

# Staffing Committee

**Dorset County Council**



Date of Meeting	10 April 2017
Officer	Head of Human Resources & Organisational Development
<b>Subject of Report</b>	<b>Equality &amp; Diversity Policy</b>
Executive Summary	The diversity policy has been reviewed to ensure that it reflects the council's commitment to equality and diversity in a modern workplace. The policy has not been reviewed since its implementation in 2009, aside from minor revisions previously required to reflect the introduction of Equality Act 2010.
Impact Assessment:	<p>Equalities Impact Assessment:</p> <p>Due to the nature of the policy, an EqIA is not required. The Diversity Working Groups have had the opportunity to comment on the policy itself.</p>
	<p>Use of Evidence:</p> <p>Feedback has been gained from those involved in equality and diversity matters including the council's Corporate Policy &amp; Performance Officer (Equalities), the Diversity Working Groups, the Staff Support Groups and from trade union colleagues.</p>
	<p>Budget:</p> <p>There are no financial implications arising from the proposal.</p>
	<p>Risk Assessment:</p> <p>Having considered the risks associated with this decision using the County Council's approved risk management methodology, the level of risk has been identified as: Current Risk: LOW</p>

## Equality and Diversity Policy

	Residual Risk LOW
	Other Implications: None.
Recommendation	It is recommend that the Staffing Committee approve the revised policy to take effect from 1 May 2017.
Reason for Recommendation	The Staffing Committee oversee matters relating to staff terms and conditions and people management policies.
Appendices	Appendix – Revised Equality and Diversity Policy
Background Papers	None
Officer Contact	Name: Sarah Butcher, Principal HR & OD Adviser Tel: 01305 228505 Email: <a href="mailto:s.e.butcher@dorsetcc.gov.uk">s.e.butcher@dorsetcc.gov.uk</a>

## **1. Introduction**

- 1.1. This report summarises the rationale for revising the existing diversity policy. A proposed new policy is provided in the appendix.
- 1.2. The current policy has been in place since 2009. The proposed changes describe the council's current approach, bringing together everything that the council does as an employer to promote equality and diversity. Modern language and terms are used to bring the policy up to date.
- 1.3. The revised policy includes a general policy statement, in section 2. The existing policy statement is repeated in all of the council's HR&OD and people management policies. The revised statement aims to emphasise the benefits of a diverse working environment and to recognise groups beyond those with characteristics that are protected in law. This broadens the existing statement, which is as follows:

“The County Council is committed to diversity and equality of opportunity so that no employee will be subject to unlawful or unfair discrimination on the grounds of gender, age, marital or civil partnership status, colour, race, nationality or other ethnic or national origin, religion or belief, disability, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, pregnancy or maternity, criminal background, membership or non-membership of a trade union or political beliefs.”
- 1.4. The revised policy promotes and clarifies:
  - the various commitments of the council in its role as employer in promoting equality and diversity
  - what the council does to recruit and develop a diverse workforce
  - the tools, support and guidance that is available to managers and staff (including Equality Impact Assessments and the Staff Support Groups)
  - the responsibility of all employees to act within the spirit of the policy
  - how our suite of HR&OD and people management policies and procedures support equality and diversity in the workplace at the various stages of employment
- 1.5. The revised policy has been developed in consultation with those involved in equality and diversity matters including the Diversity Working Groups, the Staff Support Groups and the trade unions.

## **2. Next Steps**

- 2.1 In order that the new policy is appropriately promoted, there will be communications to all staff, including via the all staff e-newsletter and a front page news item on Sharepoint. Managers will be expected to ensure that all staff are aware of the revised policy.
- 2.2 The new diversity policy statement will be updated across all relevant policies.

**Sheralyn Huntingford**  
**Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development**

April 2017

## **Equality and Diversity Policy**

### **1. Introduction**

- 1.1. The council is committed to promoting equality of opportunity, valuing diversity and eliminating discrimination. We aim to do this by the way we deliver our services, employ people and in our role as community leaders. How we will do this, and how we comply with the Public Sector Equality Duties, is set out in the [Dorset joint equality scheme](#).
- 1.2. As an employer, the council aims to ensure that these commitments, reinforced by our [behaviours](#), are embedded in our day to day working practices with all our colleagues, service users and partners.

### **2. Policy statement**

- 2.1. Every employee is entitled to a working environment that promotes dignity and respect to all. The council will not tolerate discrimination, victimisation, bullying or harassment because of gender, gender identity, age, marital or civil partnership status, colour, race, nationality or other ethnic or national origin, religion or belief, disability, caring responsibilities, working pattern, sexual orientation, pregnancy or maternity, criminal background, trade union activity or political beliefs – or on any other grounds. The council will provide equality of opportunity for all employees and potential employees and will seek to create an environment in which individual differences and the contributions of all employees are recognised and valued.

### **3. Scope**

- 3.1. This policy applies to all council employees excluding schools based employees.
- 3.2. The council aims to ensure that its commitment to equality and diversity is reflected and valued by those who are working on behalf of the council, including agency workers and contractors. The council will take all appropriate steps to ensure compliance with the expected behaviours and non-compliance will be taken seriously by the council.
- 3.3. All employees have a responsibility to act within the spirit of this policy. Employees at all levels must ensure that there is no discrimination in any of their decisions or behaviours.
- 3.4. Threatening or abusive behaviour by service users will be dealt with through the [violence at work policy](#).
- 3.5. This policy has been developed in consultation with the recognised trade unions.

### **4. Definitions**

- 4.1. Equality can be described as breaking down barriers, eliminating discrimination and ensuring equal opportunity and access for all groups.
- 4.2. Diversity can be described as celebrating differences and valuing everyone. Each person is an individual with visible and non-visible differences and by respecting this everyone can feel valued for their contributions, which is beneficial not only for them but also for the council.

## 5. Key principles

5.1. The council aims to promote an environment free from discrimination, victimisation, bullying and harassment, where all our employees are treated fairly and with respect. The council aims to remove barriers to employment or to employees reaching their full potential. We will do this by:

- ensuring that equality and diversity is an integral part of the council's [induction](#) for all new employees
- requiring all managers to undertake [equality and diversity training](#) so that they are able to operate in the spirit of this policy
- treating seriously any employee [grievance](#) concerning discrimination, victimisation, bullying or harassment
- dealing with acts of discrimination, victimisation, bullying or harassment by an employee against another employee or a member of the public under the [disciplinary policy and procedure](#). This includes comments made on social media, as outlined in the [social networking policy](#).

5.2. The council aims to recruit and develop a workforce which reflects the diverse communities in which we live and work. We will do this by:

- encouraging recruitment from groups currently under-represented
- determining the criteria for [recruitment selection](#) and promotion on the basis of objective, job related criteria
- providing ex-offenders with equal employment opportunities in accordance with the [policy on the employment of ex-offenders](#)
- making [reasonable adjustments](#) to support potential employees in the recruitment and selection process
- guaranteeing to offer an interview to all disabled applicants who fulfil the essential criteria for a post
- providing all employees with equal access to [learning and development opportunities](#)
- recognising and valuing the difference and individual contribution that people make

5.3. The council aims to provide a range of appropriate support and guidance to employees during their time with us. We will do this by:

- working with, and supporting the work of, our [staff support groups](#)
- promoting access to various sources of support including [employee wellbeing](#) and the [staff counselling service](#)
- making [reasonable adjustments](#) for disabled employees and those that become disabled
- through our approach to [flexible working](#), helping all our employees fulfil their potential at work whilst finding the right work/life balance, irrespective of whether they have caring responsibilities
- providing appropriate support to employees who are transitioning at work
- seeking to ensure that managers with responsibility for selecting employees for [redeployment](#) or [redundancy](#) do not discriminate unfairly in the process of selection
- incorporating legislative requirements, including those contained within the Equality Act 2010, and best practice to all our employment policies and procedures, terms and conditions of employment, pay and benefits and supporting these with appropriate guidance.

## 6. Monitoring our progress

- 6.1. The council seeks diversity data from employees and potential employees and will work to understand barriers that stop individuals from declaring this data. We will encourage all employees to provide this information so that we can provide better support to them and their managers. Information collected for monitoring purposes is treated as confidential and it will not be used for any other purpose. The council publishes anonymised workforce profile data on the [Dorset for You website](#).
- 6.2. The Inequalities Group and the People and Wellbeing Group meets to discuss equality and diversity progress across the council.
- 6.3. [Equality Impact Assessments](#) will be carried out to identify any potential adverse impacts across our employment policies and practises and these will be monitored by directorate diversity working groups.
- 6.4. The council will work with external organisations to better understand how we can support our employees. The council:
- has signed the [Mindful Employer Charter](#) for employers who are positive about mental health. The initiative is aimed at increasing awareness of mental health at work and assisting employers in supporting mental wellbeing at work
  - participates in the [Stonewall](#) Workplace Equality Index. Stonewall aim to support organisations to offer inclusive, equal and inspiring environments for lesbian, gay, bi and trans people, whilst also understanding the benefits that lesbian, gay, bi and trans people can bring to an organisation
  - is a [Disability Confident](#) employer. The council aims to recruit and retain disabled people and people with health conditions based on their skills and talent.