

REPORT TO EXECUTIVE

Date of Meeting: 3 November 2020

REPORT TO COUNCIL

Date of Meeting: 15 December 2020

Report of: Director Transformation

Title: Review of Equality and Diversity Policy

Is this a Key Decision?

No

Is this an Executive or Council Function?

Council

1. What is the report about?

To seek approval for the adoption of the revised Equality and Diversity Policy.

2. Recommendations:

2.1 That Executive supports the revised Equality and Diversity Policy; and

2.2 That Council approves the revised Equality and Diversity Policy.

3. Reasons for the recommendation:

The Equality and Diversity Policy has been updated to ensure it reflects current process relating in particular to the production of Equality Impact Assessments and the recent updates to Statutory Taxi and Private Hire Vehicle Standards.

4. What are the resource implications including non financial resources.

The report is an update on the policy. The policy will require a heightened awareness from staff in their day to day work to take account of equality considerations which may require additional time. There will also be a requirement for training and awareness raising programmes to ensure all staff understand their responsibilities.

5. Section 151 Officer comments:

There are no additional financial implications for Council to consider contained within this report.

6. What are the legal aspects?

6.1 The Equality Act 2010 public sector equality duty comprises a general duty supported by specific duties. The general equality duty requires public authorities, in the exercise of their functions, to have due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Act;
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and people who do not share it; and
- Foster good relations between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not.

6.2 The Equality Act brought together and harmonised all previous nine main pieces of equality legislation covering service provision and employment, protecting individuals against discrimination

7. Monitoring Officer's comments:

The Monitoring Officer is happy to endorse this Policy to members in order to ensure that we comply with our statutory obligations.

8. Report details:

8.1 Equality and Diversity Policy

8.2 This policy was last reviewed in 2018. The current review makes minor amendments to reflect current procedures such as those for Equality Impact Assessments and the recent Statutory Taxi and Private Hire Vehicle Standards.

8.3 The policy is subject to ongoing annual review in order to respond to changes in legislation and best practice.

8.4 Members are asked to endorse this document.

8.5 Key Achievements

8.6 Since the previous iteration of the policy a new procedure for the production of Equality Impact Assessments has been developed. This procedure, which is available on the intranet, provides clarity about when and how to write assessments and has increased the number being produced for members to aid their decision making.

8.7 A training session is planned for service leads to provide further guidance on best practice in writing these assessments.

8.8 As part of the Council's rapid response to the outbreak of Covid 19, work was undertaken to ensure that information on how to access help and support, including grants, was made available to harder to hear groups through the Exeter Community Wellbeing programme and Covid-19 Exeter Wellbeing Support Fund. A link to the British Sign Language translation of Government guidance has also been included on the Council's web site.

8.9 The Council has responded to the requirements of the 2018 Accessibility Regulations for websites by producing guidance for staff, available on the intranet, on how to make documents and web pages fully accessible. Since February 2020 no content will be published on the website unless it meets these requirements.

9. How does the decision contribute to the Council's Corporate Plan?

In promoting equality and diversity the policy contributes directly to three strands of the Corporate Plan:

- Lead a well-run Council;
- Building great neighbourhoods; and
- Supporting active and healthy lifestyles

10. What risks are there and how can they be reduced?

10.1 Failure to meet duties under the Equality Act 2010 risk challenge from the public and community groups.

10.2 The Council's Corporate Equality and Diversity Group provides governance to the policy and resulting actions.

11. Equality Act 2010 (The Act)

11.1 Under the Act's Public Sector Equalities Duty, decision makers are required to consider the need to:

- eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other prohibited conduct;
- advance equality by encouraging participation, removing disadvantage, taking account of disabilities and meeting people's needs; and
- foster good relations between people by tackling prejudice and promoting understanding.

11.2 In order to comply with the general duty authorities must assess the impact on equality of decisions, policies and practices. These duties do not prevent the authority from reducing services where necessary, but they offer a way of developing proposals that consider the impacts on all members of the community.

11.3 In making decisions the authority must take into account the potential impact of that decision in relation to age, disability, race/ethnicity (includes Gypsies and Travellers), sex and gender, gender identity, religion and belief, sexual orientation, pregnant women and new and breastfeeding mothers, marriage and civil partnership status in coming to a decision.

11.4 In recommending this proposal potential impact has been identified on people with protected characteristics as determined by the Act and an Equalities Impact Assessment has been included in the background papers for Member's attention.

12. Carbon Footprint (Environmental) Implications:

12.1 No direct carbon/environmental impacts arising from the recommendations.

13. Are there any other options?

None.

Director Transformation, Jo Yelland

Author: Melinda Pogue-Jackson, Policy Officer – Community Safety, Safeguarding and Equality and Diversity

Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1972 (as amended)

Background papers used in compiling this report:-

None

Contact for enquires:
Democratic Services (Committees)
Room 4.36
01392 265275