

**SUBJECT: REVIEW OF THE DIVERSITY AND EQUALITY POLICY**

**JOINT REPORT OF THE CHIEF FIRE OFFICER, CLERK TO THE AUTHORITY AND THE PERSONNEL ADVISOR**

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**1 INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to inform members of the review of the Authority's Diversity and Equality Policy and outline the main changes for approval.

**2 BACKGROUND**

- 2.1 The current Diversity and Equality Policy had been in place since March 2007. In accordance with the Policy a full review has been undertaken in order to bring its content up to date and to re-assess how easy it is to understand and for readers to access specific information.
- 2.2 Many organisations have a separate policy covering bullying and harassment and in collating evidence for the Stonewall Workplace Equality Index Top 100 Employers<sup>1</sup>, the Diversity and Equality Advisor identified that the original Policy did not sufficiently meet the needs of the criteria in relation to the provision of information / guidance regarding bullying and harassment and this was a key area which required attention.
- 2.3 The Chief Fire Officer has now undertaken a complete review, which commenced with researching best practice and also involved an informal consultation exercise with employees. The revised policies are attached as appendices A and B to this report for approval by Members.

**3 POLICY AMENDMENTS**

- 3.1 Initial feedback from employees and research findings indicated that the policy was too long and detailed and, as a result, employees found it difficult to find key information and fully understand the policy.
- 3.2 The Policy has therefore been revised and re-structured into a more logical order to improve its clarity so that readers could easily understand the policy and find specific information quickly.

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<sup>1</sup> Stonewall is an organisation which works to achieve equality and justice for lesbian, gay and bisexual (LGB) people and runs a national Index each year which showcases Britain's top 100 employers for the 1.7 million LGB people in Britain.

## **PREVENTING PROTECTING RESPONDING**

3.3 In line with current good practice, the original policy was then divided into two separate policies namely; The Diversity and Equality Policy 1.28 and the Dignity and Respect Policy 1.19, which places the focus firmly on bullying and harassment, previously incorporated as part of the original policy.

3.4 Further consultation was completed with the Authority's Diversity and Equality Committee which includes representatives from the recognised Trades Unions, and necessary amendments made.

### **4 FUTURE REVIEW**

4.1 The Diversity and Equality Policy 1.28 and the Dignity and Respect Policy 1.19 will be subject to an annual review in accordance with the timescales set out in the Single Equality Scheme.

4.2 Minor amendments to the policies will be required following the implementation of the Equality Act 2010 and any further ad-hoc reviews will be carried out should additional changes to legislation take place.

### **5 RISK MANAGEMENT**

5.1 A risk assessment has been undertaken to ensure that the risk to the Authority has been minimised as far as practicable. The assessment has considered an appropriate balance between risk and control; the realisation of efficiencies; the most appropriate use of limited resources; and a comprehensive evaluation of the benefits.

5.2 Ensuring up to date and relevant Diversity and Equality policies are in place ensures that the risk to the authority is low (utilising the standard risk matrix based on control measures being in place). The complete risk assessment is available on request from the Chief Fire Officer.

### **6 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

6.1 There are no financial implications in relation to this report.

### **7 DIVERSITY AND EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS**

7.1 It is vital to have in place and effectively communicate the Diversity and Equality policy and the Dignity and Respect policy to ensure that all employees conduct themselves in a manner, which concords with the core values of the organisation and ensures equality and fairness for all.

7.2 By accepting and adopting these policies the Authority and its employees are demonstrating their support for equality and fairness at work.

### **8 HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPLICATIONS**

8.1 There are no health and safety implications in respect of this report.

**9 RECOMMENDATIONS**

9.1 Members are recommended to:

- a) Note the content of this report;
- b) Approve the amended Diversity and Equality policy and the Dignity and Respect policy;
- c) Receive further reports as appropriate.

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**BACKGROUND PAPERS**

The undermentioned Background Papers refer to the subject matter of the above report:

- Equality and Diversity Strategy 2008-2018.