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**Jane Robinson, Chief Executive**

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## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

1. The purpose of this report is to seek approval of a new Equal Opportunities Policy.
2. The Council has had an equal opportunities policy in place since 2000, which has been continually reviewed since then.
3. The Equal Opportunities Policy has been rewritten to ensure the Council is meeting the requirements of the Equality Act 2010 and deliver on our Public Sector Equality Duty. It also has been updated to reflect the priorities of the Council's Workforce Strategy 2015-2020.
4. This policy sets out the Council's commitment to eliminating discrimination, advancing equality of opportunity between different groups, providing fair access in employment and when delivering services, and promoting good relations.
5. Councillors, as decision makers, are accountable to the people of Gateshead for delivering equality of opportunity and for discharging the Council's public sector equality duty. The current Code of Conduct for Members of Gateshead Council does not specifically deal with the equalities duty. It is therefore considered appropriate to ask Council to add this policy to the "Associated Protocols" in the Code of Conduct, so that a failure to comply with the policy could be seen as a breach of the Code.
6. This policy has been designed to ensure that there is a consistent approach across the Council to all areas of equalities work, and will be reviewed on an annual basis.
7. The Cabinet has considered the facts and issues arising from the report including alternative options and took all relevant advice before formulating their recommendation.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

8. It is recommended that Council approves:
  - (i) the new Equal Opportunities Policy; and
  - (ii) annexing the Equal Opportunities Policy to the Code of Conduct for Members of Gateshead Council.

