

Report to the Cabinet

Report reference: C-018-2016/17
Date of meeting: 1 September 2016



Portfolio: Governance and Development Management

Subject: Equality Policy 2016

Responsible Officer: Barbara Copson (01992 564042)

Democratic Services Officer: Gary Woodhall (01992 564470)

Recommendations/Decisions Required:

(1) That the Council's Equality Policy 2016 be recommended to Council for adoption.

Executive Summary:

The Equality Act 2010 places a number of duties upon the Council including the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED). This is a wide ranging duty and proactive requirement to integrate consideration of equality and good relations into the day-to-day business of public authorities. Considering how a function can affect different groups in different ways can lead to the function having the intended effect and lead to greater equality and better outcomes. It requires equality considerations to be reflected into the design of policies and the delivery of services, including internal policies, and for these to be kept under review.

The Council has arrangements in place to deliver the work required and ensure its equality responsibilities are met. This work is supported by an Equality Framework which includes an Equality Policy. The current policy was agreed in 2011 and considerable progress has been achieved since then and therefore the policy needs updating to reflect our current position and arrangements for the delivery of our equality work.

Reasons for Proposed Decision:

The Council is responsible for the development and coordination of an approach to its statutory equality duties, and their delivery.

The adoption of a policy provides good evidence of proactive or forward-thinking management in relation to our equality work and provides guidance for staff.

Other Options for Action:

Not to have a policy; however this would reduce clarity and structure regarding the Council's equality work.

Report:

1. The Equality Act 2010 Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) places wide ranging and proactive duties upon the Council through the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED). In summary, those subject to the equality duty must, in the exercise of their functions, have due regard to the need to:

- eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act;
- advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not; and
- foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

2. The equality duty covers the nine protected characteristics: age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation. Public authorities also need to have due regard to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination against someone because of their marriage or civil partnership status.

3. In addition to the PSED further specific duties require the production of equality objectives; that we understand how the Council's functions impact on the people; and for the Council to publish equality information annually setting out the progress it has made in the previous 12 months.

4. The broad purpose of the equality duties is to integrate consideration of equality and good relations into the day-to-day business of public authorities and the Council must consider how it can pro-actively and positively contribute to this throughout its service delivery and employment functions. However In addition to greater equality for customers and employees the PSED also makes good business sense as it can lead to services that are more appropriate to the user, and services that are more effective and cost-effective. This can lead to increased satisfaction with public services.

5. Meeting equality duties requires knowledge, understanding and systems embedded throughout the Council to ensure the duties are delivered as required throughout Council functions. To support this work the council adopted its first Equality Policy in 2011 to set out our commitment to equality, how we will deliver our equality duties, and how we organise ourselves to do this. This policy has been useful to help staff to understand our approach and what is expected of them. It has also helped our customers to understand our responsibilities and how we are addressing them.

6. Significant progress has been made since then to develop knowledge and processes and deliver against legislative requirements. A new policy is required and has therefore been produced to reflect our current position and approach. The Equality Policy 2016 is attached at Appendix 1.

7. This policy has received input from the Corporate Equality Working Group, and has been approved by the Council's Management Board. Cabinet is requested to consider the policy and recommend it to Full Council for adoption.

Resource Implications:

The implementation of the Equality Policy is managed within existing resources. The delivery of commitments within this policy and particularly the equality objectives requires the use of resources within other service directorates.

Legal and Governance Implications:

The production of an equality policy is not a specific requirement of equality legislation, however it is a useful tool to support the organisation and delivery of work to achieve compliance with equality legislation.

Safer, Cleaner and Greener Implications:

None.

Consultation Undertaken:

Management Board and the Corporate Equality Working Group.

Background Papers:

Equality Policy 2011, Equality Objectives 2016-2020.

Risk Management:

A policy helps support the Council's delivery of its equality duties and therefore the risk of non-compliance is reduced.

Due Regard Record



SUBJECT: Equality Policy 2016

REPORT TO: Cabinet (1 September 2016)

Date/Officer	Summary of equality analysis
<p>4 August 2016</p> <p>B Copson</p>	<p>An Equality Policy helps to support the delivery of work to ensure equality legislation is complied with. It includes our commitment to equality and details the responsibilities of staff and members, and provides information about levels of training to support staff and members to comply with equality requirements.</p> <p>Close compliance with equality requirements helps to maximise the potential benefits of the legislation and minimise the risk of non-compliance.</p> <p>This policy reflects our current arrangements and mechanisms for delivering equality work. This policy applies to all staff and elected members and helps to support them in their work. It provides information for customers about how the Council meets its duties and provides reassurance that it is organised and forward thinking in its approach to and delivery of the work.</p> <p>The policy should be considered as a tool to support relevant work and a source of information about that work and how it is delivered.</p>