

CORPORATE RESOURCES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Date of Meeting	Thursday 17 January 2019
Report Subject	Diversity and Equality Policy
Cabinet Member	Cabinet Member for Corporate Management and Assets
Report Author	Chief Executive
Type of Report	Strategic

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report presents the Council's revised Diversity and Equality policy for consideration prior to endorsement and publication.

Discrimination against employees, potential employees and customers who belong to a protected group is unlawful under the Equality Act 2010. There is not a requirement to produce and publish a policy, however, publishing a policy demonstrates the Council's commitment to equality and treating everyone fairly. The policy (attached as Appendix 1) demonstrates the Council's commitment to developing an inclusive workplace and high quality services which meet peoples' needs.

The overall aim of the Diversity and Equality policy in the Council's delivery of services, goods, works and facilities, provision of grants and engagement with partners is to:-

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination and harassment;
- Promote equality of opportunity; and
- Foster good relations between diverse communities.

The policy has been updated to reflect changes in Welsh language legislation and the Department of Work and Pensions' "Two Tick" scheme which has been replaced with the Disability Confident Employers scheme, which aims to improve how employers attract, recruit and retain disabled workers.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1	To consider and review the updated Diversity and Equality Policy prior to endorsement by Cabinet.
2	To support the action being taken to improve completion rates of the equality e-learning modules.

REPORT DETAILS

1.00	EXPLAINING THE DIVERSITY AND EQUALITY POLICY
1.01	The Council's Diversity and Equality policy was originally approved by Cabinet in 2012. It has been updated to ensure it reflects current legislation and practice.
1.02	Although there is no statutory requirement to publish an equality policy, under the Equality Act 2010, it is unlawful to discriminate against employees, potential employees and customers because of a protected characteristic. The Diversity and Equality policy demonstrates the Council's commitment to developing an inclusive workplace and high quality services which meet peoples' needs.
1.03	Since implementing the policy the Council has: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• become accredited as a Disability Confident Employer;• continue to make physical alterations to schools increasing disabled pupils' access to all aspects of the school curriculum;• continued to ensure access to information by providing information in different languages and formats;• published some documents in British Sign Language increasing the Deaf communities;• increased opportunities for employees to work flexibly enabling them to manage their work life balance.
1.04	The revised policy sets out the Council's approach to valuing diversity, eliminating harassment and promoting equality in everything that it does. This includes how we ensure current and potential employees, customers and other organisations who do, or want to do business with the Council are treated equitably regardless of their background.
1.05	Following circulation to Human Resources (HR) and wider consultation the policy has been updated to include the following changes: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• replace references to the "Two Tick Scheme, Positive about Disabled People" with "Disability Confident Employer" (the Department of Work and Pension's new version of Two Ticks);• remove references to the Welsh Language Scheme and replace with Welsh Language Standards; and• ensure consistency with HR policies.

1.06	Valuing diversity and promoting equality is integral to good practice in employment and service delivery. Responsibility for the policy is an integral part of every employee's role, wherever they work.
1.07	As with any Council corporate policy, managers and employees need to be aware and understand how to apply the policy and their responsibilities to each other and their customers and partners. Two e-learning modules are available on the Council's e-learning portal, Flintshire Academi, but to date only a small number of employees have completed them.
1.08	<p>To encourage more employees to complete the e-learning modules:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • new employees will complete the modules during their induction period; • managers will be prompted to check that other employees have completed the modules as part of appraisals and other supervision meetings; • periodic workforce news promotions. <p>Completion rates will be monitored and reported within the Strategic Equality Plan annual report presented to Cabinet. Periodic reports will also be monitored by the Chief Officer Team.</p>
1.09	<p>Wider monitoring of the policy both internally and externally will be undertaken through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • workforce diversity monitoring • reviewing complaints about discrimination and incidents of bullying and harassment in the workplace • reviewing customer complaints about discrimination • monitoring the diversity profile of customer experience. <p>Monitoring aims to discern differences in satisfaction levels or complaints from different sectors of the community as well as identify any potential inequality in employment or trends relating to bullying and harassment in the workplace.</p>

2.00	RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS
2.01	Managers to co-ordinate and prioritise team capacity to ensure all employees are able to complete the two equality e-learning modules.

3.00	CONSULTATIONS REQUIRED / CARRIED OUT
3.01	The policy was circulated to HR, Trade Union, Chief Officer Team and external and internal networks and promoted on the Council website.

4.00	RISK MANAGEMENT
4.01	Compliance with the policy will support the organisation to meet the Equality Act 2010 and reduce any risk of litigation.

5.00	APPENDICES
5.01	Appendix 1 - Diversity and Equality Policy.

6.00	LIST OF ACCESSIBLE BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS
6.01	<p>Contact Officer: Fiona Mocko, Strategic Policy Advisor Telephone: 01352 702122 E-mail: fiona.mocko@flintshire.gov.uk</p>

7.00	GLOSSARY OF TERMS
7.01	<p>(1) Equality Act 2010: legally protects people, with protected characteristics, from discrimination.</p> <p>(2) Disability Confident: a Department of Work and Pensions scheme designed to help employers recruit and retain disabled people and people with health conditions for their skills and talent.</p> <p>(3) Protected characteristics: these are the groups protected under the Equality Act 2010. The characteristics are: Age, Disability, Gender Reassignment, Marriage and Civil Partnership, Pregnancy and Maternity, Race, Religion and Belief, Sex and Sexual Orientation.</p> <p>(4) Two Ticks scheme: scheme in which employers agreed to take action to meet five commitments regarding the employment, retention, training and career development of disabled employees.</p> <p>(5) Workforce Diversity monitoring: is the process to capture workforce information by protected group and analyse the data to identify actual or potential inequalities.</p>