

12.2 EQUALITY POLICY (DU)

Purpose of the report

To adopt the Equality Policy.

Key issues

The introduction of the Equality Act 2010 requires the existing Comprehensive Equality Policy to be updated. The Act came into force in 2011 and guidance on the public sector duties followed. From April 2012 listed authorities were required to publish equality objectives.

Recommendations

1. **1. To adopt the new Equality Policy**
- 2. That any future changes to the Policy will be approved at Authority**
- 3. That future changes or updates to the guidance notes can be approved by Resource Management Team**

How does this contribute to our policies and legal obligations?

2. To have an Equality Policy is required to meet Corporate Objective 11- to be a well run public body and the Equality Act 2010.

Background

3. The existing Comprehensive Equality Policy was approved by Authority in 2008. The policy provided the context to mainstream equality in service delivery and employment and for our work towards the Equality Standard for Local Government.
4. As a public body an equality policy helps to ensure that our services are delivered in a fair, accessible and equitable way. It also ensures equality to those seeking, and in, employment. There is not just a legal obligation to comply but it also makes sounds business sense.
5. To take account of requirements in the Equality Act 2010, training was given to the Chief Executive, Directors, Heads of Service and some Team Managers in September 2012. The training focused on understanding the 9 Protected Characteristics in the Act i.e.
 - Age
 - Disability
 - Gender reassignment
 - Pregnancy and maternity
 - Race
 - Religion or belief
 - Sex
 - Sexual orientation
 - Marriage or civil partnership status.

6. The training also advised managers that as a public body the Authority must comply with the General Equality Duty in the Equality Act 2010 to
- Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Equality Act 2010;
 - Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
 - Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

And that as a public body the Authority has Specific Duties in the Act to help it improve its performance on the general equality duty, by improving focus and transparency. Public sector organisations are required to:

- Publish sufficient information to demonstrate the Authority's compliance with general equality duty across its functions. This must be published annually from the first date of publication; and
 - Publish and prepare equality objectives which indicate how the Authority reasonably thinks it should meet one or more of the aims of the general equality duty include details of how the Authority achieved its objectives. These equality objectives must be published at least every four years.
7. Information to demonstrate compliance with the general duty performance on our equality objectives will be reported annually in the Business & Performance Plan. For 2012- 15 the following specific equality objectives have been identified in the success factors of 4 of our corporate objectives as follows
- **Corporate objective 7: Enable individuals, the community and voluntary sector to increase their contribution to the national park;** with a success factor of *'our work is supported by at least 7,000 volunteer days annually and the proportion from our target groups increases'*;
 - **Corporate objective 8: Provide and enable recreation services that promote health benefits, widen participation, reduce impact on the environment and manage conflicts between users;** with a success factor of *'have widened participation to the services we offer to our target audience's'*;
 - **Corporate objective 10: Inspire a wider range of people to access and better understand the national park, through some direct provision of services and enabling others to do so;** with a success factor of *'continue to provide a similar number of learning opportunities and more target audiences take part in the activities'*
 - **Corporate objective 11: Be a well run public body with proportionate and effective ways of working, delivering excellent customer service and living our values;** with a success factor of *'we have improved staff engagement in all of our work and maintained our Investors in People accreditation' will evidence our equality actions as an employer.*

8. Through the manager's training in September 2012, it was agreed that we would replace the Equality Impact and Needs Assessment process (EINAs) by changing the templates for decision making reports to Resource Management Team and Committee. Reports now include a section on Equality to ensure that Equality issues are considered in decision making.
9. Where public functions are contracted out the contractor will themselves be subject to the general equality duty. The requirement to comply with the general equality duty also applies to all procurement regardless of value.
10. The guidance notes to all employment policies have also been updated to take account of the Equality Act 2010.

Proposals

11. To adopt the new Equality Policy.
12. That the format for the document is agreed as
 - a) A short Policy Statement approved by the Authority. Any changes to the Policy Statement in the future to be approved by Authority and
 - b) More detailed guidance notes to managers on how to implement the policy. The guidance notes will be updated and approved by management team.
13. Equality in the Authority continues to be led by a member of the senior management team.

Are there any corporate implications members should be concerned about?

14. **Financial:** Given Equality work is mainstreamed in service delivery, requirements are funded in service budgets instead of a separate, stand alone budget.
15. **Risk Management:** The Equality and Human Rights Commission as the independent regulator is required to assess whether public bodies are complying with the equality duty and can issue compliance notices in respect of a failure. This risk is mitigated by having the Equality Policy and specific equality targets in our corporate objectives.
16. **Sustainability:** Equality work in the Authority has a management team lead. Progress on the specific equality targets in our corporate objectives are reported annually in the Business & Performance Plan.
17. **Equality:** This Policy will enable us to meet the requirements of the Equality Act 2010 in service delivery and employment.
18. **Background papers** - None

Appendices

The Equality Policy

Report Author, Job Title and Publication Date

Deborah Unwin, Head of Human Resources & Performance, 7 March 2013