

TITLE OF REPORT: Corporate Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy

REPORT OF: Sheena Ramsey, Chief Executive

Purpose of the Report

1. Cabinet is asked to endorse and recommend the Council to approve a new Equality, Diversity and Inclusion policy.

Background

2. The Council has had an equal opportunities policy in place since 2000, which has been regularly reviewed since then.
3. This Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) policy would replace the current equal opportunities policy and has been developed 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 developed to reflect the priorities of our strategic approach, Thrive and our new Corporate Plan 2023-28.

Proposal

4. This policy sets out the Council's commitment to eliminating discrimination, advancing equality of opportunity and promoting good relations between different groups.
5. Councillors, as decision makers, are accountable to the people of Gateshead for delivering improved outcomes for equality, diversity and inclusion and for discharging the Council's public sector equality duty.
6. This policy has been designed to ensure that there is a consistent approach across the Council to all areas of equalities work, with a commitment to making EDI a shared responsibility and priority, with a policy review every three years.

Recommendation

7. Cabinet is asked to recommend to Council the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion policy attached as Appendix 2.

For the following reason:

To demonstrate the Council's commitment to tackling inequality in Gateshead, whilst ensuring compliance with the Public Sector Equality Duty.

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Policy Context

1. The Council's strategic approach Thrive and the Gateshead Health and Wellbeing Strategy has outlined the challenges faced by Gateshead in terms of inequality. This proposed EDI policy will support delivery of making Gateshead a place where everyone thrives and delivery of our Corporate Plan, the strength of Gateshead is the people of Gateshead, in particular its priorities of Customer experience and Inclusivity.

Background

2. This EDI Policy has been developed to ensure the Council is meeting the requirements of the Equality Act 2010 and deliver on our Public Sector Equality Duty.
3. The main elements of this policy are to:
 - outline the Council's commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion and what we mean by this
 - describe the vision of the policy and the commitments the Council wishes to deliver against the themes from the local government association's equality framework for local government; Leadership, Services, Communities and Workforce
 - make clear the contributions and responsibilities of managers, employees, elected members and service providers towards the implementation of the policy.
4. The vision and commitments within this policy relating to a Diverse Workforce are taken directly from the proposed Workforce EDI Strategy. The Workforce EDI strategy will support delivery of our Workforce Strategy 2022-25, and will be responsibility of the Service Director for Human Resources and Workforce Development.

Proposal

5. This policy demonstrates our commitment to improving equality, diversity and inclusion, as a leading local employer, service provider and commissioner of services for Gateshead residents.
6. EDI will be our shared responsibility and priority, so that everyone at the council, across all levels and services, works to tackle the inequalities faced by people in our communities.
7. We will work with all council services to develop an action plan demonstrating how the policy commitments will be delivered, and report progress against this work and the impact it has made to residents in our published Equality and Diversity annual report.

8. Following the approval of the Gateshead Health and Wellbeing Strategy which agreed to adopt the voluntary Socio-Economic Duty of the Equality Act 2010, this policy includes a leadership commitment to implement the duty across the council.
9. We will work with council services to develop new corporate equality objectives for 2025, including how we support our most vulnerable residents, such as care experienced children and young people.

Consultation

10. A public consultation on the proposed EDI policy took place from 15 January – 18 February 2024. Internal and external engagement took place during this consultation. Over 200 responses were received to the consultation with strong levels of support for the proposed vision and policy commitments. **Appendix 3** of this report shares the full consultation feedback and a You Said, We Did summary of proposed actions following consultation analysis.
11. Consultation has taken place with the Leader and Deputy Leader of the Council, as well as the Support Cabinet Member for Diversity and Equalities.

Alternative Options

12. There are no alternative options with regard to the report as the recommendation supports the Council's specific duty to comply with the Public Sector Equality Duty.

Implications of Recommended Option

13. Resources

- a) **Financial Implications** – The Strategic Director, Resources and Digital confirms there are no financial implications arising directly from this report.
- b) **Human Resource Implications** – The vision and commitments relating to the workforce will support the Council's ability to meet its duties under the Equality Act 2010.
- c) **Property Implications** – There are no property implications arising directly from this report.

14. **Risk Management Implications** – There are no risk management implications arising directly from this report.

15. **Equality and Diversity Implications** – The policy has been developed with the aim of improving the lives of Gateshead's residents with protected characteristics. An integrated impact assessment has been developed for this policy and is attached as **Appendix 4**.

16. **Crime and Disorder Implications** – There are no direct crime and disorder implications arising directly as a result of this report.

17. **Health Implications** – There are no direct health implications arising directly as a result of this report.

18. **Climate Emergency and Sustainability Implications** - There are no direct climate emergency or sustainability implications arising directly as a result of this report.

19. **Human Rights Implications** - There are no direct human rights implications arising directly as a result of this report.

20. **Ward implications** – There are no direct ward implications arising directly as a result of this report.

Background Information

21. The following background papers have been used to inform this report:

- Gateshead Council Equal Opportunities policy 2019
- Making Gateshead a Place where everyone Thrives 2019
- Gateshead Council Corporate Plan 2023-28
- Workforce Strategy 2022-25