

# Cabinet report

## 8 July 2011

Report of Head of Corporate Strategy

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Wards affected: All

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To: CABINET

DATE: 8 July 2011

**Report No. 12/11**

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DATE: 11 July 2011

## Draft Corporate Equality Policy

### Recommendations

- (a) that cabinet approves the harmonised Corporate Equality Policy (CEP) in appendix one.
- (b) that the head of corporate strategy, in consultation with the relevant cabinet member, is authorised to make any further changes to the CEP to reflect any changes to the duties currently being consulted on, following final government approval.

### Purpose of Report

1. To seek cabinet approval to the councils' harmonised Corporate Equality Policy.

### Strategic Objectives

2. The CEP contributes directly towards the councils' strategic objective of managing our business effectively; in particular through our corporate priorities to 'provide equality of access to our services' (South) and to 'optimise access to our services' (Vale).

## Background

3. The Equality Act 2010 includes a new single public sector equality duty which will replace the existing race, disability and gender equality duties and will extend to also cover gender reassignment in full, age, religion or belief, pregnancy and maternity and sexual orientation.
4. The general duties, which form the new public sector equality duty, requires public bodies, and others who exercise public functions, to have due regard to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation; to advance equality of opportunity; and to foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not share it<sup>1</sup>.
5. The Act contains a power enabling the Minister to make regulations imposing specific duties on public bodies to support better performance of the general duties. These regulations have been revised recently and are currently being consulted on. The government intends to bring them into force in July 2011. In order not to delay this policy the specific duties have been included in their draft form in this policy.
6. The councils' have a formal requirement to produce a CEP. We need to ensure our CEP is consistent with all statutory equality legislation, and have therefore updated it to reflect the Equality Act 2010 and the new joint working arrangements.
7. The CEP sets out the councils' commitment to ensuring equality considerations are included in everything we do; it will help to demonstrate how we meet our duties under the Act. Our CEP covers the following areas of work:
  - assessing the impact of service and employment design
  - collecting monitoring data to understand our communities
  - consultation and engagement
  - advancing equality of opportunity in contracts where relevant
  - equalities training
  - commitment to the Equality Framework for Local Government
  - human resources policies
  - monitoring complaints.
8. Our CEP does not contain an action plan. During 2011/12 the councils' will develop equality objectives and a harmonised Corporate Equality Action Plan that will reflect the requirements of the Act and the Equality Framework for Local Government.
9. The main changes to our CEP as a result of the Act are:
  - we now need to consider the additional protected groups of marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity and gender reassignment in full as the person is no longer required to demonstrate they are under medical supervision
  - the need to develop equality objectives instead of producing a comprehensive equality scheme

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<sup>1</sup> A "protected characteristic" under the Act - colour, race, nationality, ethnic or national origin, disability, age, sex, gender reassignment, sexual orientation, religion, belief, marriage or civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity

- the need to foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not share it, previously this only applied to race

## **Options**

10. Not to have a policy. Without it we risk the possibility of challenge from the Equality and Human Rights Commission, on how we meet the requirements of the Equality Act 2010.

## **Financial Implications**

11. There are no immediate financial implications as a result of this policy.

## **Legal Implications**

12. The review of this policy ensures it is consistent with the Equality Act 2010.

## **Risks**

13. This policy demonstrates our commitment to equality and demonstrates explicitly how we will meet the requirements of the Act. Without it we risk the possibility of challenge e.g. from the Equality and Human Rights commission, on how we meet the requirements of the Equality Act 2010.

## **Other Implications**

14. None

## **Conclusion**

15. Our CEP outlines and demonstrates the councils' commitment to meeting the requirements of the Equality Act 2010 and the Equality Framework for Local Government.

## **Background Papers**

- None