

North Tyneside Council

Report to Cabinet

Date: 27 March 2023

Title: Corporate Equality and Diversity Policy and Corporate Equality Objectives Review

Portfolio(s): Inclusion, Employment and Skills	Cabinet Member(s): Cllr Hannah Johnson
Report from Directorate: Corporate Strategy and Customer Service	
Responsible Officer: Jacqueline Laughton Assistant Chief Executive	Tel: (0191) 643 5724
Wards affected: All wards	

PART 1

1.1 Executive Summary:

North Tyneside Council's Equality and Diversity Policy ("the Policy") sets out its commitment to achieving the aims of the Equality Act 2010 ("the Act") and how it will seek to demonstrate due regard to these aims in the way the Authority exercises its functions.

In accordance with good practice, the Policy is reviewed every two years. On this occasion the opportunity was also taken to review the Authority's Corporate Equality Objectives – these highlight the priority issues the Authority is seeking to address in relation to the Act. Consultation on the Policy and the review of the Corporate Equality Objectives was undertaken between January and February 2023.

This report updates Cabinet on the outcomes of the consultation exercise and provides a refreshed Policy and set of Corporate Equality Objectives for approval.

1.2 Recommendation(s):

It is recommended that Cabinet:

- (1) agree the Equality and Diversity Policy for the Authority appended to this report at Appendix 1; and
- (2) agree the Corporate Equality Objectives for the Authority for the period April 2023 to March 2025, as set out in paragraph 1.5.3 of the report (with further detail in Appendix 2)

1.3 Forward Plan:

Twenty-eight days notice of this report has been given and it first appeared on the Forward Plan that was published on 3 February 2023.

1.4 Council Plan and Policy Framework

The Authority's commitment to equality and diversity, as outlined in the updated Equality and Diversity Policy, underpins all of the priorities contained in the Our North Tyneside Plan 2021-25.

The commitments made in the Policy are also reflected in the Authority's customer promise and values (Appendices 2 and 3 of the policy).

1.5 Information:

1.5.1 Context

The Policy sets out its commitment to achieving the main aim of the Act which is to eliminate discrimination and other prohibited conduct and to demonstrate how the Authority, when discharging its functions, will have due regard to the public sector equality duty and the need to :

- eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct prohibited by the Act
- advance equality of opportunity between those who share a relevant protected characteristic under the Act and those who do not share such a characteristic; and
- foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

A protected characteristic under the Act is any of the following: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.

The Policy was originally agreed in 2017 and in line with good practice is reviewed every two years in consultation with internal and external groups and individuals. As a review of the Policy was due, the opportunity was also taken to review the Corporate Equality Objectives. These objectives enable the Authority to identify and publish the priority issues (in terms of policy making, service delivery and employment) is seeking to address in order to achieve the aims of the Act.

This report sets out the findings from the public consultation on the draft policy and the review of the Authority's Corporate Equality Objectives and actions.

1.5.2 Equality and Diversity Policy consultation findings

Consultation on the Policy ran from 5 January until 21 February 2023. The following external groups were asked to participate in the consultation exercise: AgeUK (including its trans group), Youth Council, Church of England, Catholic Church, North East Sikh Service, Ethnic Diversity Community Taskforce (which includes Black, Muslim and Jewish community representatives, Show Racism the Red Card, Tyne Coast College, North Tyneside Business Forum, Department for Work and Pensions, North Tyneside

Voluntary Organisations Development Agency and Nexus), Deaflink, Becoming Visible, Deaf Awareness North East, North Tyneside Disability Forum, North Tyneside Coalition of Disabled People, Learning Disability North East, North Tyneside Women's Voices, Barnardos, Peary House, the Voluntary and Community sector more generally, North Tyneside Carers Centre, The Pride Centre, North Tyneside Residents Panel and local people.

Engagement within the Authority was undertaken with the Authority's four staff equality networks, the Cabinet Member for Inclusion, Employment and Skills, Senior Leadership Team (SLT), Corporate Equality Group (CEG), trades unions and employees who were all invited to share their views.

A variety of approaches were used to gather views in ways most appropriate to each stakeholder group. They included an online survey (promoted via the engagement hub, social media, direct mail and the Authority's in-house newsletter Teamwork), a paper survey (available in the Authority's main libraries), in person meetings with the Staff Networks, Cabinet Member, SLT, CEG and trades unions.

62 on-line and e-mail responses were received. These came from Deaf Awareness North East, AgeUK North Tyneside, Education North Tyneside, members of the Corporate Equality Group, Senior Leadership Team, Youth Council, members of North Tyneside Residents Panel, and employees and residents. Social media posts about the consultation reached 2,967 people and resulted in engagement by 126 people.

The feedback received was positive, with the majority of participants stating their support for the Policy. Appendix 3 provides a summary of the responses received during the consultation and shows how they have informed changes to the wording of the policy.

1.5.3 Corporate Equality Objectives

In accordance with the requirements of the specific duties placed on the Authority under the Act the Authority must:

'prepare and publish one or more objectives that it thinks it needs to achieve to further any of the aims of the general equality duty.... at least every four years'.

The Authority's current Corporate Equality Objectives were agreed by Cabinet in February 2022. Given the good progress made against the key actions that underpinned each objective through delivery of the Authority's Embedding Equality Programme it was timely to undertake a review of the objectives in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Inclusion, Employment and Skills, SLT and Corporate Equality Group.

The proposed objectives for 2023-25 are:

1. Improve North Tyneside Council's Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) process.
2. Be a good employer and promote an inclusive workforce that feels valued.
3. Ensure staff and elected members are kept informed about the requirements of the Public Sector Equality Duty.
4. Improve the collection and use of both internal and external equality data.
5. Ensure our buildings, services and communications are accessible.
6. Improve engagement with North Tyneside's diverse communities.

Appendix 2 compares the current objectives and those proposed for 2023-25, together with the outcomes identified for each objective.

1.5.4 Implementation of the Policy and objectives

Delivery of the objectives, through the Organisational Business Plan (including Directorate Plans) and Embedding Equality Programme will enable implementation of the Policy. Performance will be reported on an annual basis to Cabinet through the Annual Equality and Diversity Review.

Both the Policy and the Annual Equality and Diversity Review will be published on the Authority's website, and promoted widely.

1.6 **Decision options:**

The following decision options are available for consideration by Cabinet:

Option 1

To approve the proposed Equality and Diversity Policy, and to the Corporate Equality Objectives.

Option 2

To approve the proposed Equality and Diversity Policy, but not to the Corporate Equality Objectives.

Option 3

To approve the Corporate Equality Objectives, but not to the Equality and Diversity Policy.

Option 4

Not to approve the Equality and Diversity Policy or Corporate Equality Objectives.

Option 5

To request changes to the Equality and Diversity Policy or Corporate Equality Objectives, prior to further consideration by Cabinet.

Option 1 is the recommended option.

1.7 **Reasons for recommended option:**

Option 1 is recommended for the following reasons:

The Authority's approach to equality and diversity underpins all of its decision-making including key plans and policies. Approval of the recommended option will ensure that the Authority has a current Equality and Diversity Policy that reflects both current legislation and the context within which the Authority is operating.

The proposed Corporate Equality Objectives will enable implementation of the Equality and Diversity Policy and ensure compliance with the Public Sector Equality Duty.

1.8 **Appendices:**

Appendix 1: North Tyneside Council's Equality and Diversity Policy 2023

Appendix 2: Corporate Equality Objectives 2023-25 and outcomes

Appendix 3: Summary of Consultation Responses

Appendix 4: Equality Impact Assessment

1.9 Contact officers:

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1.10 Background information:

The following background papers/information have been used in the compilation of this report and are available at the office of the author:

- (1) [Cabinet Report Equality and Diversity – 22 February 2021](#)
- (2) [Equality and Diversity Review June 2022](#)
- (3) [Equality Act 2010 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](#)
- (4) [Equality Act 2010: Guidance](#) Government Equalities Office and Equality and Human Rights Commission – updated 16 June 2015

PART 2 – COMPLIANCE WITH PRINCIPLES OF DECISION MAKING

2.1 Finance and other resources

The costs of delivery are included in existing service budgets and no additional costs are anticipated.

2.2 Legal

Publication of the Authority's Equality and Diversity Policy and Corporate Equality Objectives demonstrates the Authority's commitment to equality and diversity and to the need to have due regard to the public sector equality duty set out in section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 when the Authority discharges its functions.

2.3 Consultation/community engagement

Consultation on the Equality and Diversity Policy ran from 5 January until 21 February 2023. 62 on-line and e-mail responses were received. Social media posts about the consultation reached 2,967 people and resulted in engagement by 126.

2.3.1 Internal Consultation

The consultation was undertaken as shown in section 1.5.2 of the report and resulted in amendments being made to the Policy.

2.3.2 External Consultation/Engagement

The consultation was undertaken as shown in section 1.5.2 of the report and resulted in amendments being made to the Policy.

2.4 Human rights

The 2010 Equality Act created a legal framework to protect the rights of individuals and advance equality of opportunity for all. The human characteristics protected by the Act are age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation. The Act is therefore of particular pertinence to the Human Rights of freedom of thought, belief and religion; freedom of expression; the right to marry; and protection from discrimination.

2.5 Equalities and diversity

The Policy provides the framework for work undertaken by the Authority to meet its duties under the Equality Act 2010 and the need to have regard to the public sector equality duty. This enables the Authority to fulfil its commitment that North Tyneside becomes a place where people feel safe and no one experiences discrimination or disadvantage because of their characteristics, background or personal circumstances.

The Policy and corporate objectives demonstrate the Authority's commitment to equality and diversity as a leading local employer, service provider and commissioner. It also makes clear the responsibility that everyone who represents North Tyneside Council or who delivers services on the Authority's behalf has for its implementation.

An Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) was undertaken to inform delivery of the public consultation undertaken as part of the review of the Policy and is appended to this report at Appendix 4. This helped to ensure an inclusive process was followed, giving a wide range of protected groups an opportunity to influence the content of the Policy.

2.6 Risk management

The effectiveness of the Authority's equality and diversity processes are monitored every quarter as part of North Tyneside Council's risk management processes and are reported via the Corporate Strategic Risk Register.

2.7 Crime and disorder

There are no crime and disorder implications arising directly from this report. However, the policy affirms the Authority's commitment to equality and diversity and highlights that it will not tolerate discrimination, harassment or victimisation and will take action against it.

2.8 Environment and sustainability

There are no environment and sustainability implications arising directly from this report.

PART 3 - SIGN OFF

- Chief Executive
- Director(s) of Service
- Mayor/Cabinet Member(s)
- Chief Finance Officer
- Monitoring Officer
- Assistant Chief Executive