

Report to the Council

Committee: Cabinet

Date: 27 September 2016

Subject: Equality Policy 2016

Portfolio Holder: Councillor R Bassett

Recommending:

(1) That the Council's Equality Policy 2016 be adopted.

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:

(a) eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act;

(b) advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not; and

(c) 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 and the Cabinet. The Council is requested to consider the policy and approve its adoption.

8. We recommend as set out at the commencement of this report.