

Individual Executive Member Decision

Title of Report:	West Berkshire Council Equality Policy and Equality Objectives
Report to be considered by:	Individual Executive Member Decision
Date on which Decision is to be taken:	17 September 2015
Forward Plan Ref:	ID3027

Purpose of Report: To agree the refresh of the Council's Equality Policy and Equality Objectives for 2015-16

Recommended Action: That the refreshed Equality Policy and Equality Objectives are agreed

Reason for decision to be taken: The Equality Policy sets out the Council's vision and commitment to equality of opportunity and respect for diversity. The Equality Objectives set out how the council proposes to further the aims of the General Equality Duty

Other options considered: N/A

Key background documentation: Equality Act 2010

Portfolio Member Details	
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Date Portfolio Member agreed report:	17 August 2015

Contact Officer Details	
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Implications

Policy:	Introduces a refreshed policy and equality objectives
Financial:	None
Personnel:	The Equality Policy details the responsibilities of staff, Members and contractors under the Equality Act.
Legal/Procurement:	None
Property:	None
Risk Management:	None
Corporate Board's Recommendation:	N/A

Is this item relevant to equality?	Please tick relevant boxes	
	Yes	No
Does the policy affect service users, employees or the wider community and:		
• Is it likely to affect people with particular protected characteristics differently?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Is it a major policy, significantly affecting how functions are delivered?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Will the policy have a significant impact on how other organisations operate in terms of equality?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Does the policy relate to functions that engagement has identified as being important to people with particular protected characteristics?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
• Does the policy relate to an area with known inequalities?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Outcome (Where one or more 'Yes' boxes are ticked, the item is relevant to equality)		
Relevant to equality - Complete an EIA available at http://intranet/EqIA		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Not relevant to equality		<input type="checkbox"/>

Consultation Responses

Members:

Leader of Council:	To be consulted once draft report has been agreed by Portfolio Holder
Overview & Scrutiny Management Commission Chairman:	To be consulted once draft report has been agreed by Portfolio Holder
Ward Members:	Ward Members will be consulted as part of the draft decision.
Opposition Spokesperson:	To be consulted once draft report has been agreed by Portfolio Holder
Local Stakeholders:	Disability External Scrutiny Board
Officers Consulted:	Corporate Including Everyone Board & Corporate Management Team
Trade Union:	To be consulted once draft report has been agreed by

Portfolio Holder

Is this item subject to call-in?	Yes: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No: <input type="checkbox"/>
If not subject to call-in please put a cross in the appropriate box:		
The item is due to be referred to Council for final approval		<input type="checkbox"/>
Delays in implementation could have serious financial implications for the Council		<input type="checkbox"/>
Delays in implementation could compromise the Council's position		<input type="checkbox"/>
Considered or reviewed by Overview and Scrutiny Management Commission or associated Task Groups within preceding six months		<input type="checkbox"/>
Item is Urgent Key Decision		<input type="checkbox"/>
Report is to note only		<input type="checkbox"/>

Supporting Information

1. Background

- 1.1 The Public Sector Equality Duty, which is section 149 of the Equality Act 2010, requires public bodies to consider the needs of different groups of individuals when carrying out their day to day work. It further requires public bodies to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between different people when carrying out their activities.
- 1.2 In order to support this, West Berkshire Council developed an Equality Policy in July 2012. This provided a high level statement of our expectations and responsibilities in relation to equality and diversity. This policy is now due to be refreshed and this has provided an opportunity for some amendments.

2. Equality Policy Refresh

- 2.1 The refreshed policy is attached at Appendix A and includes the following changes:

- (1) Purpose

The purpose of the policy has been extended in section 1.1 from a commitment to equality to include equality of opportunity and respect for diversity in respect of the Council's role as a provider of services and employer.

Sections 1.3-1.4 have also been inserted, which set out the overall aims of the policy and areas in which these aims will be achieved.

- (2) Applicability

The applicability of the policy has been extended to include the services provided to local residents and visitors in section 2.1.1.

- (3) Policy

Section 3.4, which sets out how the Council will meet the aims, has been extended to include:

- (a) Placing residents and service users at the heart of policies and strategies (section 3.4.3).
- (b) Having due regard to the need to consider people from all communities in the formation of our policies and services. This includes promoting equality and good relations between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and people who do not (section 3.4.4).
- (c) Engaging with and listening to all sections of the community in identifying needs and in decisions on the way services are designed, planned and delivered (section 3.4.5).

- (d) Ensuring that members and staff at every level of the organisation understand what equality in service provision means, and apply it in their roles (section 3.4.6).

(4) Roles and Responsibilities

Responsibility for the implementation of the policy has been extended in section 4 from the Including Everyone Board and employees to specifically make reference to:

- (a) Members of the Council (section 4.1)
- (b) Chief Executive (section section 4.2)
- (c) All Corporate Directors and Heads of Service. They also have responsibility for allocating resources to ensure delivery of the equality objectives. (section 4.3).
- (d) All Managers (section 4.4).
- (e) Contractors, partners, suppliers and volunteers (section 4.6).

3. Equality Objectives 2015-16

3.1 Whilst the Equality Policy sets out the Council's expectations and responsibilities in relation to equality and diversity, the Council also has a requirement to publish Equality Objectives. This is set out in regulations known as the Specific Duties that came into force in September 2011 and are designed to support the Public Sector Equality Duty, mentioned in 1.1 above. The specific duties require public bodies to:

- (1) Publish information to show their compliance with the Equality Duty, at least annually;
- (2) Set and publish one or more equality objectives, at least every four years.

3.2 A report on progress with the Equality Objectives is published on the Council's website by 31 January each year, as required under the Equalities legislation. A copy of the report published in January 2015, entitled 'Equalities Objectives and Activities 2014-15' is attached at Appendix B.

4. Proposals

4.1 The proposed Equality Objectives have been drawn from the West Berkshire Council Strategies for 2014-15 and 2015-19. There are four objectives, which have been discussed and agreed with the Portfolio Holder and the Corporate Including Everyone Board.

4.2 The objectives are as follows:-

- (1) Ensure our workforce is reflective of our communities.
- (2) Endeavour to minimise discrimination, harassment and victimisation and advance equality of opportunity for employees and all members of our communities.

(3) Implement new ways of working to develop communities to be more resilient in meeting the needs of vulnerable people.

(4) Close the educational attainment gap for vulnerable pupils.

4.3 Further information on the proposed Equality Objectives for 2015-16, including the performance measures is included at Appendix C.

5. Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) Outcomes

5.1 The refreshed Equality Policy is intended to improve equality outcomes for all protected groups and no detrimental impacts have been identified (see attached EqIA at Appendix D).

5.2 As the Equality Objectives have been drawn from the 2014-18 and 2015-19 Council Strategies, they have already been subject to consultation as part of this process. In addition, consultation has been undertaken with the Corporate Including Everyone Board, Disability External Scrutiny Board and the Portfolio Holder, who have agreed the proposals. The Equality Objectives are intended to improve equality outcomes for all protected groups and no detrimental impacts have been identified (see attached EqIA at Appendix E.)

6. Conclusion

6.1 That the refreshed Equality Policy and Equality Objectives for 2015-16 are approved and adopted. These will then be published on the Council's website and the Equality Objectives will be monitored on a quarterly basis, with progress overseen by the Including Everyone Board.

Appendices

Appendix A – West Berkshire Council Equality Policy 2015

Appendix B – Equality Objectives and Activities 2014-15

Appendix C – Equality Objectives 2015-16

Appendix D – Equality Policy Impact Assessment

Appendix E – Equality Objectives Impact Assessment