosen date the most appropriate?

4. Has the individual completed a request form with their line manager and included valid reasons for attending?

Yes No

5. Is there external funding available for the training? i.e. train to gain

Yes No

6. Can the cost of the training be supported by the section/division?

Yes No

Form of Undertaking

In an agreement made on

Date

between the employer, Hartlepool Borough Council and the employee:

Name

Job Title

Department

Works telephone No.

Payroll No.

Address

To attend the course:-

Course Title

Delivered by

Hartlepool Borough Council will:-

Please detail below any support agreed with the Line Manager

Employee Signature

Date

Hartlepool Borough Council

Qualification Based Training and Financial Assistance

Payments will be made either direct to the provider or to the employee on proof of payment. The full details of the payments are set out in the table below. (Please complete in full)

Item	Amount (if known)	Level of support
Course fees		
Registration fees		
Examination fees		
Travel		
Subsistence		
Essential text books		
Paid time off work		
Residential		
Study Leave		
Examination Leave		
Other support (Please specify)		

In consideration of the Employer providing assistance mentioned above.

The above named employee agrees as follows to:

1. Attend the whole course (unless there is a valid and mutually acceptable reason)
2. Work to the best of his or her ability to succeed in all aspects of the course. Notify the employer immediately of any changes in personal circumstances, work problems or problems with the course provider that may prevent successful completion of the course.
3. Ensure that absence or progress reports and examination/course results are shown to the employer whenever they are made available to the employee.

Refund of fees

4. If the employee fails to attend any part of the college course, fails to achieve the required standard for satisfactory completion of the course, he or she may be required to reimburse the employer for all sums paid to or on behalf of the employee as identified in the table above.
5. The employee hereby authorises reimbursement of any sums required in accordance with paragraph 4 to be made to the employer by the employer deducting the full amount from any wages, salary or other money payable by the employer to the employee.

Hartlepool Borough Council

Qualification Based Training and Financial Assistance

6. Reimbursement will not be required if the employee was constructively dismissed, or the employer was unable to provide a permanent post.
7. If the employer waives the repayment of any part of the employers contribution , the employee will compensate the employer in full for any tax liability arising from the waiver.
8. If the employee leaves the Employer's employment within two years of completing the course for any reason other than the reasons specified in clause 6 he/she will be required to refund all sums paid by the employer in respect of fees, subsistence, travel, books and other sundry payments identified in the table above for which the council has paid or is liable. For the avoidance of doubt, such refunds will be required where the Employee is leaving within 2 years to take up employment with another authority or is leaving as a result of taking voluntary retirement or voluntary redundancy.

Director

Name

Date

PERFORMANCE PORTFOLIO

Report to Portfolio Holder

27 March 2009



Report of: Chief Personnel Officer

Subject: MEMBERS' ICT PROJECT

SUMMARY

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

To provide an update on the current position and to set out proposals for the roll-out of Phase 2 of the Members' ICT project.

2. SUMMARY OF CONTENTS

Update information in relation to successful implementation of Phase 1 of the Members' ICT Project and proposals for further roll out.

3. RELEVANCE TO PORTFOLIO MEMBER

Portfolio holder has responsibility for agreeing further roll out of ICT to Elected Members

4. TYPE OF DECISION

Non-key decision

5. DECISION MAKING ROUTE

Portfolio holder meeting of 27 March 2009

6. DECISION(S) REQUIRED

- 6.1 Continue with the phasing of the programme as this is key to ensuring that the roll-out of ICT to Elected Members is implemented efficiently and effectively. Phasing ensures that any problems are identified as early in the process as possible and are promptly resolved and avoids repetition of further occurrences.

- 6.2 In accordance with Cabinet minute 40 (9th July 2007) the Chief Personnel Officer and Assistant Chief Executive reviews the Phase 1 process and agree further implementation phases with the Performance Portfolio Holder.
- 6.3 Consideration to be given to carry forward unspent monies from 2008/9 to underpin the potential budget shortfall of approximately in 2009/10.
- 6.4 The Members' Services team continue to organise appropriate equipment and on-going support to Members in the provision of ICT.
- 6.5 The Chief Personnel Officer and Assistant Chief Executive review the Phase 2 process and agree further implementation phases with the Performance Portfolio Holder.

Report of: Chief Personnel Officer

Subject: MEMBERS' ICT PROJECT

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To provide an update on the current position and to set out proposals for the roll-out of Phase 2 of the Members' ICT project.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 At its meeting on 9 July 2007, Cabinet approved a phased roll-out of Members' ICT Provision. It was agreed that the criteria for Members to be included in Phase 1 would be:

- a member of Cabinet;
- Chair or Vice Chair of the Council;
- a Scrutiny Chair;
- a Group Leader.

3. PHASE I

- 3.1 Phase 1 is now nearing completion with 13 Members successfully using ICT. As part of the project, Members participating in Phase 1 agreed and confirmed that they would no longer require paper copies of documents and having consulted with Members on their use of equipment, it is proposed to cease the issue of hard copies for all correspondence, including meeting papers, with effect from 1 July 2009.
- 3.2 Members in Phase 1, who declined the use of HBC managed equipment, have been issued with a remote access fob, and 'pool' laptops are available for their use in the Civic Suite.
- 3.3 It should be noted that due to advancement in technology, further options for broadband connectivity (3G) and tablets were included part way through the roll-out of Phase 1.
- 3.4 Members were originally offered HBC laptops with either use of their own broadband or with HBC broadband, both of these options required the installation of router equipment at the Members' home to ensure no virus could be transferred to HBC systems. However, it is now possible

to offer 3G connectivity which negates the need for router equipment and also allows Members to access systems remotely from any location with 3G coverage.

As a result of this additional option, one member who originally declined the use of HBC managed equipment has indicated that they may wish to reconsider their position and request DMS & 3G equipment. Other members may also wish to reconsider their position.

4. **PHASE 2**

- 4.1 The process for the roll-out of Phase 2 should be the same as that used for Phase 1 and it is proposed that the following criteria be applied to identify those Members to be invited to participate in the roll-out of Phase 2:
- Chair/Vice Chair of any Committee
 - Chairs of Neighbourhood Forums
- 4.2 If the above criteria is approved, a further 12 Members will be offered DMS equipment.
- 4.3 To further develop the use of ICT by Members, it is proposed that for Members who do not fall within the above category but who do actively use email (15 No) that they be offered the use of fobs to enable remote access Members who take up this option, could then be included within the Phase 3 roll-out of DMS equipment.
- 4.4 Phase 2 will commence on approval and it is hoped to be completed by March 2010. At the completion of Phase 2, the number of Members using HBC ICT equipment actively could be 40 which can be broken down as follows:
- DMS 25 No
 - Fob only 15 No
- 4.5 Of the remaining 8 Members, 3 declined to take part in Phase 1 of the project; however 2 of these Members have their own equipment and actively use e-mail. The remaining Members do not currently use ICT at all.
- 4.5 Phase 3 of the programme will be to provide DMS/3G equipment for those Members who use their own equipment and have been provided with Fobs to access the secure server. This phase is proposed to commence in April 2010.

5. FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

- 5.1 Appendix A illustrates an analysis of expenditure for each of the phases, together with annual ongoing costs.
- 5.2 If all Members identified agreed to participate in Phase 2 and take up the options offered, the maximum cost of this phase would be £19,020.00. Added to this would be the ongoing costs of Phase 1 of £14,340.53 making a total potential expenditure of £33,360.53 in 2009/10. The roll-out of Phase 1 spanned two funding years 2007/8 and 2008/9, resulting in an underspend in both years. However it is known that some of the Members identified in Phase 2 of the proposal will not wish to participate fully i.e. pool laptop/fob will only be required, which may result in a reduction in the estimated costs. This could possibly be offset if Members from Phase 1 indicate that they wish to make use of the more developed options now available.
- 5.3 The proposal being developed (led by Trevor Smith in Adult & Community Services) to upgrade the bearer service for Council 3G provision from 2Mb to 4Mb, which would improve service accessibility by Members and other remote users, has been put on hold as a result of the current financial position, however the likelihood of 12 new users on 3G would not be detrimental to this. Consideration would need to be given to funding if this project is progressed in the future.
- 5.4 Government Connect - work continues to encourage Members to remove the 'bounce' from their e-mail with support provided by the Members' Services team. Any 'bounce' arrangements still in place at the 27 March 2009 will automatically be removed. Members currently enjoy the ease that the 'bounce' offers and have been reluctant for its removal. The removal of the 'bounce' facility may increase the take up of the use of the applications available to Members in Phases 2 and 3.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 6.1 Continue with the phasing of the programme as this is key to ensuring that the roll-out of ICT to Elected Members is implemented efficiently and effectively. Phasing ensures that any problems are identified as early in the process as possible and are promptly resolved and avoids repetition of further occurrences.
- 6.2 In accordance with Cabinet minute 40 (9th July 2007) the Chief Personnel Officer and Assistant Chief Executive reviews the Phase 1 process and agree further implementation phases with the Performance Portfolio Holder.
- 6.3 Consideration to be given to carry forward unspent monies from 2008/9 to underpin the potential budget shortfall of approximately in 2009/10.

- 6.4 The Members' Services team continue to organise appropriate equipment and on-going support to Members in the provision of ICT.
- 6.5 The Chief Personnel Officer and Assistant Chief Executive review the Phase 2 process and agree further implementation phases with the Performance Portfolio Holder.

7 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

To develop and enhance the use of ICT by Elected Members

8 BACKGROUND PAPERS

Cabinet report of 9 July 2007

9 CONTACT OFFICER

Christine Armstrong
Central Services Manager
Telephone 01429 523016
Email: christine.armstrong@hartlepool.gov.uk

APPENDIX A										
NAME	DMS (IN YEAR) LAPTOP/ TABLET	FOB	ROUTER	MAGIC BOX	BROADBAND /3G	EXTRAS	PHASE COSTS	ON GOING YRLY COSTS PER	TOTAL COSTS PER ANNUM TO	ONGOIN G COSTS
	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£
PHASE 1										
Mayor	0.00				100.00	35.00	135.00	300.00		
Cllr Akers-Belcher	1121.25	220.00			75.00	186.00	1602.25	1335.00		
Cllr Brash	1121.25	220.00		451.90		384.90	2178.05	1035.00		
Cllr S Cook	1121.25	220.00					1341.25	1035.00		
Cllr Hargreaves	1430.33	220.00			300.00	85.00	2035.33	1526.00		
Cllr Jackson	1121.25	220.00					1341.25	1035.00		
Cllr James	1440.00	220.00		451.90	300.00	422.56	2834.46	1452.00		
Cllr Morris	823.76	220.00		451.90		130.00	1625.66	823.76		
Cllr Richardson	823.76	220.00				105.00	1148.76	823.76		
Cllr Hall	410.63	220.00			300.00	76.00	1006.63	1121.25		
Cllr Hill	1121.25	220.00	264.60		629.00	226.66	2461.51	1395.00		
Cllr Payne	1121.25	220.00			300.00	85.00	1726.25	1335.00		
Cllr Shaw	823.76	220.00	264.60		300.00	220.60	1828.96	1123.76		
Computer Trolley							3000.00			
Totals - Phase 1 2007-09	12479.74	2640.00	529.20	1355.70	2304.00	1956.72	24265.36	14340.53	24265.36	14340.53
PHASE 2										
AN OTHER x 12	975.00	220.00			300.00	35.00	15720.00	15300.00		
AN OTHER x 15 (FOB ONLY)		220.00					3300.00			
Totals - Phase 2 2009-10							19020.00	15300.00	33360.53	29640.53
PHASE 3										
AN OTHER x 15 (LAPTOP/3G)	975.00				300.00	35.00	20400.00	19125.00		
Totals - Phase 3 2010-11							20400.00	19125.00	50040.53	48765.53
REMAINDER										
AN OTHER x 8	975.00				300.00	35.00	10480.00	10200.00		
Totals - Remainder 2011							10480.00	10200.00	59245.53	58965.53

PERFORMANCE PORTFOLIO

Report to Portfolio Holder

27th March 2009



Report of: Chief Personnel Officer

Subject: EQUALITY MARK LEVEL 3 ASSESSMENT

SUMMARY

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

To inform the Portfolio Holder of the successful assessment by the Centre for Local Policy Studies, Edge Hill University which has resulted in the Council being awarded the Equality Mark Certificate and having the previously declared Level 3 of the Equality Standard for Local Government externally validated.

2. SUMMARY OF CONTENTS

The report provides brief details of the assessment results and proposed follow up actions.

3. RELEVANCE TO PORTFOLIO MEMBER

Corporate Issues

4. TYPE OF DECISION

Non Key

5. DECISION MAKING ROUTE

Portfolio meeting only

6. DECISION(S) REQUIRED

Portfolio Holder to note the report.

Report of: Chief Personnel Officer

Subject: EQUALITY MARK LEVEL 3 ASSESSMENT

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To inform the Portfolio Holder of the successful assessment by the Centre for Local Policy Studies, Edge Hill University which has resulted in the Council being awarded the Equality Mark Certificate and having the previously declared Level 3 of the Equality Standard for Local Government externally validated.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 In 2005 a commitment was made by the Cabinet (and was published in the Race and Diversity Scheme 2005-08) to achieve Level 3 of the Equality Standard of Local Government by March 2008.
- 2.2 In fulfilling the commitment, the Council in March 2008 declared itself as having achieved Level 3 of the Equality Standard in 2007/8. A requirement of the Standard is that declarations at Levels 3 and 5 have to be externally validated.
- 2.3 In December 2008 the Council underwent an external assessment and validation on the Level 3 of the Equality Standard. The formal assessment consisted of three related parts:
- Critical examination of the Council's equality self-assessment and a sample from a portfolio of documents supplied by the Council
 - Interviews with Members, staff and external stakeholders to test the self assessment across the Council
 - Examination of documentary evidence for consistency with self-assessment and interview findings

3.0 SUMMARY OF THE ASSESSMENT

- 3.1 The report summarises that Hartlepool Borough Council

“is to be congratulated on a strong achievement against Level 3 of the Equality Standard for Local Government.

The Council has shown a clear commitment to improving its approach and outcomes to equality, and has directed resources to support these aims. The three elements of the assessment: the self assessment document, the supporting evidence and the interviews provided a consistent view of the Council's achievements and clearly highlighted

the areas where it needs to make improvements. In particular it should be noted that during interviews staff were enthusiastic and clear about their responsibilities for improving the way in which they deliver services to communities and those in most need. The external stakeholder focus group participants were equally enthusiastic about the way in which the council had progressed, and although candid and open in their discussions about where further improvements could be made, were nevertheless highly positive of the Council's equality policies and progress.

The assessors therefore recommend that Hartlepool Borough Council should receive the "Equality Mark Certificate for Level 3 achievement."

- 3.2 The scores achieved are as follows:
- 4 - Good performance - 62.5%
 - 3 - Strengths outweigh Weaknesses - 32.5%
 - 2 - Weaknesses outweigh Strengths – 5%
 - 1 - Weak Performance- 0%
- 3.3 A copy of the full report is attached as Appendix A. It is also available on the Intranet and on the Internet.

4.0 FOLLOW UP ACTIONS

- 4.1 The recommendations that have been identified in the report will be incorporated in the Corporate Diversity Steering Group (DSG) action plan and will be monitored by DSG. This will be reported half yearly and annually to the portfolio holder.
- 4.2 The Council has been invited to attend the Awards Ceremony in June where a formal presentation of the Equality Mark certificate will be made.
- 4.3 Publicity arrangements are being made to publicise this achievement through Hartlepool Mail and Hartbeat Magazine.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 5.1 That the Portfolio Holder notes the report.

6.0 CONTACT OFFICER

Vijaya Kotur.
Principal Diversity Officer
Tel No: 01429-523060

Appendix A

Hartlepool Borough Council

Equality Mark Level 3 Assessment and Validation Report

Final Report

DECEMBER 2008

Centre for Local Policy Studies
Edge Hill University
Ormskirk
Lancashire L39 4QP

Assessors:

Nasreen Kaleem
Meena Patel



Edge Hill University



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1. Background and Introduction

This report is based on the findings of an assessment and validation carried out for Hartlepool Borough Council to examine their claim to have achieved Level 3 of the Equality Standard for Local Government.

The report forms part of the formal assessment against the elements of Level 3 of the Standard, leading to the award of the Equality Mark © once successfully completed and verified. Organisations that complete and are successful at a level 3 assessment are awarded the Equality Mark Certificate.

This report sets out the methodology used in the assessment and provides qualitative comments and recommendations, where relevant, to provide support for future improvement in equality policy and practice. Following a brief discussion of the assessment methodology, there is a review of the Council, based on documentary evidence - policies, self-assessment and any other reports including recent inspections and assessments. Section 4 comments on Level 1 and Level 2 achievement, Section 5 contains the formal assessment for Level 3 and Section 6 identifies a number of areas for consideration in the next phase of equality improvement.

2. Methodology

The formal assessment consists of three related parts:

- Critical examination of the Council's equality self-assessment and a sample from a portfolio of documents supplied by the Council
- Interviews with Members, staff and external stakeholders to test the self assessment across the Council
- Examination of documentary evidence for consistency with self-assessment and interview findings

Conclusions about the level reached are arrived at through qualitative examination of findings from the three parts of the assessment.

Where specific examples of good practice are referenced in this report, it simply reflects the areas sampled for documentary review and interview. It is not meant to imply that good practice does not exist in other parts of the council.

2.1 Achieving Level 3 of The Equality standard for Local Government

To achieve Level 3 of the Standard, authorities have to show that each service area has developed equality service objectives and set out targets and related performance indicators to achieve those objectives. An authority will also have reviewed its employment, human resource, pay and 'service delivery' practices.

Objectives and targets should be based on equality impact assessments defined by a prior screening and prioritisation process. Equality impact assessments should be shaped by good quality data collection, stakeholder input and the results of existing or specifically commissioned consultations.

An authority should show that it has developed the capacity to consistently monitor action taken to achieve equality objectives and targets. It should be able to demonstrate that it has undertaken sufficient consultation both internally and externally to be able to understand the needs of all its stakeholder groups

Finally, an authority should be able to show that equality improvement action (i.e. action to achieve targets) has actually started.

2.2 Formal assessment at Level 3

A numerical rating system is used in the formal assessment to support findings for each element of Level 3 of the Standard. The scoring system is consistent with the approach taken by the Audit Commission in Best Value Reviews and Assessments. Scores are 4,3,2,1 with 4 being highest and 1 being lowest – a score of 0 would indicate a serious weakness or other lack of evidence. The scores summarise a qualitative judgement of an authority's performance in relation to that element. The quantitative part of the assessment assigns a company-wide score to each of the Level 3 elements.

- Good performance = 4

- Strengths outweigh weaknesses = 3
- Weaknesses outweigh strengths = 2
- Poor = 1
- No evidence for performance = 0

To achieve Level 3, an authority should get an average score of 3 with no elements scored a 1 or 0. The assessors conclude that the Council has met this criterion. The scores assigned have taken into account the contents of the self-assessment document; documentary evidence and results of interviews with Elected Member, managers, other staff and stakeholders.

3. Context

(Section 3 has been based on Hartlepool Council's Level 3 Self Assessment submission to the CLPS and external reports such as Corporate Assessments carried out by the Audit Commission and National Statistics)

Hartlepool is located on the North East coast at the eastern end of the Tees Valley. It has a significant port facility and the A19 passes through the Borough. Hartlepool is compact and densely populated, covering an area of 9,386 hectares with a population in 2008 of 92,200. It is relatively isolated from the national transport infrastructure and main markets.

Diverse population breakdown

Overall, the population is projected to be fairly stable over the next ten years with older age groups increasing and younger age groups reducing.

Age: the breakdown as in 2007 shows a reduction in birth rates and an increase in older population.

Gender: the overall split is 51% female, 49% male.

Black and Minority Ethnic Groups: there is a small but growing minority ethnic population which was measured as 1.2% of the total population in 2001 (1,042 people). Office for National Statistics (ONS) estimates suggest it has increased through immigration from Eastern Europe and other regions. There are 27 spoken languages in Hartlepool.

Asylum Seekers: Numbers of asylum seekers settling in Hartlepool is low. According to statistics produced in December 2007 by the North of England Refugee Service (NERS) and the “North East Strategic Migration Partnership” (NESMP), Hartlepool Borough Council has supported three households (including dependants the numbers were 5) through the provision of NASS (National Asylum Support Service) accommodation.

Gypsies and Travellers: there is no site provision for Gypsies and Travellers in the Borough at present. The Council is conducting an accommodation assessment along with neighbouring authorities in the Tees Valley. Over the past three years, the private sector housing team have been aware of eight encampments in the Borough, ranging in size from 1 to 11 caravans. All have been ‘unauthorised.’ A small number of Romany children attend school in the Borough.

Disability: again definitive numbers are not available. A local analysis based on the Health Survey for England (2003) suggests there are 14,100 people 16 and over with one or more disabilities in Hartlepool. (21%); 3,800 of these have a serious disability. (6% of population 16 plus) and 10,300 (15%) a moderate disability. Other sources suggest that 2% (2,000) of the Hartlepool population are registered deaf or hard of hearing, but 20% (14,000) of adults reported some degree of deafness. In 2006 225 people were registered blind in Hartlepool and 180 partially sighted. A quarter (24.4%) of Hartlepool's residents identified themselves as having a limiting long-term illness in the 2001 Census, compared to less than one in five nationally (18.2%).

Sexual Orientation: there are no reliable statistics for the number of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people in Hartlepool. Estimates vary between 6% and 10% of the population. This is an issue not well addressed in national guidance and the Census has no data on sexual orientation.

Religion and Belief: The 2001 Census provided statistics on religion and belief but there is no updated data since then. Christianity was recorded by 80.7% of the population; Islam 0.4%; Hinduism 0.16%; Buddhism 0.08%; Sikhism 0.04%; Jewish 0.02% and other religion 0.09%. 9.42% recorded no religion or belief.

Socio economic context:

Historically, the economy was based on the port and coal exporting trade of the nineteenth century, giving rise to iron and steel, shipbuilding and engineering industries. Structural economic change in the later part of the last century hit Hartlepool particularly hard with the decline of its basic industries.

The substantial investment of resources into Hartlepool over the last 10-15 years has, therefore, been largely targeted to support the physical regeneration of the Borough's buildings and infrastructure. Evidence of the success of this programme is highly visible, particularly in the town centre and the Marina area. Major investment programmes currently underway include Single Programme, New Deal for Communities, Housing Market Renewal, European Social Fund and Neighbourhood Renewal Fund with a combined expenditure in 2007/8 of £15.8m.

According to the 2007 Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD), 34% of Hartlepool residents live in neighbourhoods classified as being disadvantaged (i.e. within the 10% most deprived areas in the country). Out of the 354 districts nationally Hartlepool has a ranking of 23rd most deprived. This compares with the 2000 IMD district ranking of 10th, although the factors and method of analysis changed between the two indices.

Life expectancy is lower than national and regional averages and mortality ratios are above average, particularly for chronic heart disease and cancer.

The high levels of social deprivation contribute to a number of associated problems, including higher than average levels of crime and dependency on social support and benefit services. In recognition of this situation, while priority continues to be given to physical regeneration, emphasis has shifted over the last few years towards a broader approach, with a stronger emphasis on social and economic regeneration. This shift is evident in both the Council's current priorities and its method of operation.

The multiple nature of the social problems experienced by a large proportion of the population means that working and bringing together members of the

community, public agencies and other stakeholders, is essential if improvements are to be continued. This is fully recognised by the Council.

Hartlepool has strengths which are less easily measured. A MORI satisfaction survey published in 2007 found that more than four in five Hartlepool borough residents (83%) are satisfied with their area as a place to live, which is in line with national averages. In addition, the town is served by a strong and voluntary sector which works with the Council to make improvements.

3.2 The Council

Hartlepool Council became a unitary authority in 1996. Its population makes it the smallest of five unitary authorities in the Tees Valley sub-region, and is the second smallest unitary council in England.

Hartlepool Council is one of the country's best performing local authorities – assessed as a 'four star' authority – the highest possible rating – by the Audit Commission for the sixth consecutive year. The Audit Commission said:-

“Hartlepool Council is performing well. Ambitions and action to achieve are founded on a strong drive to improve life in Hartlepool. Performance often ranks among the best in England. Outstanding partnership working is achieving improved outcomes ... across national and local priorities.”

The Council also achieved the top rating Improving Strongly for the delivery of services making Hartlepool one of only twelve of 116 similar authorities to achieve both the **Four Star** and **Improving Strongly** ratings.

The most recently completed Corporate Assessment report described the Council as having:

- Very effective community leadership from the Mayor and Cabinet
- Good officer leadership and management
- Outstanding partnership working
- A very good understanding of community needs
- Excellent consultation and engagement

- Good financial capacity
- Good performance management

Over 45% of national indicators are in the top quartile, significantly higher than the 29% average for all unitary authorities. This was achieved by improvements to 62% of Performance Indicators and a further 12% were already performing at maximum and therefore could not improve. These results confirm significant and consistent improvement since 2003/04 when only 25% of indicators were above the best quartile breakpoint.

The Council currently has an Independent elected Mayor and 47 elected members representing 17 wards. The Council currently comprises 23 Labour, 6 Liberal Democrat, 5 Conservative, 2 UKIP and 12 Independent representatives (including the Mayor). The Council adopted a Mayor and Cabinet executive decision making system in May 2002, with Stuart Drummond elected as Mayor. The Mayor was re-elected in May 2005 for a 4-year term, with an increased majority. For the past 6 years he has led an inclusive coalition Cabinet and his new Cabinet brings together Labour, Independent and Liberal Democrat councillors with decision making delegated to individual portfolio holders and officers where and when appropriate. The portfolios are: Regeneration; Liveability and Housing; Culture, Leisure and Tourism; Performance; Neighbourhoods and Communities, Children's Services; Adult and Public Health Services; and Finance and Efficiency.

The Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee and four Scrutiny Forums review the work of the Executive and the Council. The Scrutiny Forums provide the opportunity for councillors to review the work of the Executive and Council, provide policy advice and examine issues of local concern.

Political and managerial leadership has created an organisation capable of achieving its ambitions for the future. The Council underwent a restructure in 2005/6 and now has 5 departments: Adult and Community Services, Children's Services, Chief Executive's, Neighbourhood Services and Regeneration and Planning

For 2008/9 the net revenue budget is £98.425m, (this excludes spending by schools).

The Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy and 2008/9 budget is summarised in the Corporate Plan

Some of the key issues are:

- Meeting increased demand because of demographic trends and increasing need for services.
- Higher costs from increased landfill tax, increases in recycling costs and costs arising from the introduction of a new refuse round.
- Achieving £8.5m efficiency savings over 3 years
- Addressing a backlog of maintenance on assets
- Achieving a sustainable budget position over the medium term with reduced use of reserves.

A Business Transformation Programme is a key element in the Council's strategy. The Business Transformation Programme is designed to form part of a managed programme integral to the Medium Term Financial Strategy supporting the achievement of challenging efficiency targets as prescribed by Central Government.

Increasingly, the Council has faced a difficult financial position as it seeks to minimise Council Tax increases and, at the same time, protect and improve services. In part, the financial pressures arise from the heavily skewed nature of the Council's property resource base, with the overwhelming proportion of properties in the lower Council Tax bands, 88% are in bands A-C.

The Council will undertake capital investment during 2008/9 of £18.7m. Over the three years of the programme the main areas for investment are:

- Transforming schools both secondary and primary
- Transport improvements
- Environmental and Community safety

- Housing improvements to address market failure

3.3 The Council's approach to equality improvement

The Council's constitution details specific responsibilities for Members and Officers in relation to equality and diversity. It places additional responsibilities on Members, the Chief Executive, Directors and Chief Officers and employees. Collectively, the Corporate Management Team (CMT) has responsibility for day-to-day implementation of the Equality and Diversity Scheme. To assist in this role, a specialist group (the Diversity Steering Group) has been set up.

The Diversity Steering Group has a strategic and corporate focus co-ordinating diversity activity and reports to the Corporate Management Team. It comprises of a CMT Director (Diversity Champion), Chief Personnel Officer who is Head of Equalities for the Council (Chair), Principal Diversity Officer, HR representatives and Senior Departmental representatives who chair their respective departmental diversity working groups and monitor the progress.

The remit of the Diversity Steering Group is to co-ordinate and mainstream all council activity in relation to diversity and equality issues, and;

- to be responsible for setting and achieving targets set in relation to the Equality Standard for Local Government
- to provide a strategic and corporate lead in developing policy and making improvements in relation to equality and diversity issues across the Council
- to identify how diversity and equality training needs are met
- to explore funding opportunities in order to support the Council in progressing the work on diversity and equality issues.
- to oversee, and provide help and support on, diversity and equality actions within departments
- to prepare the Council's Equality and Diversity Scheme (including race, disability, gender, age, sexual orientation & religion and belief equality schemes) and monitor progress

- to provide corporate guidance on diversity and equality issues
- in conjunction with the Assistant Chief Executive, to determine and co-ordinate consultation on diversity matters and to respond to corporate issues raised during consultation.

The departmental Diversity Working Groups reports to the Diversity Steering Group and their respective Departmental Management Team.

Their remit is to:

- develop and implement corporate equality and diversity policies, for example by engaging with colleagues and communities in consultations and contributing to the Corporate Annual Diversity Report and Diversity Plan
- collect, co-ordinate and disseminate diversity information amongst managers and colleagues
- work towards achieving the levels of Equality Standard for local government and provide information/ evidence for self-assessment process
- work with service colleagues to complete the impact assessments of services and identify service improvement objectives and actions for inclusion in department and service plans
- monitor progress on departmental and service plans quarterly and suggest remedial action where required
- recommend programme of Diversity Impact Assessments to their directorate following completion of corporate and departmental plans
- monitor departmental consultation exercises
- monitor departmental use of language translation and interpretation services
- advise and promote on equality training throughout the department

An Equality and Diversity Report is published annually, which monitors progress against the Council's Diversity Scheme. In addition half yearly reports are submitted to the Performance Portfolio Holder.

4. Achievement at Levels 1 & 2

4.1 Formal Assessment for Level 1

During the level 3 formal assessment and validation the Council demonstrated that it had met the criteria for level 1 achievement. It had committed to a comprehensive equality policy and was committed to achieving equality in race, gender, disability, sexual orientation, age and religion or belief through:

- a commitment to improving equality practice at both corporate and departmental level
- earmarking specific resources for improving equality practice
- commitment to complying with all relevant legislation
- planning for and setting equality targets within all departments and service areas
- consulting with stakeholders and vulnerable target groups
- a commitment to a fair equal pay and employment policy
- carrying out impact assessments across service departments
- monitoring and evaluating progress
- scrutiny and self-assessment

4.2 Formal assessment for level 2

During the level 3 assessment and validation the Council demonstrated that it had met the criteria for level 2. The Service demonstrated:

- that it has put systems in place for self-assessment, scrutiny and audit

- that it has engaged in equality impact assessments
- that it has undertaken a self assessment across the authority
- that it has engaged in consultation with designated community, staff and stakeholder groups
- that it has engaged in the development of information and monitoring systems
- that it has engaged in an equality action planning process for employment, pay and service delivery

5. Formal assessment for Level 3 of the Equality Standard

5.1 Evidence

For achievement of Level 3 of the Equality Standard for Local Government an authority is required to have met the following criteria:

- Completed a full and systematic consultation process with designated community staff and stakeholder groups
- Set equality objectives for employment, pay and service delivery, based on impact and needs / requirements assessment and consultation
- Equality objectives have been translated into action plans with specific targets
- Developing information and monitoring systems that allow it to assess progress in achieving targets.
- Action on targets has started.

These general activities and developments translate into action in the four substantive areas of the Standard:

- Leadership and corporate commitment
- Consultation, community involvement, engagement, and scrutiny

- Service delivery and customer care
- Employment and Training

The Council produced self-assessment documentation detailing the Level 3 items to be assessed. The documentation is in itself an indication of a comprehensive and systematic approach to the self-assessment process and to the achievement of Level 3 of the Equality Standard. One of the principal functions of the detailed interviews was to confirm whether the self-assessment reflected what is happening at all levels. Broadly, this was found to be the case.

Specific examples of good practice are used in this report to illustrate how the Council has met a particular requirement of the Standard but this is not to suggest that good practice does not exist in other areas of the Council's work.

5.2 Achieving Level 3

Having taken into account the evidence collated from the focus groups, interviews, documentation supplied and meetings held with managers, it is the judgement of the assessors that Hartlepool Borough Council is working at Level 3 of the Equality Standard for Local Government.

However, there are a number of areas in which the Council will need to make improvements in order to continue to make equality improvements both in service delivery and employment.

The rest of the assessment sets out an evaluation of the evidence made against each of the elements of the Equality Standard, and we have set out in summary format where Hartlepool Borough Council has met the requirements. We have identified, where relevant, the areas for improvement for the individual element/s. Comments and recommendations arising from the interviews and meetings held with the assessors have been included, where we felt that this added value to the summary and each area of improvement

A score of between 1 - 4 is given after each summary, for each ESLG element

5.3 Leadership and Corporate Commitment

Ensure consistency of Corporate Equality Scheme with Statutory Schemes

The Council can demonstrate that:

- It has developed a 3-year (2008-2011) Single Equality & Diversity Scheme, covering all 6 strands together with a Corporate Equality Plan (CEP), as part of the Scheme. This replaces the single strand schemes for race (2002-05 and 2005-08), gender (April 2007) and disability (December 2006)
- The Scheme sets out the Council's mission and its approach to equality and diversity which is to focus on “people who access our services by looking at their whole identity and recognising and valuing that each individual resident, visitor, partner, service provider, service user and employee is unique”.
- It also commits the Council to “promoting a community and organisational culture that fully respects and values the diverse differences and needs”
- There are overarching equality objectives set within the action plans of the Scheme and the CEP and all departments set targets based on these.

Areas for review and improvement

- Given that the Council has been undertaking equality improvements for a number of years now, we would expect to see more outcome focused objectives and targets that are also strand specific. As it stands, the overarching equality objectives within the Scheme and CEP are mainly output focused and do not reflect the true nature of inequalities in Hartlepool and how the Council intends to improve and enhance access, chances, opportunities and aspirations across all its communities. It is vital that when the Scheme and the CEP are next reviewed that much more sharper outcome focused actions are developed.

SCORE	3
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Develop a system and timetable for reporting the results of impact assessments

The Council can demonstrate that:

- It first introduced a risk based equality impact assessment in 2004/05 with regular reviews and improvements being made
- It has developed a robust system for undertaking impact needs requirements assessments (retrospective assessments looking at how closely the needs and requirements of the community are being met) and diversity impact assessments (predictive assessments to evaluate the potential future impact of a new policy or a change in policy) and all departments are fully committed to undertaking these. Managers interviewed during the assessment spoke of how the process had enabled them to consider issues that they may not have done otherwise. In other words, it focused them on strand specific issues which they may have been aware of but had not addressed in a systematic way in the past
- The approach has been corporately led by the Diversity Steering Group
- INRA's¹ address sexual orientation, religion and age as well as gender, disability and ethnicity
- Currently services and functions considered to be 'high risk' i.e. considered to have most impact on the Council's customers are prioritised for assessment

¹ Impact, Needs and Requirement Assessments

- There are clear departmental and corporate structures through which results of INRA's are reported

Areas for review and improvement

- Objectives and targets should be based on equality impact assessments defined by a prior screening and prioritisation process. We found no evidence that such a process had been undertaken. The Equality Standard requires that all the Council's functions, services and policies should be assessed over a period of time based on a prioritisation process. The Corporate Equality Steering Group should address this ensuring that all the Council's services and functions are prioritised and assessed.

SCORE	2/3
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Ensure that all departments and service areas set targets based on equality objectives devised through completed impact assessments and participation of designated community, staff and stakeholder groups

The Council can demonstrate that:

- All departments and service areas have set objectives and targets
- More recently, The Council developed a Critical Challenge process whereby representatives from a number of different equality groups/forums are asked to consider completed impact assessments and provide comments on whether or not the targets are based on community needs and aspirations
- Partner organisations also participate in helping to shape the Council's equality improvement work
- A 3-tier approach to target setting has been developed whereby the Corporate Plan including LAA and other key outcomes, feeds into

Departmental, plans, which also contain other key performance indicators and these then feed into service plans, along with other service priorities

Areas for review and improvement

- It was not always clear whether equality service objectives and targets were set as a direct result of an INRA and its findings, or, through other evidence base including professional judgment and anecdotal evidence. Give that impact assessments are a key tool in determining local needs, requirements and aspirations and are also very resource intensive, it is vital that they are used more systematically in determining local needs and requirements and tested by the critical challenge process. There should be a clear link between objectives determined by INRA's and contained within corporate, departmental and service plans
- Over time the 'golden thread' running through the 3-tier approach should also feed priorities upwards through the tiers as service areas begin to identify other priorities which should inform both at corporate objectives and the LAA

SCORE	3
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Equality objectives and targets for sexual orientation, age, religion and belief to be set by March 2009

The Council can demonstrate that:

- It has prioritised six equality strands including sexual orientation, age and religion or belief
- Impact assessment guidance and training includes six diversity strands

Areas for review and improvement

- The Council understands that it needs to develop a much better understanding of all equality strands through monitoring and on-going

involvement of target groups and communities including the LGBT community

SCORE	4
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Establish corporate guidelines/prescriptions for information gathering and equality monitoring

The Council can demonstrate that:

- It adopted guidelines for information gathering and equality monitoring in October 2007.
- The Council recognises that collecting quantitative data may not always be meaningful given the relatively small number of people within some communities. Therefore its monitoring guidance has identified where quantitative data is appropriate and relevant. However, this has not prevented the Council from engaging with communities who are numerically smaller.

Areas for review and improvement

- Much of the data departments currently collect is for specific government targets or funding returns, which leads us to question whether the principles and practice of monitoring and information gathering are embedded across the authority. As the Council continues to make equality improvements it needs to ensure that information gathering and monitoring is undertaken in a much more systematic way as these are vital tools in measuring and assessing whether or not the Council's work is leading to better outcomes for its communities

SCORE	3/4
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Seek agreement on equality targets with designated community stakeholders and local partners:

The Council can demonstrate that:

- Its Communicating with Your Council Strategy provides a framework within which its staff prepare and write consultation plans and activities
- The Corporate Consultation group has devised a ‘toolkit’ including guidance on how to address diverse needs during consultation with further advice available from the consultation team, should staff require it
- In addition to the usual consultation mechanisms, the Council has made arrangements to engage with specific groups including: Talking with Communities for BME communities and some faith groups; regular meetings with the LGBT community through Hart Gables, a well established local organisation; the Life Chances Partnership Board involving all disability groups in Hartlepool; the Learning Disabilities Partnership and the Youth Forum and UK Youth Parliament
- It has developed the Critical Challenge process that draws representatives from a number of the groups mentioned above and other individuals and this is a vital process in getting feedback, comment and agreement on the Council’s equality vision, objectives and targets. A number of service managers have attended meetings to present the findings of their assessments and have revised assessments, or targets, as a result of the feedback.
- It works closely with its partners in achieving shared objectives. The Hartlepool Partnership, which is responsible for producing the Community Strategy, has representation from some of the local equality groups. One of the key priorities within the Strategy is ‘Strengthening Communities’ and includes the LAA Outcome 32, Freedom from Discrimination or Harassment. The LAA also includes a number of other targets which impact on local diverse communities including young people, people with disabilities and social cohesion amongst others.

- The Multi-agency forum, chaired by the Council's Principal Diversity Officer, was re-launched in 2006 and its main aim is to ensure that all services are relevant and accessible to diverse communities.

Areas for review and improvement:

- The Council has made tremendous inroads in engaging with its diverse communities and has dedicated resources to making this happen. Many of the external stakeholders we spoke to during the assessment, spoke highly of the work that the Council had undertaken in engaging with them. It is important that these positive relationships are nurtured and maintained and that community partners and others are seen as equal partners who can make significant contributions to improving the lives of everyone who lives and works in Hartlepool.

SCORE	4
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Establish mechanisms for ensuring that equality targets are delivered by contractors through contract management:

The Council can demonstrate that:

- The Council's Commissioning Team supports departments in ensuring that diversity is addressed in all procurement
- The Council's Procurement Guide to Managers provides guidance on equality and its inclusion in contract documents, including the PQQ.
- The Council has amended its documentation, in conjunction with the North East Centre for Excellence, to comply with the Standard
- Managers are kept informed via the Council's newsletter for managers and a training module on the Leadership and Management development

- Regular “Meet the Buyer” sessions are held to which potential contractors and suppliers are invited. These address the Council's requirements including equality and diversity

Areas for review and Improvement:

- It is not clear from the evidence submitted the extent to which the Council monitors or further supports contractors to become compliant and follow good practice. We would recommend that this is reviewed and included within the next self-assessment process.

SCORE	3
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Ensure completion of equality action plans at departmental and service level incorporating performance indicators:

The Council can demonstrate that:

- Equality objectives and targets are built into departmental and service plans, building on desired outcomes identified within the Corporate Plan and Local Area Agreement (LAA)
- Equality objectives resulting from INRA's are embedded within service planning processes.
- All key performance indicators are included

Areas for review and improvement:

- Keep under regular review and ensure that newer indicators and changes brought about by legislation (e.g. the Single Equality Bill) are embedded

SCORE	4
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Adopt where appropriate national targets/performance indicators as prescribed by government departments or by the Audit Commission:

The Council can demonstrate that:

- National targets have been adopted and all diversity indicators are reported. Following publication of the national indicator sets, the Council has undertaken a review of the PI's it will retain from the Best Value regime and other national audit organizations and these are included, along with the new national indicators, to the performance management system.

Areas for review and improvement:

- As previous point above – Keep under regular review and ensure that newer indicators and changes brought about by legislation (e.g. the Single Equality Bill) are embedded.

SCORE	4
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Implement systems for reviewing progress and revising the Corporate Equality Scheme/Plan (CEP) and service action plans:

The Council can demonstrate that:

- Progress is reviewed at political level through half yearly and annual reports to the Diversity champion and Cabinet Member responsible for diversity
- At departmental level progress is reviewed by management teams/diversity groups
- At corporate level, DSG is responsible for reviewing progress

Areas for review and improvement:

- None identified, however recommend that periodic reviews are carried out to ensure that there is sufficient critical challenge built into the processes

SCORE	4
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Members and senior officers endorse action plans as appropriate :

The Council can demonstrate that:

- INRA's and resulting actions are signed off by chief officers
- The CEP and Equality Scheme is signed off by the Cabinet following endorsement by the performance portfolio holder
- Six monthly and annual reports are provided for the performance portfolio holder

Areas for review

- None identified, however as recommend above, that periodic reviews are carried out to ensure that there is sufficient critical challenge built into the processes

SCORE	4
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Link action planning to performance management and Best Value² process

The Council can demonstrate that:

- It began to link equality targets in the corporate performance management system from 2006/07
- It implemented a new performance management system (Covalent) from January 2008
- The equality actions contained within the Corporate Equality Plan, the Equality Scheme and departmental actions are included as scorecards in the performance management system

² Note should be taken of the changes to the Best Value system that will be in place from 2009 onwards

Areas for review and improvement:

- The council has evidenced strong performance in line with requirements and by taking account of how best the current performance framework can be used to identify and measure outcomes based on established targets
- We would expect to see these carried through the Covalent system that has been implemented, and additionally would expect that the council should be well placed to transition to the new local government performance framework. However, given the complexity of the move to the NI and Audit and Assessment framework, together with incoming changes to the legal and policy framework for equality, a review and refresh of current approaches is recommended to ensure the necessary alignments are made.

SCORE	4
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Ensure action on achieving targets has started:**The Council can demonstrate that:**

- It has commenced actions on all targets within the Equality Scheme, Corporate Plan and departmental and service plans

Areas for review and improvement

- Please note comments on nature of targets that the Council should be seeking to set, in previous sections

SCORE	4
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Ensure that progress has been verified through self-assessment, scrutiny and audit and have been validated externally through an accredited assessor

The Council can demonstrate that:

- It has developed a self-assessment process which should help to drive continuous improvement across the authority
- Progress at all levels has been verified through self-assessment at corporate and departmental levels and this has been externally validated

Areas for review and improvement:

- This area should be kept under review and ensure that self-assessment takes account of current and future changes to legal and policy frameworks.

SCORE	4
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5.4 Consultation and Community Development and Scrutiny

Develop a strategy for all designated community, staff and stakeholder groups to participate in the development of equality objectives, service design and employment practice

The Council can demonstrate that:

- It has in place a Communicating with your Council strategy that incorporates the Corporate Consultation Strategy. There are additionally a range of strategies, policies and action plans that support effective community consultation and engagement, including the Talking with Communities project. This project was commented on favourably by participants taking part in the focus group interview sessions with the assessors. In addition the council carries out regular consultation and engagement with the *Viewpoint* citizens panel. Other notable examples include the Stakeholder Challenge Event (regional conference held in June 2008) and specific consultation initiatives held with the LGBT communities on specific council services.
- The council has in place a corporate consultation group and has devised specific guidelines and a ‘toolkit’ for consultation. Information is collected from a range of sources to inform the councils approach to service delivery and improvement
- Customer Service Centre improvements/feedback from customers results in changes/improvements in services e.g. customers can speak directly to a member of staff rather than go through an automated system
- The council has covered the equality strands well by including forums for example, Disabled Groups and for consulting with ‘harder to reach groups’ such as the Learning Disabled, Young People and with older people through the over 50’s Forum. A range of groups that are involved in consultation/involvement are set out on the council’s website.
- Regular employee surveys are carried out and Employee Panels are used as a method of getting feedback from staff

Areas for review and improvement:

- Comments have been provided elsewhere in this report on consultation and engagement undertaken and these should also be noted. The

council should regularly review the effectiveness of the forums and other means of consultation that are in place and refresh appropriately.

- Hartlepool like other areas are experiencing changes in population, particularly with newer migrant communities settling in the area. The processes that the council has in place should continue to review local profiles and make changes to representation as needed. The ‘Talking with Communities’ initiatives should provide clear insights into any population or other changes affecting communities.
- Periodically review and refresh the consultation guidelines and toolkit

SCORE	4
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Make all service level and employment objectives and targets available for consultation and scrutiny:

The Council can demonstrate that:

- Through its consultative and engagement activities it has ensured that information relating to equality objectives and targets is made widely available
- It has opened itself up to scrutiny at a number of levels, for example the Talking with Communities, consultations with Black and Minority Ethnic Groups, and consultations with LGBT groups has a separate diversity section on the ‘Your Town Your Say’ website
- It uses partnership working as a means of establishing shared objectives
- It publishes an annual Diversity report, and diversity reports and scorecards can be made available through the Covalent performance management system. The annual Diversity report sets out the targets for the previous year and details the progress made for each service area

Areas for review and improvement:

- To sustain and refresh the external stakeholder engagement to support the scrutiny process; and to link this with greater member involvement
- To ensure that it is effectively embedding scrutiny and challenge across all areas of equality planning including impact assessments
- Faith Community consultation

SCORE	4
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Make provision of language services appropriate to designated consultation and scrutiny groups :**The Council can demonstrate that:**

- It sets out the availability of information in a range of formats and languages, upon request, and provides language, large print and Braille translated materials at consultation events as appropriate
- That appropriate language and translation services are made available during consultation events including the provision of a TVDCS (Tees Valley and Durham Communication Service) interpreters. This provision has been place for BSL and Lip Speakers since 2005. Additionally the council sources language and other interpretation access support from a range of providers including AIRS (Gateshead), Big Word and K International
- Provides documents in Easy-read format in-house, and the council includes a 'browse aloud' facility on its websites

Areas for review and improvement

- The council should regularly review through monitoring and evaluation how effectively its language support mechanisms are meeting the needs of its minority communities and service users

SCORE	4
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Consultation is systematically built into equality impact assessment, self-assessment and the equality planning process:

The Council can demonstrate that:

- That it has opened its objective and target setting processes to consultation and scrutiny from stakeholder and partnership groups
- That it undertook an independent evaluation of a community stakeholder challenge group – this recommended that external stakeholder challenge should be more effectively built into the equality impact assessment processes³
- That it has consulted with a range of local groups on its strategic equality priorities
- That regular consultation is carried out with staff and staff representatives including the ‘Critical Challenge’ groups for which additional resources have been allocated for 2008/09 financial year
- The council has in place a two tier approach to impact assessments. The Diversity Impact Assessments (DIA) are carried out at policy level, and Impact Needs and Requirement Assessments are undertaken annually by every service (since 2005) and the procedures have been refined to include six equality strands⁴
- A ‘critical challenge’ with stakeholder groups is undertaken on specific DIA’s and INRA’s within each service area⁵

³ Independent assessment undertaken by Doug Feery, DIALOG consultant, June 2008 – report submitted as part of documentary evidence.

⁴ Currently the six equality strands include, Race, Gender, Disability, Age, Sexual Orientation and Religion or Belief

⁵ Examples viewed included those for the Adult and Community Services department

- The council uses its self assessment to balance the progress that has been achieved against equality targets and to identify gaps and improvements
- The council has demonstrated strong processes are in place for agreeing community strategy and LAA targets with a range of partners and stakeholders

Areas for review and improvement:

- HBC has taken a systematic approach to impact assessment, and has put in place a range of guidance and training support to ensure that impact assessments are part of the planning processes
- Assess progress being made to involve stakeholder (scrutiny) of impact assessments (Critical Challenge process) as recommended in the Consultants report of June 2008 (footnote 3)

SCORE	3/4
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Involve designated community, staff and stakeholder groups with scrutiny procedures:

The Council can demonstrate that:

- A wide range of external stakeholder groups are regularly consulted on a range of issues and services (see above) and this is an area of strength for the council – notable examples include ‘Getting Around Hartlepool’ scheme for improving road and travel safety; Fruit and Vegetable Bag Scheme
- External stakeholders have been consulted about impact assessments (see above re: external consultants report), and INRA’s have been open to discussion by community groups as part of the ‘Critical Challenge’ project

- Regular area forum meetings are held to discuss local issues, and Area forums for tackling community safety issues are also regularly held. Residents are encouraged to attend.
- Staff are involved in internal consultation and there are well developed equality forums in place across each of the service departments and regular staff surveys are carried out
- Members are informed of progress against equality work and consultations and progress is regularly reported through the councils democratic processes
- The council has in place a Consultation and Involvement plan that tracks progress against planned consultations
- The Hartlepool Community Strategy has a central aim of ‘empowering individuals, groups and communities, and increasing the involvement of citizens in all decisions that affect their lives’.

Areas for review and improvement

- The council should continue to develop a systematic approach to scrutiny of equality actions by external stakeholders using the mechanisms that it has developed. Whilst on the whole the council is doing well on providing information on what it is doing or intending to do, external stakeholders need to know about the findings of impact assessments, the contents of action plans, why specific improvement targets have been set and how they will be monitored. As the council develops these areas further and consistently across all service areas we would expect that refinements to self assessment and continuous improvement to equality planning would follow. The Critical Challenge project can be widened to strengthen scrutiny processes in this respect.
- The Consultation and Involvement plan is one area where the outcomes from consultation and responses from consulted can be strengthened to support the scrutiny processes as well as gauging stakeholder and customer views.

SCORE	4
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Consultation on equality to be linked with the continuing development of community strategies

The Council can demonstrate that:

- Hartlepool's Community Strategy & Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy (Hartlepool's Ambition) sets out priorities for ensuring consultation in the continuous development of strategic priorities
- Consultation was undertaken in the development of the Community Strategy & Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy, and in setting out the priorities and themes contained within this
- Hartlepool Borough Council works closely and in collaboration with partners and stakeholders in the development of regional priorities

Areas for review and improvement

- None identified – (except for those issues already highlighted in previous sections)

SCORE	4
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Publicise how, when and where actions on targets will start:

The Council can demonstrate that:

- Information on equality objectives, targets and actions is made available through the council's website and written information. Written information is widely distributed and made available in accessible formats where required
- It has a clearly laid out self-assessment document, and publishes an Annual Diversity Report that is distributed to partner and stakeholder groups

Areas for review and improvement:

- regularly review accessibility of publicised information and build in scrutiny and challenge mechanisms to support continuous improvement

SCORE	4
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5.5 Service Delivery and Customer Care

Equality objectives and targets developed within each department/service area for race, gender and disability based on completed impact assessments:

The Council can demonstrate that:

- Retrospective Equality impact assessments (INRA) or predictive diversity Impact assessments (DIAs) are completed in all service and corporate areas and the results can be fed into service plans or within project plans
- Departmental plans contain broad equality objectives and are subject to equality impact assessments and barriers to accessibility are discussed at team level
- Services INRAs and DIAs are open to ‘critical challenge’ by stakeholders as part of the community stakeholders challenge project
- The Diversity Steering Group helps prioritise actions and assesses resources implications arising from equality impact assessment at a corporate level

Areas for review and improvement:

- Whilst the council has in place a framework and performance management system that does support the delivery of its equality objectives, there are a number of areas observed, that require some attention. The impact assessments are used to uncover issues of

‘adverse impact’ and possible areas of ‘retrospective discrimination’. In some cases they are also highlighting priorities or areas that require improvements to be made. There is a need to ensure that consistency of approach is maintained across departments and that equality objectives and targets are based on identified need based on sound equality impact assessments. The assessors have noted that whilst equality impact assessments are required of all departments, there is not a corresponding requirement for consistency of DIA/INRA's across all service areas, policies or practices. Different departments/services are applying the impact assessment processes differently. For example impact assessments may be applied to a project, or a service outcome. And, it is not always the case for the impact assessments to be applied to a strategy or at the early stages of policy development. There are also inconsistencies with the addressing all of the equality strands, and most often this is due to the lack of availability of clear data or information. This is an area for review and improvement and further comments are specifically set out in the section below 6.1 below.

SCORE	3
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Equality objectives and targets developed within each department / service area for sexual orientation, religion and belief and age by March 2009

The Council can demonstrate that:

- The council is committed to working across a range of equality strands including those for sexual orientation, religion or belief and age.

Areas for review and improvement

- As highlighted above there is currently inconsistencies across the current (six) equality strands. The reasons for this are largely concerned with data quality and availability. Therefore this is highlighted as an area for review, although we would expect the council to be well placed to address any issues that are highlighted through continuous self-assessment.

SCORE 3

Service plans to specifically address the importance of barriers, accessibility and reasonable adjustment in the provision of services

The Council can demonstrate that:

- Service plans specifically address the need to complete INRAs or DIAs
- The council has a specific Disabilities Service to support access to people with disabilities, and this service has its own service plan which includes cross cutting areas for the whole council

Areas for review and improvement:

- These are linked to the section directly above and the comments related to impact assessment will apply here.

SCORE 3

Allocation of appropriate resources to achieve targets

The Council can demonstrate that:

- Training resources have been allocated for equality improvement work
- Staff time has been allocated to equality improvement work within all departments and services
- Specific funding has been allocated to equality improvement work with partners and stakeholders
- There is good allocation of staff resources and time for equality management

and improvement priorities through a dedicated Principal Diversity Officer's post, and through the development of performance management systems

- that both internal and external decision makers are made aware of and kept informed about equality priorities and developments

Areas for review and improvement

- Evaluate and keep under review as part of self-assessment process

SCORE	4
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Establish structures of responsibility at departmental and service level to progress action plans

The Council can demonstrate that:

- That it has developed very clear structures of responsibility and accountability at each level of the council at corporate and service/departmental levels including a Diversity Steering Group within each department
- That accountability for progress is also within the portfolio of the Deputy Mayor who is the Cabinet lead for Performance and the Cabinet Diversity Champion. In addition the Director for Children's Services takes the lead as Corporate Management Team Diversity Champion
- That equality management processes are supported by the Corporate Diversity Steering Group
- That it is embedding performance for delivering on equality objectives within the appraisal systems for staff and managers
- That service planning systematically sets equality objectives and targets
- A performance management system is in place (COVALENT) that supports the monitoring of equality objectives and targets
- Departments have carried out self-assessment exercise as part of the equality standard assessment and validation process

Areas for review and improvement

- Periodically review accountability structures through the self assessment process in place for equality performance management

SCORE	4
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Set timetables within action plans for creating/adapting information and monitoring systems within service areas

The Council can demonstrate that:

- That it has in place corporate guidance and support for effective monitoring
- Equality action plans are subjected to review and scrutiny

Areas for review and improvement

- It is recommended that the council reviews the processes currently in place for arriving at equality objectives against the comments already made elsewhere in this report in relation to equality impact assessments and linked to setting equality objectives and targets.

SCORE	3
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For agencies delivering services on behalf of the authority, include within contracts a requirement to deliver an effective and appropriate service, fairly and without unlawful discrimination

The Council can demonstrate that:

- Procurement/contractor guidelines are in place

Areas for review and improvement

- Monitor agencies and services, using results to inform improvements

SCORE	3
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Establish monitoring of contracts to secure equal employment and equal service delivery targets

The Council can demonstrate that:

- That external contracts are subject to the council's procurement and contract policies

Areas for review and improvement:

- Monitor as part of equality self-assessment process and review outcomes against key equality groups and targets

SCORE	3
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Start action on departmental and service area targets

The Council can demonstrate that:

- Equality objectives and targets are set within each service area and corporately; and the council can demonstrate that it is taking action to meet its overall equality objectives and specifically services are working towards actions set or established within specific plans or projects as identified
- It has the capacity to coordinate and report on equality action taken to meet targets

Areas for review and improvement :

- The comments already made elsewhere in this report are applicable to meeting targets – for example improvements in data capture and quality and impact assessment processes
- Address gaps in service targets that have been identified across some of the equality strands

SCORE	3
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5.6 Employment and Training

Set employment equality targets for recruitment, staff retention, work force profiles for race, gender and disability

The council can demonstrate that:

- It has set targets in line with BVPI's covering gender, ethnicity and disability. More recently this has been supplemented by targets for gender (whole workforce) and age
- The targets are set in the context of a Local Labour Market Assessment carried out in 2004 and 2007 by the Joint Strategy Unit supported by the five Tees Valley councils
- It wants to maintain BVPIs in this area by setting locally determined targets

Areas for review and improvement

- The figures show an under representation of disabled people within the Council's workforce. We note that the Council is seeking to improve on this position through a variety of means including working closely with the Disability Employment Advisors at Job Centre Plus and local disability organisations. Other measures have included hosting disabled job seekers within departments and offering long term placements in HR for people with learning difficulties. It is vital that the Council continues with its efforts to establish why disabled people are not represented and put in place more positive action measures to improve on this position.

SCORE	3
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Set employment equality targets for recruitment, staff retention, work force profiles sexual orientation, religion or belief and age according to available data

The council can demonstrate that:

- It has begun to monitor sexual orientation and religion or belief in employment and training
- Once the Council has sufficient data, targets will be set and compared to locally available data
- The Council is due to procure a new HR/Payroll system which should improve its capacity to undertake detailed monitoring

Areas for review and improvement

- Again once the Council has some baseline data it needs to consider whether any positive action measures need to be put in place.

SCORE	3
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Conduct and equal pay review and plan for equal pay adjustment

The Council can demonstrate that:

- A Single Status Agreement was adopted by the Council in May 2008 including a revised pay and grading structure
- New rates of pay have been implemented for all employees and back pay has also been settled

Areas for review and improvement

- None identified

SCORE	4
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Establish that policies and procedures associated with equality are part of staff handbook and are understood by staff

The Council can demonstrate that:

- New employees are made aware of all the key policies and procedures during their induction

- Contracts of employment state where policies can be viewed
- Existing staff are made aware of any changes in policies and procedures through the Council's newsletter and leaflets
- Employee surveys measure the extent to which staff have an awareness and understanding of the Council's policies including those relating to equality and diversity.

Areas for review and improvement:

- None identified

SCORE	4
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Ensure that staff and members are aware of action plans and the implications for services and employment

The Council can demonstrate that:

- Staff are kept aware through team meetings which include equality and diversity as standard agenda items
- Progress on actions in corporate, departmental and service plans is also reviewed at team meetings
- All front-line staff interviewed during the assessment for Level 3 were fully aware of equality actions for their service including positive actions and outcomes for local communities

Areas for review and improvement

- Front-line staff in particular were very keen to establish links with colleagues in other departments and share information about engaging with communities and improving service delivery. This was very evident during and after our interviews with groups of front-line staff. The Council should consider how best to share practice particularly at front-line staff

SCORE	4
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Provide training for managers on the implementation of the Standard with contractors and partners

The Council can demonstrate that:

- As part of the Leadership and Management Development programme, procurement module was delivered to managers. This covered equality issues as laid out in the procurement guide

Areas for review and improvement

- The Council's self-assessments identifies this as an area for further work and strengthening, particularly on monitoring outputs and outcomes.

SCORE	2/3
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Appraise competency/behaviours to ensure that managers and staff are capable of implementing the Equality Standard, including the new strands of sexual orientation, religion or belief and age

The Council can demonstrate that:

- The Council's competency framework includes two management of diversity competencies – managing service related equality and diversity issues and promoting equality and valuing diversity
- Again, managers and staff interviewed during this assessment, were very well aware of the behaviours and competencies that enable services to be more accessible and relevant to diverse communities. However, this needs to be developed across all 6 strands and both managers and staff should engage with diverse communities on a regular basis so as to develop a better understanding

Areas for review and improvement

- Development of appraisal and competency framework should take account of a range of equality strands. We would expect that the council will be developing this in line with the requirements of changing legislative and local government policy frameworks⁶.

SCORE	4
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Provide training for all staff on the detailed implementation of the Equality Standard including action plans and updates on legal and other developments**The Council can demonstrate that:**

- The Leadership and Management Development Programme has built into it specific modules such as on age regulations. The programme also covers the equality standard and impact assessments
- Departmental workshops on integrating impact assessments into service planning are also provided
- Training was also provided for staff involved in the Critical Challenge process

Areas for review and improvement:

- None identified

SCORE	4
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The Local Government Workforce Strategies address equality issues**The Council can demonstrate that:**

- Two of the Council's corporate workforce strategies – The People Strategy 2006-2009 and the Workforce Development Strategy 2007-

⁶ Changes to equality legislation includes the forthcoming Single Equality Act, and the Comprehensive Area Assessment.

2012 are underpinned by its Equality and Diversity in Employment policy and Single Status Agreement.

Areas for review and improvement:

- None identified

SCORE	4
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Build equality objectives and targets into management appraisal mechanisms

The Council can demonstrate that:

- Equality and diversity is a core value in the Council's competency framework
- Annual appraisals are held with all employees and include actions and targets on equality and diversity improvements
- The 'Be the Difference' leadership and management development programme supports the council's corporate aims for equality and diversity through understanding and developing the kind of managers that Hartlepool needs

Areas for review and improvement:

- Review and evaluate the management appraisal mechanisms in place, and the 'Be the Difference' initiative against equality criteria and within the self assessment process for equality management

SCORE	4
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Provide information and appropriate training on action plans to support the scrutiny process

The Council can demonstrate that:

- Information on employment matters is received by the Performance Portfolio holders and the Local Joint Consultative Committee
- The Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee and the Service Scrutiny forums consider the Corporate Plan, prior to consideration and adoption by Cabinet
- Regular monitoring reports are presented to Portfolio Holders

Areas for review and improvement:

- There was no evidence of any training for those involved in the scrutiny process

SCORE	3
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Start action on all employment and pay targets

The Council can demonstrate that:

- Action on all targets has commenced

Areas for review and improvement:

- Actions should be kept under review and evaluated as part of equality objectives, and in line with the requirements specified within the equality scheme, in accordance with statutory requirements

SCORE	4
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6. Consolidating Level 3, achieving Level 4

6.1 Consolidating Level 3

The assessment scores show that the Council is performing well at Level 3 of the Standard. However, there are some areas for improvement identified that require attention in order to consolidate Level 3. It is recommended that the following issues be addressed:

- I. The Council should be in a position now to develop more and improved outcome focused objectives and targets that are also strand specific. Currently, equality objectives within the Equality Scheme and action plans tend to be mainly output focused – for example, related to carrying out consultation or further consultation; or requiring further data. This does not fully reflect the true nature of inequalities in Hartlepool or how the Council intends to improve and enhance access, chances, opportunities and aspirations across all its communities. It is vital that when the Equality Scheme and the Equality Strategy and Policy are next reviewed that much more sharper outcome focused actions are developed. The self-assessment processes once further developed should support this.
- II. The Equality Standard requires that all the Council functions, services and policies should be assessed over a period of time based on a prioritisation process. The Corporate Diversity Steering Group should consider a planned approach to undertaking Equality Impact Assessments – or as in the case of Hartlepool to Impact Needs Requirement Assessments or INRA's across all the Council's activities.
- III. It is vital that both the DIAs and INRA's are used more systematically in determining local needs and requirements and tested by the critical challenge process. There should be a clear link between objectives determined by INRA's and those contained within corporate, departmental and service plans. The 'critical challenge' currently in place is an important part of the process and is to be commended as an area of good practice. However, this can be further developed to support the scrutiny and challenge elements that are highlighted in this report as potential areas for improvement. Within this we recommend that consultation and evaluation exercises are carried out with stakeholders to determine the extent to which engagement,

scrutiny and critical challenge can be enhanced, and how stakeholders can be further supported to provide this effectively.

- IV. Information gathering including monitoring needs to be firmly embedded in the Council's work. In particular, the requirement for additional data and monitoring across all equality strands has been highlighted.
- V. The council has acknowledged that it needs to improve and indeed is improving monitoring and data management well. As stated elsewhere in this report, data and target setting is inconsistently applied across all equality strands. The council is beginning to identify and is self-aware of the gaps in monitoring and service managers have identified the actions that they need to take, through the DIA/INRAs and equality action planning processes. The Equality Standard guidance states:

' Target setting and action planning should have monitoring built in. Effective monitoring checks the progress made towards achieving specific targets and is not a generalised process of information collection'

- VI. Positive action measures in employment should be considered to address the under-representation of disabled people in the workforce.
- VII. Consideration should be given to how front-line staff, across the authority, share information and good practice on accessibility to services
- VIII. The Council's excellent work in engaging with its diverse communities needs to be sustained by ensuring that all service areas engage with communities through established forums and networks and this informs the way in which the Council undertakes all its business.

IX. The council has good procurement and contracting processes in place for ensuring that contractors and commissioning agents are aware of the council's equality objectives, and are abiding by equality legal requirements. Equally, processes are in place for providing training and guidance for managers on these requirements. However, it was unclear from the evidence provided as to the effectiveness of these processes and procedures. We would therefore recommend that such equality outcomes relating to equality procurement or commissioning of goods and services is monitored and evaluated as part of the next round of equality self-assessment. An impact assessment on the outcomes of such procedures should also be considered and the findings used to where any improvements or changes should be made.

6.2 The Requirements of Level 4

To achieve Level 4 of the ESLG an authority will have to show that it has achieved progress against the Level 3 targets that it set for race, gender and disability, and, that by 2009 it has achieved progress across the authority for sexual orientation, age, religion and belief (as set out in the revised ESLG June 2007).

In addition to the two criteria set out above the general requirements for Level 4 are that an authority can demonstrate that:

- It has developed information and monitoring systems that will allow it to assess progress in achieving targets
- It is measuring progress against targets and effectively using its information and monitoring systems
- Monitoring reports are being produced at specific intervals and circulated to designated consultation and scrutiny groups
- It is using the self assessment process to review and revise targets and its monitoring and consultation systems

- Self assessment includes the involvement of designated staff, community and stakeholders groups and seeks external validation through community involvement, peer review or expert opinion
- It has continued to carry out impact assessments for new policies and where gaps are identified through self assessment
- It has initiated a new round of action planning and target setting
- Monitoring systems are providing useful information towards specific targets

7. The Equality Improvement Framework for Local Government

The Equality Standard for Local Government (ESLG) was established as a best value performance Indicator in 2001, after a long and extensive development process, and has since then been seen as the foremost performance improvement and management system for equalities in English local government and public services sectors. Over time the ESLG has undergone review and refinement to take account of changing legal and policy frameworks. The Improvement and Development Agency (IDeA) has recently developed the Equality Framework for Local Government (EFLG). The IDeA offers local authorities the option to ‘migrate’ from the ESLG to the EFLG. The EFLG whilst building on the ESLG is considerably different, and at present the EFLG is undergoing final consultations and has not yet been formally been launched, although this is expected shortly. However, the draft documents currently available for the EFLG has the following summary features:

The EFLG⁷ has three levels

- Developing

⁷ Equality Framework for Local Government – IDeA January 2009 version

- Achieving
- Excellent

And; it has five 'areas' against which performance is measured:

- Knowing your community – equality mapping
- Place shaping, leadership, partnership and organisational commitment
- Community engagement and satisfaction
- Responsive services and customer care
- A modern and diverse workforce

Councils that have already done work with the Equality Standard, and that wish to proceed to working with the EFLG will be able to 'migrate' to the EFLG. Therefore those currently working at levels 1 and 2 of the ESLG can claim to be at the 'Developing' level. Those at level 3 can claim to be at the 'Achieving' level. However those authorities at level 4 can only claim 'Moving Towards Excellence' classification. Those authorities that currently claim to be at level 5 can migrate to the 'Excellent' classification.

On this basis therefore, if HBC 'migrates' to the Equality Framework for Local Government working at level 3 of the Equality Standard, it will be treated as and 'Achieving' authority for the five substantive areas described above. It will then be working towards 'Excellent' level of the EFLG

The documents setting out the EFLG do not distinguish between those authorities that have been independently assessed against level 3 or level 5 of the Equality Standard, or those that are 'self-claiming' to be at these current levels. The IDeA has stated that authorities at the Achieving and Excellent levels will be required to undergo an external assessment, and a 'Peer Challenge' will be offered for these assessments.

Those authorities undergoing Peer Challenge and successfully meeting the self-assessment requirements for ‘achieving’ or ‘excellent’ classifications can obtain a Kite-mark.

As Hartlepool Borough Council have undergone and achieved a level 3 Equality Mark Award, then the council will be able to claim the ‘Achieving’ category under the EFLG. If the council decided to do this, then it would mean that the council would carry on forward with the EFLG towards the ‘Excellent’ category. However, HBC along with other local authorities will still have the option of continuing to work with the Equality Standard Framework and undergoing an independent assessment and validation under the ‘Equality Mark’ scheme at Level 5. Alternatively HBC can take the option of undergoing an Equality Mark assessment at the Excellence category of the EFLG. As both the ESLG and the EFLG are not currently within the National (Performance) Indicator (NI) framework for Audit and Inspection purposes, for example the Comprehensive Area Assessments either of these options are viable ways forward. The important point is that the Audit Commission will be seeking evidence on a range of equality NI’s, and will be mindful of the increased legal duties presented within the Single Equality Bill, as well as the existing legal and equality policy frameworks.

8. Conclusion

Hartlepool Borough Council is to be congratulated on a strong achievement against Level 3 of the Equality Standard for Local Government. The council has shown a clear commitment to improving its approach and outcomes to equality, and has directed resources to support these aims. The three elements of the assessment: the self assessment document, the supporting evidence and the interviews provided a consistent view of the councils’ achievements and clearly highlighted the areas where it needs to make improvements.

In particular it should be noted that during interviews staff were enthusiastic and clear about their responsibilities for improving the way in which they

deliver services to communities and those in most need. The external stakeholder focus group participants were equally enthusiastic about the way in which the council had progressed, and although candid and open in their discussions about where further improvements could be made, were nevertheless highly positive of the councils equality policies and progress.

The assessors therefore recommend that Hartlepool Borough Council should receive the Equality Mark Certificate for level 3 achievement.

9. Acknowledgements

The assessors wish to thank all the staff, elected members and representatives of external groups and organisations and individuals whom we met for their very helpful contribution to the assessment. In particular, we would like to thank Vijaya Kotur and her team for their time and the extremely efficient organisational support provided to us.

10. Assessors

This assessment was carried out by Nasreen Kaleem (Centre for Local Policy Studies) and Meena Patel (Associate Consultant, Improvement & Development Agency and the Centre for Local Policy Studies).

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