

Part I

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Wards: All

WELWYN HATFIELD BOROUGH COUNCIL  
SOCIAL OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 22 NOVEMBER 2017  
REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR (HOUSING AND COMMUNITIES)

EQUALITY POLICY

**1 Executive Summary**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to propose a revised Equality Policy for Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council.
- 1.2 The Policy meets the requirements of the Equality Act 2010 and has been developed by the council's new Equality Steering Group, set up following the re-integration of the Housing Service back into the council.
- 1.3 Once approved the Policy will replace the council's and the housing trust's respective Equality and Diversity Policies and reflect the five refreshed equality objectives agreed by the new Equality Steering Group.

**2 Recommendation(s)**

- 2.1 That Social Overview and Scrutiny Committee endorses the new Equality Policy and recommends its approval to Cabinet.

**3 Explanation**

- 3.1 Following the re-integration of the Housing Service back into the council in February 2017 a new council-wide Equality Steering Group has been created with the aim of reviewing current arrangements for managing the equality agenda and developing a new standardised approach across the council. Whereas the council's previous Equality Group was made up of various officers within the council, the new Group is made up of Heads of Service, the Executive Member for Policy and Culture and chaired by the Executive Director (Housing and Communities).
- 3.2 The purpose of the Equality Steering Group is to:
  - Lead by example – both within and outside of Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council
  - Promote the delivery of excellent services to meet the needs of our communities
  - Agree actions to deliver excellence
  - Ensure legal and statutory compliance
  - Encourage good practice and challenge bad practice
  - Develop realistic actions to mainstream equality and diversity beyond compliance in the council
- 3.3 The Equality Steering Group has developed a revised Equality Policy which will replace the previously published policies for Welwyn Hatfield Community

Housing Trust and Welwyn Hatfield Council. The proposed new Policy is fully compliant with the requirements of the Equality Act 2010. In addition to the requirement for the council to take positive steps to prevent discrimination and promote good relations among people from different groups, the council, as a public authority, is also required to publish equality objectives and set out within an equality scheme, how it will achieve its objectives.

3.4 The proposed new Equality Policy provides a framework for ensuring that our commitment towards equal opportunities is reflected in all the services we provide, including those which we provide as an employer and partner to other organisations.

3.5 The Equality Policy sets out five proposed new equality objectives. These are:

One: We will lead by example within the community, promoting equality of opportunity and fairness

Two: We will value and understand the diversity of our communities, for the benefit of our customers and all residents of the borough

Three: We will deliver fully accessible, fair and inclusive services

Four: We will provide equal opportunities to our employees and encourage a culture of equality within the workplace

Five: We will consult with residents and the community on matters which affect them, taking into account the diversity of our borough

3.6 Once the Equality Policy, including its five objectives, have been approved the Steering Group will publish its action plan, within a new Equality Scheme. This will set out how the objectives will be delivered and monitored over a two year period.

3.7 Consultation will take place during the development of the Equality Scheme and Action Plan. Consultees will include the Borough Panel, Tenants Panel and relevant (community-facing) partner agencies.

3.8 Importantly the proposed new policy will be linked to other key corporate strategies, including the evolving new Customer Services and Workforce Development strategies. This will ensure that its principles are reflected in all of the council's key areas of work, therefore increasing its positive impact on the services which the council provides.

#### **4 Financial Implication(s)**

4.1 The Equality Policy will be implemented within existing service budgets.

#### **5 Legal Implications**

5.1 The proposed new Equality Policy is compliant with the Equality Act 2010. The policy provides for fulfilment of the council's General and Specific Equality Duties, as defined within the Equality Act 2010.

#### **6 Risk Management Implications**

6.1 Breaches of the Equality Act by council could result in customer complaints, criminal proceedings, employment tribunals, fines, reputational damage and reduced opportunities for partnership working in the future.

6.2 The proposed new Equality Policy will help to mitigate the risk of any future litigation against the council for non-compliance with the provisions of the Equality Act 2010.

## **7 Security & Terrorism Implication(s)**

7.1 There are no known security and terrorism implications associated with this recommendation

## **8 Procurement Implication(s)**

8.1 There are no direct procurement implications associated with this recommendation.

## **9 Climate Change Implication(s)**

9.1 There are no climate change implications associated with this recommendation.

## **10 Link to Corporate Priorities**

10.1 The subject of this report is linked specifically to the Council's Corporate Priority: Engage with our communities and provide value for money.

10.2 However by providing greater equality of opportunity for staff, residents, contractors and employers, the implementation of this policy will help to meet all of the council's corporate priorities.

## **11 Equality and Diversity**

11.1 An Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) was carried out on 17 November 2017 and no negative impact was identified on any of the protected groups under Equalities legislation.

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Date	13 November 2017