

Report for Resolution

Report to Cabinet
Report of 9th November 2011
Head of Strategy and Programme Management
Subject Equality Policy for Norwich City Council

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Purpose

To seek approval to an equality policy clearly setting out the council's commitments and expectations from partners in line with new legislation and to comply with the socio-economic duty that was originally part of the Equalities Act 2010.

Recommendations

To:-

- (1) approve the equality policy for Norwich City Council.
- (2) agree to formally comply with the socio economic duty originally passed into law in the Equalities Act 2010 but not implemented by the current government.

Financial Consequences

There are no financial consequences of this report.

Risk Assessment

Strategic Priority and Outcome/Service Priorities

The report helps to meet the strategic priority "Opportunities for all – communities to be able to access the wide range of services in the city provided by the Council" and the service plan priority 'Attaining the 'achieving' level of the Equalities Framework for Local Government'

Cabinet Member: Councillor Arthur - Leader of the Council

Ward: All

Contact Officers

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Report

Equality Policy

1. Norwich City Council has been continuously improving its approach to equalities in line with changing legislation and its target to reach the 'achieving' level of the equalities framework. In line with this a new equality policy has been developed that would be published on the council's website and clearly set out the council's principles and commitments to equalities and expectations of its partners. This can be found at Annex A. It is, therefore, recommended that Cabinet approve the new equality policy.

Socio Economic Duty

2. The original Equalities Act 2010 included a socio economic duty which would have required the Council to consider what impact its strategic decisions will have on narrowing socio economic inequalities. In reality this approach is already covered to an extent through the Council's integrated impact assessment process which has been put in place as part of the Council's continuing equalities work. This approach allows the Council to assess and record the impact of changes of policy or approach across a range of key factors in a clear and straightforward format that supports decision making.
3. It is, therefore, recommended that the Cabinet should formally agree to comply with the socio economic duty originally passed into law in the Equalities Act 2010. Refinements will then be made to further strengthen the council's approach in this area.

Norwich City Council

Equality Policy

Policy Statement:

Norwich city council is committed to equality for all residents of Norwich. This is through the delivery of accessible, fair services as an employer, contractor of services and a community leader. The council celebrates diversity and the contribution different groups make to the vibrant city of Norwich.

This is about making sure we and the services that we contract out do not discriminate against someone because of perceived difference. It also means that we take an active role as a leader in the community, and remove barriers to participation and access for all members of the community. We can do this through implementing robust policies. Examples might be:

- Taking appropriate action if unlawful discrimination is identified
- Consulting with community groups such as disability awareness groups
- Supporting and promoting community and cultural events (e.g. black history month)

Taking a positive approach to diversity creates a cycle of improvement in service provision. By demonstrating we value all aspects of the community we are strengthening it as a whole.

In our service provision we will:

- communicate information clearly using plain language and different formats such as translated services, large print or Braille where appropriate
- make sure our services are accessible
- assess the needs of, and engage with disadvantaged and vulnerable groups to ensure services do not negatively impact them
- monitor use of services
- promote positive images to counter discrimination
- respond proactively to reports of discrimination and harassment
- promote good relations between community groups
- monitor policies and procedures to assess their effectiveness for disadvantaged groups
- monitor effectiveness of contractors in their commitment to equalities
- consult internally and externally regarding our equality commitments.

As an employer we will:

- ensure that recruitment, retention and redeployment policies are fair and transparent
- make reasonable adjustments so that potential barriers are removed for disabled employees
- regularly review our policies and procedures to make sure that they comply with legislation and good practice
- publicise our commitment to equality to potential job applicants
- be robust in our response to discrimination or harassment from employees
- make clear our requirements of employees regarding equality for all

From our employees we expect:

- adherence to the council's code of conduct
- a workplace environment free from discrimination or harassment
- the customer to be at the heart of everything we do
- individuals to treat each other with dignity and respect
- inequality to be challenged
- equality of opportunity to be promoted

The Equalities Act (2010)

All public bodies have 'general equality duties' as laid out in the Equality Act (2010) to pay due regard to the duty to:

- Eliminate prohibited conduct under 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. (cohesion)

Types of discrimination	Prohibited conduct
Direct Discrimination	Being treated less favourably than someone else due to a perceived difference
Indirect Discrimination	The way something is done means that you are treated less favourably than someone else due to a perceived difference
Discrimination arising from a disability	where the discrimination is as a result of the disability
Perception discrimination	Being treated less favourably than someone else because of a perceived difference, regardless of whether it is true.
Discrimination by association	Being treated less favourably than others because of your association with someone with a protected characteristic (which protects carers).
Victimisation	Being treated badly when making a complaint or taking out a grievance in relation to the Equalities Act
Harassment	Unwanted conduct relating to a protected characteristic

Protected characteristics	
Age	Gender Reassignment
Disability	Religion/Belief
Race	Sexual Orientation
Gender/Sex	Pregnancy and Maternity
	Marriage and civil partnership

For further information on the council as an employer, please refer to the human resources equality policy.