

TITLE OF REPORT: **Equal Opportunities Policy**

REPORT OF: **Jane Robinson, Chief Executive**

Purpose of the Report

1. Cabinet is asked to endorse and recommend the Council to approve a new Equal Opportunities Policy.

Background

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.

Proposal

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.

Recommendations

7. Cabinet is asked to recommend to Council:
 - (i) the Equal Opportunities Policy attached at Appendix 2;
 - (ii) to annex the Equal Opportunities Policy to the Code of Conduct for Members of Gateshead Council

For the following reason:

To ensure that the Council continues to meet its legislative requirements and advance equality of opportunity for all.

CONTACT: Sheila Johnston extension: 2063

Policy Context

1. The Council recognises that it has a moral and legal responsibility to promote equal opportunities. In addition, the Council recognises that the pursuit of equality of opportunity is essential for a productive and professional working environment.

Background

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. The main elements of this policy are to:
 - outline the Council's commitment to equality and diversity
 - describe the purpose of the policy and the outcomes the Council wishes to achieve
 - make clear the contributions and responsibilities of managers, employees, elected members and service providers towards the implementation of the policy.

Consultation

5. In preparing the Equal Opportunities Policy, consultation has taken place with the Leader and Deputy Leader of the Council, as well as the Support Cabinet Member for Diversities and Equalities.

Alternative Options

6. No alternative option has been proposed.

Implications of Recommended Option

7. **Resources:**
 - a) **Financial Implications** – the Strategic Director, Corporate Resources, confirms that there are no financial implications arising from this report.
 - b) **Human Resources Implications** – the Equal Opportunities Policy sets out how the Council will proactively manage and monitor employment related matters.
 - c) **Property Implications** - there are no property implications arising from this report.

8. **Risk Management Implication** - the risks and controls associated with failure to adhere to equalities legislation are identified in the Council's strategic risk register, monitored quarterly by the Audit and Standards Committee.
9. **Equality and Diversity Implications** - the Equal Opportunities Policy seeks to protect all those who work for Gateshead Council, who use its services or the services provided by a third party on the Council's behalf.
10. **Crime and Disorder Implications** – there are no crime and disorder implications arising from this report.
11. **Health Implications** – there are no health implications arising from this report.
12. **Sustainability Implications** - there are no sustainability implications arising from this report.
13. **Human Rights Implications** - there are no human rights implications arising from this report.
14. **Area and Ward Implications** - there are no area and ward implications arising from this report.

Background Information

15. None.