

EQUALITY POLICY STATEMENT & OBJECTIVES

Improvement & Innovation Advisory Committee - 25 February 2021

Report of: Chief Executive

Status: For Consideration

Also considered by:

- Cabinet - 18 March 2021

Key Decision: No

Portfolio Holder: Cllr. Peter Fleming

Contact Officer: Lee Banks, Ext. 7161

Recommendation to Improvement & Innovation Advisory Committee:

- (a) To recommend to Cabinet that the Equality Policy Statement and Objectives are adopted; and
- (b) To recommend to Cabinet that a full review of the Equality Policy Statement and Objectives to take place on the publication of Census 2021 data.

Recommendation to Cabinet:

- (a) The Equality Policy Statement and Objectives are adopted; and
- (b) It is agreed that a full review of the Equality Policy Statement and Objectives to take place on the publication of Census 2021 data.

Reason for recommendation: To comply with our obligations under the Equality Act (2010), based on Members' priorities.

Introduction and Background

- 1 The approval of an equality policy statement and objectives is within the Council's policy framework and is a matter for Cabinet. The Council has a strong record of ensuring our services are responsive to the needs of our residents and customers, whilst taking a proportionate response to implementing equalities legislation.
- 2 The Equality Act (2010) sets out a 'Public Sector Equality Duty' which requires public authorities to have 'due regard' to the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity, and foster good relations

between different people when carrying out their day to day work - in shaping policy, in delivering services and in relation to their own employees.

- 3 The Equality Act (2010) sets out the nine protected characteristics of age, disability, gender reassignment, marital or civil partnership status, pregnancy or maternity, race, religion or belief, sex (gender) and sexual orientation.
- 4 As part of the duty, public authorities are required to prepare and publish one or more objectives and review these at least every four years. Public authorities are also required to publish information to demonstrate how they are complying with the duty.
- 5 There are five proposed equality objectives relating to our roles as a community leader, service provider and employer. It is recommended that the current objectives are adopted for 2021 only, and are subject to full review, including consultation with stakeholders on the publication of Census 2021 data later this year.
- 6 The new Census data, alongside any new data arising from the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on our communities, will provide a new baseline for assessing any inequalities in our District and allow the Council to adopt an action plan based on the most current information about our District.

Equality Policy Statement and Objectives 2021

- 7 The Council continues to take a proportionate approach to responding to our duties under the Equality Act (2010), reflecting the demographics of our communities. Public authorities are required to consider what they can do to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity, and foster good relations.
- 8 In this regard, through the adoption of the proposed Equality Policy Statement and Objectives for 2021, the Council has adopted the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) definition of anti-Semitism.
- 9 A plain text draft of the proposed Policy Statement is provided as Appendix A to this report. To ensure the Policy Statement is widely accessible the content will be designed to be added directly to the Council's website pages, rather than as a Word or PDF document. An audio recording of the Policy Statement will also be created, in the same way in which the Council's In Shape magazine is also made available to residents.

Other options Considered and/or rejected

All public authorities are required to comply with the Equality Act 2010. If we do not publish equality objectives we will not be able to demonstrate what steps we are taking to tackle the inequalities faced by our residents and action may be taken against the Council by the Equality and Human Rights Commission.

Adoption of a policy statement and objectives for 2021, with the agreement to undertake a further review on the publication of Census 2021 data, will ensure focus on tackling inequalities within the context of our local priorities and demographics of our population.

Key Implications

Financial

Understanding the needs of people with protected characteristics under the Equality Act (2010) will assist the Council in allocating resources to areas or services where it is considered to be a greater priority

Legal Implications and Risk Assessment Statement

The Council is required to comply with the Equality Act 2010. Failure to do so may result in the Council not being able to demonstrate what steps it is taking to tackle inequalities and action being taken by the Equality and Human Rights Commission.

Equality Assessment

Members are reminded of the requirement, under the Public Sector Equality Duty (section 149 of the Equality Act 2010) to have due regard to (i) eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Equality Act 2010, (ii) advance equality of opportunity between people from different groups, and (iii) foster good relations between people from different groups.

Conclusions

This report sets out priorities for addressing areas of discrimination and disadvantage, advancing equality of opportunity and demonstrates the Council's compliance with the Equality Act (2010).

Appendices

Appendix A - Equality Policy Statement and Objectives

Background Papers

None

Dr Pav Ramewal
Chief Executive