

**COMMUNITY PDG
8 OCTOBER 2019**

EQUALITY POLICY

Cabinet Members: Cllrs Nikki Woollatt and Dennis Knowles
Responsible Officer: Catherine Yandle, Group Manager for Performance, Governance and Data Security

Reason for Report: To remind Members of the Council's statutory duties under the Equality Act 2010, and to seek Members' approval for the revised Equality Policy and Equality Objectives.

RECOMMENDATION(S): That Members recommend to Cabinet that they approve the Equality Policy together with the Equality Objectives for 2019-21.

Relationship to Corporate Plan: The Equality Objectives reflect the Corporate Plan aims under the Community and Corporate priorities.

Financial Implications: The Equality Policy does not have any financial implications itself beyond those identified in individual service's equality impact assessments.

Legal Implications: Not complying with the Council's statutory duties with regard to equality could open the Council to legal challenge.

Risk Assessment: Approving the Equality Policy and Equality Objectives reduces the risk of legal challenge.

Equality Impact Assessment: Equality issues are the subject of this report.

1.0 Introduction

1.1 Under the Equality Act 2010 local authorities have a duty to have 'due regard' to:

Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Act;

Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it; and

Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

1.2 The way a local authority shows it has 'due regard' is by evidencing how Single Equality Policy indicates how this should be done. (Appendix A attached).

1.3 Case law over the last few years has clarified that considerations of equality should not only be placed at the centre of policy development but that bodies subject to the Public Sector Equality Duty, of which we are one, must apply this duty to the carrying out of any functions of a public body not just statutory functions.

1.4 Local authorities also have specific duties under the Act to publish Equality Information annually and 'Equality Objectives' at least every four years. The Equality Information is available on the Mid Devon District Council website Equality pages.

2.0 Equality Objectives

2.1 The Council's 'Equality Objective' set last year was to review the work of, and work towards the revival of, the Corporate Equalities Group.

2.2 Since this objective was set we have attended Devon County Council's Equality Reference Group as an observer, incorporated the objective into the Communication Engagement Strategy approved by Cabinet in January 2019 and included it as an "action" in the Annual Governance Statement (AGS) 2018-19 Action Plan. Progress on the AGS Action Plan is reported to every Audit Committee meeting. We have also reviewed how we collect equalities feedback from customers.

2.4 With the Committee's approval one Equality Objective for 2019-21 will be to continue this work.

2.5 An additional proposed objective is to look in more depth at issues in relation to specific Protected Characteristics in turn, this will necessarily take more than one year. We propose to start with mental health issues which will not only contribute to the work to reduce staff sickness absence but also with work for the wider community such as Dementia awareness.

3.0 Conclusion

3.1 That the Community PDG recommends to Cabinet that they approve the Equality Policy together with the Equality Objectives for 2019-21.

Contact for more Information: Catherine Yandle, Group Manager for Performance, Governance and Data Security

Circulation of the Report: Members of Community PDG, Cabinet Members, Leadership Team