

**CABINET**

**DATE OF MEETING: 7 SEPTEMBER 2017**

**TITLE OF REPORT: CORPORATE EQUALITY POLICY AND OBJECTIVES (2017-21)**

**Report of: Head of Regulatory Services**

**Cabinet member: Councillor James Radley, Services**

**I PURPOSE OF REPORT**

**1.1** To obtain Cabinet approval for the draft Corporate Equality Policy and Objectives 2017-21 attached at Appendix A and B.

**2 OFFICER RECOMMENDATION**

**2.1** That the Corporate Equality Policy and proposed Equality Objectives for 2017-21 be adopted.

**3 BACKGROUND**

**3.1** The Council's vision for Hart is a district that appreciates and celebrates its diversity, challenges intolerance and discrimination, and positively promotes equality. It also, through the effective delivery of services and activities, is a district where all residents have the opportunity to contribute towards and benefit from the district's success.

**3.2** The Equality Act 2010 introduced a new Public Sector Equality Duty. The general equality duty (the 'aims') requires public authorities, in the exercise of their functions, to have due regard to the need to:

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

**3.3** In addition, the Public Sector Equality duty placed specific duties upon local authorities to:

- 3.3.1** Publish information to show their compliance which must include publishing information in relation to the make-up of the overall workforce with respect to their characteristics e.g. age, sex, race in comparison to the characteristics of the local population;
- 3.3.2** Prepare and publish one or more equality objectives which will help the Council meet the three aims of the Equality Duty, every four years.

- 3.4** In May 2014 the Council adopted a Corporate Equality Policy and set of Equality Objectives for the period 2014-17 which set out how the council works to fulfil its equality duties as a service provider and employer.
- 3.5** Since the adoption of the Policy and Objectives the Council has taken steps to improve its knowledge of residents and staff, and ensure residents can have involvement in how we develop and deliver our services by:
- 3.5.1 Engaging with a range of existing groups, organisations and forums such as the Hart Ageing Well Network and a wide range of voluntary and community groups through Hart Voluntary Action;
  - 3.5.2 Building links with new groups such as the Fleet Nepalese Community Group and Autism Friendly Fleet group;
  - 3.5.3 Ensuring staff and councillors have a clear understanding of our equality duties with regards to residents and within the workplace, through the introduction of training and information sessions.
- 3.6** The Corporate Equality Policy has been reviewed as part of the council's standard process of policy review. Some minor changes have been made to the language and terminology within the policy to bring it in line with best practice. There has also been further clarification of the Council's approach to responding to requests from residents for information in alternative formats and languages. The refreshed policy can be found in Appendix A.
- 3.7** Four proposed Equality Objectives for the period 2017-21 (set out in Appendix B) have been developed in consultation with the council's 'Customer Services Champions Group' which has officer representation from across the council. The Objectives are designed to help the council build on the progress made to date, and to further strengthen our approach, ensuring equality considerations are mainstreamed into the everyday business of the council and that there is consistency across services, and to ensure the council remains responsive to the changing demographics and needs of Hart's community.
- 3.8** Stakeholder feedback was sought on the draft objectives through key forums including: Hart Health & Wellbeing Board; Hart Ageing Well Network; Hart Voluntary Action and members (voluntary and community groups); Hart Housing Management Forum; North Hampshire Domestic Abuse Forum; Safer North Hampshire Community Safety Partnership. 9 responses were received from a range groups and organisations including housing associations, community groups and statutory services. The feedback was used to further refine the objectives and specific actions.

## **4 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

There are no additional financial implications identified within the recommendation made in this paper. Work to deliver against the proposed Equality Objectives will be undertaken within existing resources.

**5 EQUALITY CONSIDERATIONS**

An initial Equality Impact Assessment has been carried out and no negative equality impacts have been identified.

**6 ACTION**

It is requested that Cabinet note the contents of this paper and approve the Officer recommendation set out in section 2 above.

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**APPENDICES**

Appendix A Draft Corporate Equality Policy 2017-21

Appendix B Proposed Equality Objectives 2017-21

**BACKGROUND PAPERS: None**



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## Corporate Equality Policy

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<b><i>Date created</i></b>	April 2017	<b><i>Department</i></b>	Regulatory Services
<b><i>Review date</i></b>	March 2021	<b><i>Version</i></b>	1.0
<b><i>Effective date</i></b>			
<b><i>Equality Impact Assessment: (EIA)</i></b>	Date undertaken:	May 2017	
	Issues (if any):		



**Corporate Equality Policy and Objectives**

- 1. Policy Statement**
- 2. What is Equality and Diversity?**
- 3. Why do we need an Equality Policy?**
- 4. The Council's Commitment to Equality and Diversity**
- 5. Responsibility and Accountability**
- 6. What You Can Expect From the Council**
- 7. Corporate Equality Objectives 2017-21**

***Hart District Council believes that interests of residents, staff and the Council are best served by the creation and implementation of clear and consistent policies and procedures. This policy statement details the Council's policy on and commitment to equality and diversity, and takes into consideration all current legal requirements.***

## **1. Policy Statement**

- 1.1 The Council's vision for Hart is a district that appreciates and celebrates its diversity, challenges intolerance and discrimination, and positively promotes equality. It also, through the effective delivery of services and activities, is a district where all residents have the opportunity to contribute towards and benefit from the district's success.
- 1.2 The Council is committed to working towards the elimination of discrimination, and to achieve equality of opportunity and outcomes for the residents and communities of Hart, and all employees of the Council.

## **2. What is Equality and Diversity?**

- 2.1 Equality is all about making sure everyone is treated fairly and given the same opportunities. It is not about treating everyone the same.
- 2.2 Diversity is about recognising and valuing individual differences and raising awareness about them.

## **3. Why do we need an Equality Policy?**

- 3.1 As a service provider and an employer we are committed to ensuring fair treatment and equal access to our services, to information and to employment: everyone can expect the same standards of treatment regardless of their protected characteristics. The Equality Act 2010 defines the protected characteristics as: age; disability; gender reassignment; sex; sexual orientation; religion or belief; race; pregnancy & maternity; and, marriage & civil partnership.
- 3.2 The Equalities Act 2010 introduced new duties on the public sector, including local councils, some general and others specific. The general equality duties (the 'aims') requires public authorities 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
  - Encourage good relations between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not share it
- 3.4 In addition, the Public Sector Equality duty placed specific duties upon local authorities to:
  - Publish information to show their compliance which must include publishing information in relation to the make-up of the overall workforce with respect to their protected characteristics in comparison to the protected characteristics of the local population.

- Prepare and publish one or more specific and measurable equality objectives which will help the Council meet the three aims of the Equality Duty, at least every four years.

3.5 In addition to the requirements of the Equalities Act 2010, the Council has further obligations to our staff as an employer including ensuring non- discriminatory recruitment, equal pay and the rehabilitation of offenders.

#### **4. The Council's Commitment to Equality and Diversity**

4.1 The Council is committed to ensuring equality of opportunity for all. We will:

- Ensure equality of opportunity for all
- Ensure fair treatment of all
- Ensure equal access to services, to information and to employment
- Eliminate unlawful discrimination on the grounds of the protected characteristics of our employees and service users
- Promote good relations between different groups and individuals within our community
- Actively seek to address inequality, taking a lead where necessary, to ensure quality services for everyone in the community

#### **5. Responsibility and Accountability**

5.1 The ultimate responsibility for implementing this policy and achieving change lies with the Joint Chief Executives, Corporate Directors, Heads of Service and Managers. However, the policy is the responsibility of all Members and employees, who are all accountable for their actions and must follow the principles and standards set out below.

#### **6. What You Can Expect From the Council**

6.1 Leadership and Corporate Commitment

6.1.1 The Council will:

- Ensure that unlawful discrimination is challenged and addressed
- Ensure the council has due regard to the aims of the general equality duty, by understanding the impact of our services on equality
- Ensure that the Council uses equality information and analysis, at the right time as part and parcel of the decision making processes.
- Undertake effective consultation with our community on key decisions and policies that will affect them
- Provide staff and elected members with training to confidently implement the requirements of this policy and challenge any discrimination
- Agree at least one measurable Equality Objective (see appendix 2) which will help the Council further the three aims of the Equality Duty
- Provide clear information on our services in appropriate formats to be accessible to all sections of the community

- Work with partners as appropriate, to ensure our services reach all groups within our community
- Monitor the effectiveness of our equality and diversity approaches through regular reports of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee
- Ensure that all partners, contractors, agents and suppliers are aware of and adhere to the Councils Corporate Equalities Policy
- Respond promptly and fairly to any complaints about our services, including those relating to equality or discrimination

## 6.2 Service Delivery and Customer Care

### 6.2.1 The Council will:

- Provide quality services which reach all relevant communities
- Make sure our communication and consultation processes take into account equality
- Consciously think about the three aims of the Equality Duty as part of the process of formulating new policies and procedures to ensure the elimination of unlawful discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and encourage good relations
- Ensure the Council Offices and Leisure Centres provide suitable access for all parts of the community
- Meet any requests we receive to provide information in alternative formats and languages where we perceive there to be a genuine need

## 6.3 Employment and Training

### 6.3.1 The Council as an employer will:

- Be committed to providing equality in all areas of employment including recruitment, promotion, training and development, and terms and conditions of employment
- Advertise vacancies in appropriate media to target the best available talent and expertise
- Maintain and develop equality monitoring information on the workforce
- Keep all employment policies and procedures under review
- Ensure an equal pay structure
- Recognise the role of trade unions in working for equality in employment and services
- Communicate to all employees that unfair discrimination, harassment, victimisation and bullying are unacceptable
- Ensures that everyone who is responsible for recruiting and managing employees receives appropriate training and guidance on the Council's equality and employment policies, and that they understand their responsibilities

**Appendix B**

**Corporate equality objectives 2017-2021**

The council has set 4 equality objectives in line with the requirements of the Public sector Equality Duty. Progress against these objectives will be reviewed annually.

**The proposed equality objectives 2017-21**

**Objective 1: Improve our understanding of Hart’s community and its needs, through consultation and engagement, to complement existing data (e.g. Census data)**

<b>Specific actions</b>	<b>Why is this action required?</b>	<b>Equality Objective measure</b>
Introduce a set of standard equality monitoring questions to the council’s customer feedback survey and to other surveys and consultations as appropriate	To ensure the council has information about access to and experience of our services in relation to key equality groups, which can be used to inform service improvement and development	Standard equality monitoring questions will be in use and the information will be regularly analysed and reviewed as part of survey and consultation analysis
Continue to engage with a range of groups, organisations, and forums*, and establish further links where necessary, so that our understanding of Hart’s community and its needs remains current and gaps in our understanding are filled	To ensure we have robust and current information about need in Hart to help the council, its partners and communities to improve the lives of residents	The council engages with a wide range of groups, organisations and forums  The Equality and Diversity Information published annually on our website will provide a fuller picture of the community and its needs (see section 3.4 specific equality duties)
Continue to use a range of communication channels to reach a range of groups within Hart’s community, and develop new channels where gaps are identified including the use of video to reach younger generations	To ensure the council is engaging with diverse groups within our community	We will monitor the number and range of communication channels used and the range of groups reached and engaged with

\*Such as, the Hart Health & Wellbeing Partnership, Hart Ageing Well Network, Over 55s Forums, Hart Military Covenant Partnership, Hart District Association of Parish & Town Councils, Community Safety Partnership, North East Hampshire Domestic Abuse Forum, Vulnerabilities Operational Group, Hart Local Children’s Partnership, Hart Housing Forum, Fleet Nepalese Community Group, Basingstoke & Deane, Hart & Rushmoor Learning Disability Local Implementation Group (LIG), Autism Friendly Fleet project group, Citizens Advice Hart, Hart Voluntary Action

**Objective 2: Use our improved understanding of Hart’s community to continue to ensure our services are accessible and responsive to the needs of different groups, and to work with partners and communities to address needs and inequalities**

<b>Specific actions</b>	<b>Why is this action required?</b>	<b>Equality Objective measure</b>
Develop and roll-out guidance and templates to support services to assess the impact on equalities of any relevant new policy or service, or change to a policy or service, using local equality information and evidence of local need as much as possible	To ensure there is a consistent and proportionate approach across the Council which draws on the best available evidence	All services are using a consistent approach to equality impact assessment to inform decision making and ensure services are accessible to all  The number of Cabinet reports which make direct reference to due regard to equalities and the impact on protected characteristics** will be monitored
Continue to develop and roll out learning opportunities for staff and councillors, to help mainstream equalities considerations into the council’s everyday business	To ensure staff and councillors have a clear understanding of the council’s equality duties and commitment, and how this applies to their own role within the council	The number and range of learning opportunities offered and the number of staff and Councillors taking part will be recorded and monitored  100% of new starters receive equality awareness training
Continue to work with a range of groups, organisations, and forums, to address inequalities in health, wellbeing and quality of life of residents through partnership programmes such as the Homelessness Prevention Trailblazer	To maximise impact through partnership working, recognising that we can achieve more when we support each other	Examples of the range of partnership initiatives the council is involved in which address inequalities in health, wellbeing and quality of life of residents, will be published as part of our annual publication of Equality and Diversity Information

\*\*The Equality Act 2010 defines the protected characteristics as: age; disability; gender reassignment; sex; sexual orientation; religion or belief; race; pregnancy & maternity; and, marriage & civil partnership.

**Objective 3: To continue to celebrate diversity and promote inclusion within our workforce and community**

<b>Specific actions</b>	<b>Why is this action required?</b>	<b>Equality Objective measure</b>
Support local and national diversity awareness and inclusion activities such as Hampshire Pride, UK Older People’s Day, and disability awareness campaigns	To foster positive relations between people with different protected characteristics	The range of diversity awareness and inclusion activities will be recorded and examples will be published as part of our annual publication of Equality and Diversity Information
Set up a programme of diversity awareness sessions to help staff get to know different groups within Hart’s community	To raise staff awareness of the diversity within our community and the challenges faced by particular groups	The number of awareness sessions held and staff attending per year will be recorded

**Objective 4: Continue to monitor the impact of our employment policies and practices to ensure all groups have access to employment opportunities**

<b>Specific actions</b>	<b>Why is this action required?</b>	<b>Equality Objective measure</b>
Annual review and publication of workforce equality information and any adverse trends identified and addressed	To help the council promote equal opportunity within our workforce and to fulfil the specific equality duty placed on local authorities by the Equality Act 2010 (see section 3.4 specific equality duties)	Workforce equalities data will be published annually and actions taken to address equality issues as required