

Report to Cabinet

Subject: Equalities Objectives

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Author: Stephen Bray – Corporate Director

1. Purpose of the Report

- To inform Cabinet of the Council's recently agreed Equalities Objectives.

2. Background

The Equality Act 2010 replaces previous anti-discrimination laws with a single act.

It places a general equality duty on public bodies. In broad terms, the three aims of the equality duty are to: -

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination
- Advance equality of opportunity
- Foster good relations

A number of "protected characteristics" are covered by the equality duty. These are: -

- Age
- Disability
- Gender reassignment
- Marriage and civil partnership
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Race (including ethnic or national origins, colour and nationality)
- Religion or belief (including lack of belief)
- Sex
- Sexual orientation

The general duty is supported by a number of specific duties¹. One of those duties is for public bodies to set for themselves specific, measurable equality

¹ Set out in regulations which came into force on 10 September 2011

objectives, which should be published. The deadline for publication is 6 April 2012, and at least every four years thereafter.

Each public body can decide what equality objectives it sets and how many objectives there should be. Government encourages public bodies to take into account evidence of equality issues across all its functions when setting these objectives. It also in effect encourages the objectives to be integrated within an organisation's wider business and service planning – for example, it makes clear that a stand-alone equality report is not required.

3. Proposal

Officers have considered the issues as set out above, and have also drawn on equality related data held by the Council focused on the nine protected characteristics.

As a result, a draft set of equality objectives have been produced, attached at **Appendix A** to this report.

The objectives relate directly to the Council's priorities and cut across a wide range of the council's services. They impact on a number of the protected characteristics.

Most of the proposed objectives, and the actions and targets associated with them, are already included in the recently published Council Plan, in effect mainstreaming equalities actions. Progress towards them will be managed through the Council's service planning and performance management arrangements.

The data currently held about the protected characteristics is still being developed in some parts of the Council. Therefore, it would be appropriate to review the objectives as the quality of that data improves over time.

At the time of writing, the Equality Objectives were due to be agreed by the Portfolio Holder for Community and Employee Relations, in time to be published on the Council's website in time to meet the government's publication deadline.

4. Resource Implications

It is likely that the objectives can be delivered from within existing agreed resources. The situation will be kept under review as part of regular budget and performance management activity.

5. Recommendation

Cabinet is recommended to note the Council's Equality Objectives.