

TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

07 October 2021

Report of the Chief Executive

Part 1- Public

Delegated

1 SCOPING REPORT: EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY POLICY

A scoping report looking at the existing Policy and to identify opportunities for improvement or best practice

1.1 Background

- 1.1.1 The Council has had an Equality Policy Statement in place for a number of years, which aims to ensure that everyone has the opportunity to reach their potential and that Council services meet the needs of all residents. The commitments in the document apply to Councillors and staff and set standards for others who deliver services on the Council's behalf.
- 1.1.2 Objectives within the existing policy include the Council's role as a community leader to listen and respond to the views of communities, the role as a service provider to monitor and evaluate services to identify whether they are meeting people's needs as well as the role as an employer to provide a safe and accessible workplace where staff treat each other with dignity and respect.
- 1.1.3 It is now necessary to review and update the existing policy and consider if there are further opportunities to improve the policy, identifying best practice that could be adopted by the Council.

1.2 Scope of the Review

- 1.2.1 To enhance the existing policy and practices at the Council, it is suggested that the following be considered:
- Seek opportunities for proactive engagement and action, beyond the minimum legal requirements
 - Consider best practice in other authorities and in other public organisations
 - A clear plan for training for officers and members
 - Examine existing recruitment processes to ensure equality and diversity issues are considered, determine if the Council can join current schemes such as the "Disability Confident Scheme".

- Identified goals and targets within the policy to be reviewed annually by the appropriate Board.

1.3 Legal Implications

1.3.1 Equality Act 2010, includes the following protected characteristics:

- Disability
- Age
- Sex (gender)
- Race
- Religion or belief
- Sexual orientation
- Pregnancy or maternity
- Marital or civil partnership status
- Gender reassignment

1.3.2 Public Sector Equality Duty 2011

1.4 Financial and Value for Money Considerations

1.4.1 There is a budget of £3,000 for temporary staff provision, retained for external support as and when required.

1.5 Risk Assessment

1.5.1 If a public authority doesn't comply with the general equality duty, its actions or failure to act can be challenged through an application to the High Court for judicial review. An application could be made by a person or group of people with an interest in the matter, or by the Equality and Human Rights Commission.

1.6 Equality Impact Assessment

1.6.1 A revised Policy will aim to better support those with identified protected characteristics, to ensure equality for all.

1.7 Policy Considerations

1.7.1 Equalities/Diversity

1.7.2 Community

1.7.3 Customer Contact

1.7.4 Human Resources

1.8 Recommendations

1.8.1 That Members **ENDORSE** the approach identified in section 1.2 to review and update the existing Equality Policy Statement.

Background papers:

contact: Gill Fox

Nil

Julie Beilby
Chief Executive