

EQUALITY STRATEGY

Relevant Portfolio Holder	Cllr John Fisher
Portfolio Holder Consulted	Yes
Relevant Head of Service	Deb Poole, Head of Business Transformation & Organisational Development
Ward(s) Affected	All
Key Decision	

1. SUMMARY OF PROPOSALS

- 1.1 To agree for recommendation to Council the new Equality Strategy.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 **The Committee is asked to RECOMMEND to the Council**

that the Equality Strategy attached at Appendix 1 be approved and adopted.

3. KEY ISSUES

Financial Implications

- 3.1 There are no financial implications arising directly from this report; however, having a meaningful Equality Strategy will ensure that the Council considers equalities issues as an employer and deliverer of services. This will contribute towards the delivery of more relevant and appropriate services, which are generally more cost effective. Working towards the aims of the strategy could also be beneficial in regards of the council's reputation and may help to reduce potential complaints.

Legal Implications

- 3.3 The Equality Strategy contributes to how we meet the Public Sector Equality Duty established in the Equality Act 2010.

It requires public bodies to have due regard to the need to:

- eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Equality Act 2010
- 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

The Council must be able to evidence *how* due regard has been taken in regards to decision making and service change through the consideration of equality impacts in terms of the Council's role as a deliverer of services and as an employer.

When procuring or commissioning services to be delivered by a third party on our behalf, the requirements of the Act are still the responsibility of the Council.

In addition, public authorities also have specific duties and must do the following:

- publish equality information at least once a year to show how they've complied with the equality duty
- prepare and publish equality objectives at least every four years

The publication of our Equality Strategy will support us in meeting the general and specific duties placed on us as part of the Equality Act (equality objectives are included as appendix 1 of the strategy).

- 3.4 The strategy reinforces previous work around the Equality Act 2010 which included an extensive programme of workshops during 2013 and 2014. Further training/workshops will be scheduled during 2017; this will be delivered alongside Dignity at Work content.
- 3.5 The strategy will be reviewed every four years or sooner to comply with changes to the law or policy and practice.

Service / Operational Implications

- 3.6 The strategy will help all parts of the Council, staff and Elected Members, in ensuring that we deliver appropriate services which meet the needs of our communities.
- 3.7 The strategy will help to reinforce the Council's responsibilities as an employer, detailed further in Appendix 2, the draft Equal Opportunities Policy (please note; this Policy has had only a minor amendment to wording in section 4 'Protected Characteristics' since adoption in 2015 to reflect changes to accepted terminology. The change has been highlighted for clarity).
- 3.7 The Unison representative has been consulted on the strategy and expressed support for the content and structure.

- 3.8 Consultation on the strategy was also undertaken with several service managers/officers, including the Community Safety Manager and the Senior Marketing and Communications Officer.

Customer / Equalities and Diversity Implications

- 3.9 The Equality Strategy sets out our commitment for progressing equality over the next four years. The Systems Thinking approach that the Council has adopted necessitates looking at what we do from the customers (or residents) point of view and understanding their different and sometimes multiple needs (including those who do not actively engage with the Council). By recognising these different needs, the Council will be better placed to design and deliver appropriate and relevant services to the communities it serves. The strategy strengthens the Council's commitment to treating our residents and customers fairly and with respect.
- 3.10 The strategy relates directly to how the Council approaches equality and diversity and will form overarching principles for how we engage with, support and empower all members of our community. The strategy also reinforces the responsibility the Council has as an employer in regard to equality issues and the requirement to consider the equality impacts that decisions and policies may potentially have on employees and the public.

4. RISK MANAGEMENT

- 4.1 There are no risk management implications arising directly from this report.

5. APPENDICES

Appendix 1 - Draft Equality Strategy

Appendix 2- Draft Equal Opportunities Policy (amended)

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