

SINGLE EQUALITY SCHEME

Cabinet Member: Cllr Colin Slade
Responsible Officer: Catherine Yandle, Audit Team Leader

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 Single Equality Scheme and Equality Objective.

RECOMMENDATION(S): That Members approve the Single Equality Scheme together with the Equality Objective for 2017-18.

Relationship to Corporate Plan: The Equality Objective reflects the Corporate Plan priority under Empowering our Community: To work with our partners to maximise the potential of all our citizens by tackling social disadvantage and deprivation.

Financial Implications: The Single Equality Scheme does not have any financial implications beyond those identified in individual service 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 Single Equality Scheme and Equality Objective reduces the risk of legal challenge.

1.0 Introduction

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

- a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Act;
- b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it; and
- c) 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 equality is considered as part of its decision-making processes. The Single Equality Scheme indicates how this should be done. (Appendix B attached with tracked changes.)

1.3 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 attached as Appendix A and will be available on the Mid Devon District Council website by 31 March 2017.

2.0 Equality Objective

2.1 The Council's 'Equality Objective' set 2 years ago was to focus on the training needs of staff and members, to ensure they have the right knowledge and tools to fulfil their responsibilities under the Act:

"To ensure all staff and members of the Council receive the appropriate level of training on equality issues."

2.2 Equality and diversity training was rolled out to all staff starting with managers in November 2014. It is felt that this now needs to be followed up in 2017-18 with some practical actions for both staff and Members to ensure we achieve this objective going forward; a quick review of our website, templates etc. indicates this is necessary.

2.3 This is in part because 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.

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Circulation of the Report: Members of Community Wellbeing PDG, Cllr Slade, Management Team