

WAVERLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL

RESOURCES O&S COMMITTEE – 22 MARCH 2022

Title:

CORPORATE EQUALITY OBJECTIVES 2022 – 25

Portfolio Holder: Cllr Penny Marriott
Head of Service: All Heads of Service
Key decision: No
Access: Public

1. Purpose and summary

The purpose of this report is to present to the Committee a set of new corporate equality objectives and an associated action plan and to ask for the committee's endorsement and/or any recommendations it would like to make to the Executive.

The Corporate Equality Objectives and associated Action Plan are set out in Annexe 1 to this report.

2. Recommendation

It is recommended that the Resources Overview & Scrutiny Committee considers the Corporate Equality Objectives and associated Action Plan as set out in Annexe 1 and makes any recommendations to the Executive.

3. Reason for the recommendation

To gain the views and input from the Resources O&S Committee before the Equality Objectives are considered by the Executive and Council.

4. Background

4.1 Under the Equality Act 2010, the Council has a number of both general and specific duties. The general duties state that a local authority, in the exercise of their functions, must have due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act.
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not, tackling prejudice and promoting understanding.

4.2 Advancing equality of opportunity means:

- removing or minimising disadvantages suffered by people with protected characteristics due to having that characteristic
- taking steps to meet the needs of people with protected characteristics that are different from people who do not have that characteristic (including taking account of a disability).
- encouraging protected groups to participate in public life and in any other activity where participation is disproportionately low.

4.3 Protected characteristics are as follows:

- Age
- Disability
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Religion or belief
- Race
- Sex
- Sexual orientation
- Gender reassignment
- Marriage and civil partnership

4.4 In addition to general duties under the Equality Act, a local authority also has two specific duties.

1. Publish equality information annually to demonstrate compliance with the general equality duty. The information has to include information relating to people with protected characteristics who are:

- Employees
- Affected by its policies and practices

All information should be published in an accessible manner. The Council publishes an annual workforce report on the Council's website to meet this duty.

2. Prepare and publish one or more equality objectives we think we can achieve in order to carry out our General Equality Duty, at least every four years.

The Council's original equality objectives were first published in 2012 and although they have been reviewed since there have been no major changes.

4.5 Last year the Corporate Equality Group, which consists of a number of staff from across the organisation together with the Portfolio Holder for Equality, Diversity and Inclusion, started to develop a new set of equality objectives. The collective ideas were refined during a number of sessions and were then presented to the Managers Group and lastly the Senior Management Team. Set out at Annexe 1 are the proposed Corporate Equality Objectives for consideration by this committee. In addition to the high-level objectives, there are a number of commitments it is proposed the Council will focus on in the next two years. In order to assess progress on these commitments, an Action Plan has been developed which will be monitored by the Corporate Equality Group and reviewed six-monthly.

5. Relationship to the Corporate Strategy and Service Plans

The Corporate Equality Objectives underpin the Corporate Strategy and are reflected in the Council's commitment to "promote the value and worth of all residents, with opportunities for all, regardless of race, age, disability, religion, gender or sexual orientation, income or wealth" and to provide "high quality public services accessible for all".

6. Implications of decision

6.1 Resource (Finance, procurement, staffing, IT)

There are no associated resource implications.

6.2 Risk management

There are no risk management implications in the report.

6.3 Legal

The Council's specific and general duties under the 2010 Act are set out within the body of this report. The Council has a statutory duty to publish its equality objectives.

6.4 Equality, diversity and inclusion

The equality, diversity or inclusion implications are set out in this report.

6.5 Climate emergency declaration

This report does not have direct climate change implications.

7. Consultation and engagement

The Equality Objectives have been developed through a process of staff engagement and are now coming to the Overview & Scrutiny Committee to be scrutinised before travelling to the Executive and Council for approval.

8. Other options considered

No other options were appropriate.

9. Governance journey

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee will pass on their comments and recommendations to the Executive before final approval at Council.

Annexes:

Annexe 1 Corporate Equality Objectives and associated Action Plan

Background Papers

There are no background papers (as defined by Section 100D(5) of the Local Government Act 1972) relating to this report.

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Agreed and signed off by:

Legal Services: 3 March 2022

Head of Finance:

Strategic Director: 15 February 2022

Portfolio Holder: 28 February 2022