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<b>Subject:</b>	<b>EQUALITY POLICY AND OBJECTIVES</b>
<b>Meeting and Date:</b>	<b>Cabinet – 7 November 2022</b>
<b>Report of:</b>	<b>Rebecca Brough, Democratic and Corporate Services Manager</b>
<b>Portfolio Holder:</b>	<b>Councillor Christopher Vinson, Portfolio Holder for Finance, Governance, Digital and Climate Change</b>
<b>Decision Type:</b>	<b>Non-Key Decision</b>
<b>Classification:</b>	<b>Unrestricted</b>

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<b>Purpose of the report:</b>	To adopt the revised Equality Policy and objectives.
<b>Recommendation:</b>	To agree the Equality Policy and objectives.

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## 1. Summary

This report presents the revised Equality Policy and new equality objectives for the period 2022-2026. The Equality Policy aims to ensure all individuals have the right to be treated fairly when using the Council's services or when working for the Council.

## 2. Introduction and Background

2.1 In order to demonstrate compliance with the Equality Act 2010, the Equality Policy has been reviewed and updated to reflect current practices within the Council to meet the statutory requirements placed on public bodies. It is a requirement of the Public Sector Equality Duty to publish measurable objectives. These objectives will be monitored annually over the next four years.

2.2 The Public Sector Equality Duty is designed to support decision making by ensuring that public bodies consider how different people will be affected by their activities. It applies not only to public bodies but also applies to anyone carrying out public functions.

## 3. Revisions to the Equality Policy - Pronouns

3.1 This latest review of the Equality Policy has seen the inclusion of a section relating to addition of pronoun identifiers to email signatures. This is increasingly used not only in public sector bodies but also in the private sector (for example Lloyds and Goldman Sachs) and on social media and is an important demonstration of inclusivity and a simple measure for preventing misgendering. The accidental misgendering (getting someone's gender wrong) of a person can be embarrassing for the person who does it and cause hurt to the person on the receiving end.

3.2 The Equality Policy provides for three pronoun uses:

- She/Her/Hers
- He/Him/His
- They/Them/Theirs

3.3 An article from December 2019 on the website of the business publication Forbes states the benefits of organisations adopting the use of pronouns in email signatures:

"It creates a safe space so everyone can bring their whole self to work, no longer needing to censor or hide parts of themselves. This leads to greater productivity, creativity and connection with colleagues and your organisational purpose."

3.4 It is not proposed to make the inclusion of pronouns compulsory for officers or Members but rather those wishing to add pronouns are encouraged to adopt this as part of their email signatures.

#### **4. Equality Policy Objectives**

4.1 The Council is required to set at least one equality objective every four years to help focus attention on priority equality issues.

4.2 The objectives for the next four years are set out in detail in Appendix 2 but are in summary as follows:

- To provide opportunities to improve life chances, health, and wellbeing
- To continue to meet the needs of our service users by improving the knowledge and understanding of our customers and communities.
- To improve opportunities to build inclusivity into the Council's internal policies and procedures.

4.3 These will be monitored and assessed on an annual basis. Any actions arising from the annual assessment will be reported to the appropriate operational or decision-making body.

#### **5. Communication**

5.1 A single side poster has been developed to assist in communicating the Council's duties and responsibilities in respect of equalities. This summarises the key points of the Council's duties and commitments in a simple, accessible manner. It will be placed on the Council's website and promoted internally to staff.

5.2 Following the adoption of the Equality Policy, training will be rolled out for Members and officers.

#### **6. Identification of Options**

6.1 Option 1: To adopt the policy and agree the objectives.

6.2 Option 2: To adopt the policy with amendments. If significant amendments were required, it is suggested that officers return to the next meeting with a revised policy taking into account the specified amendments proposed by the Cabinet.

6.3 Option 3: To not adopt the policy or objectives.

#### **7. Evaluation of Options**

- 7.1 Option 1 is the preferred option as this would give staff and Members a clearly defined framework to support the Council's Equality work and comply with the Public Sector Equality Duty. A copy of the new policy is attached at appendix 1 and the suggested objectives at appendix 2.
- 7.2 Option 2 while not the preferred option, is the most preferable alternative to Option 1 as it would provide for the development of an updated Equality Policy. In the case of any proposed amendments, depending on the nature of these a further report to Cabinet may be necessary to consider their implications in light of the Public Sector Equality Duty.
- 7.3 Option 3 is not recommended. The Council is required to have an Equalities Policy and Objectives and would need to be able to show compliance with the Public Sector Equality Duty.

## 8. **Resource Implications**

None. There is already budget provision made for the roll-out of equalities training.

## 9. **Climate Change and Environmental Implications**

There are no direct climate change or environmental implications arising from the Equalities Policy.

## 10. **Corporate Implications**

- 10.1 Comment from the Section 151 Officer: Accountancy have been consulted and found no financial implications. We have no further comments.
- 10.2 Comment from the Solicitor to the Council: The Solicitor to the Council has been consulted in the preparation of this report and has no further comments to make.
- 10.3 Comment from the Equalities Officer: The Equality Officer has been involved in the development of this report and has no further comment to make other than to remind Members that in discharging their responsibilities, they are required to comply with the public sector equality duty as set out in section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/section/149>

## 11. **Appendices**

Appendix 1 – Equality Policy

Appendix 2 – Equality Objectives

Appendix 3 – Equality Policy Poster

## 12. **Background Papers**

None.

Contact Officer: Rebecca Brough, Democratic and Corporate Services Manager  
Keeley McEvelly, Corporate Services Officer