



Race Equality Policy

The Council has opted to adopt the Race Equality Policy as provided by SLCC July 2007.

The Race Relations Act 1976 (as amended by the Race Relations (Amendment Act 2000)) places a general duty on a wide range of public authorities to promote race equality. This duty means that, in everything they do, the authorities should have due regard to the need to:

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

All councils must make race equality a central part of their functions (such as planning, employment, policy making and service delivery). Most councils already have good practices in operation against sex and disability discrimination and the adoption of this code should be an extension of these policies.

Duties of Parish and Town Councils

Most clauses of the Act are applicable to larger public authorities with over 150 employees. Parish and town councils are covered only by the general duty to promote racial equality as defined in appendix 1 of the RRAA 2000 Act.

The benefits of the duty are:

- To improve the authority's ability to deliver suitable and accessible service that meet varied need
- Encourage greater openness (part of the Government's 'Modernising Local Councils')
- Increase confidence in public services, especially among ethnic minority communities and contribute to better decision making
- Improve staff morale, staff management and avoid claims of unlawful discrimination

What it means in practice

In most Councils race equality will be more relevant to some of the functions (e.g. public services) than others. Under section 71 (1) of the Act, councils are expected to have due regard to the three parts of the duty, listed above. 'Due regard' means taking into account racial equality, even if the ethnic population in the parish is very small. In practice, this may involve giving additional considerations and providing adequate funding to those functions affecting the public. The Act does not mean that councils have to measure the number of ethnic minorities or to fill a quota, just that the council ensures that it does not discriminate on racial grounds.

Although small parish councils should not have too much difficulty applying the Act for their council, Clerks do need to consider any Committees or Partnerships that manage any of the council's activities. For example, a parish council may have a village hall managed wholly or in partnership by the council. The Act will apply to the hall management as it is deemed a public body and the Clerk will have to ensure that an assessment is carried out for race equality.

The following **four steps** should enable the provisions of the Act to be met through the council's existing policy making arrangement:

a) Identify which of their council's functions are relevant to the duty:

Make a list of what activities their council are involved in and then check each activity against the duty.

- *Village Hall Trustees*
- *Adversane Hall Trustees*
- *Billingshurst Community Partnership*

Each organisation listed above will be provided with a copy of this policy.

b) Set priorities for these functions, based on their relevance to race equality. Assign priorities to those activities that are most relevant.

Ensure that consultation with community in inclusion, identify any hard to reach groups.

c) Assess how these relevant functions and any related policies affect race quality

The council should draw up a clear strategy on the aims of the functions. It should consider which information will affect possible users of services. Information can be sought from previous research/surveys, record of complaints and local meetings.

d) Consider how the policies might be changed to meet the general duty.

Could any existing policies inadvertently put a racial group at a disadvantage. If the answer is yes, review the policy.

Clerks will probably already be fulfilling the requirements of the code within the normal standards of public accountability and equal opportunities. If in doubt stop and ask the key question: What action should I take to eliminate discrimination and promote equality of opportunity and good race relations?

Useful contacts:

Council for Racial Equality
Tel help line: 02078287022

Website: www.cre.gov.uk