



Policy and Resources Committee – 7 December 2015

Proposed Equality Objective 2016-2020

Purpose of report

This report seeks approval for the proposed Equality Objective for East Northamptonshire Council over the period 2016-2020, as required under the Equality Act 2010.

Attachment(s) None

1.0 Background

1.1 The public sector equality duty (the equality duty) is made up of a general equality duty which is supported by specific duties. The general equality duty requires public authorities, in the exercise of their functions, to have due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Act
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and people who do not share it
- Foster good relations between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not share it

1.2 The protected characteristics covered by the Equality Duty are;

- Age
- Disability
- Gender reassignment
- Marriage and civil partnership
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Race
- Religion or belief
- Sex
- Sexual orientation

1.3 Public authorities must:

- Prepare and publish one or more objectives they think they should achieve to do any of the things mentioned in the aims of the general equality duty (see paragraph 1.1)
- Initially, publish on 6 April 2012, and then at least every four years after that. That means a new objective must be defined and published by 6 April 2016
- Ensure that those objectives are specific and measurable
- Publish those objectives in such a manner that they are accessible to the public

1.4 The council also has a duty to consult with residents on the proposed objective(s). Once the proposed objective has been approved by Committee, the consultation will take place mainly through our Residents' Panel but will also be made available on the website for participation by other residents. A paper version of the consultation will be available on request and at our Customer Service Centres. Alternative versions of the consultation will be made available on request.

2.0 Proposed equality objective

2.1 An equality objective is an aim to address the biggest and most pressing issue facing the organisation when considering its duty under the Equalities Act.

- 2.2 The Council continues to meet its legal requirement under the Equality Act 2010 to publish information to show its compliance with the Equality Duty by 31 January, annually (the latest publication being the *East Northamptonshire Story 2015*). This information included:
- Information relating to employees who share protected characteristics
 - Information relating to people who are affected by its policies and practices who share protected characteristics (for example, service users)
- 2.3 The East Northamptonshire Story does not reveal any issues that have arisen in relation to either service delivery or staff regarding equality matters. However, our Residents' Survey reveals that nearly a quarter (23%) of respondents do not feel well informed about the services provided by the council and nearly 4 in 10 (39%) do not feel they have any influence on the decisions made by council.
- 2.4 With this in mind, it is proposed that the equality objective for East Northamptonshire Council (with a review date of no later than 6 April 2020) is to:
- Provide accessible, inclusive information and services to all residents; and
 - Listen and respond to customers from all groups within the population
- 2.5 The following actions will help to achieve this objective:
- Continue to provide training for Members and Officers around equality legislation
 - Continue to revisit and review the policy development and decision-making process to ensure that equality impact assessments continue to be available at the point of decision-making at Committee
 - Identify and utilise the expertise of community groups and local organisations who may be able to help us assess the impacts of our policies and the way we deliver services
 - Improve understanding of how different communication media are used across our population and make a variety of communication channels available to ensure accessibility for all
 - Ensure meaningful consultation is carried out with our residents and that those consultations are accessible in a variety of ways to suit individual needs
 - Identify cost-effective provision of alternative communications (paper, BSL, braille, different languages, etc.) for when this service is required/requested
 - Provide effective feedback to customer comments and, where relevant, make improvements to services and the supply of information to residents.

3.0 Equality and Diversity Implications

- 3.1 An initial Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) has been carried out and found that the implications for all equality groups would be positive. The objective being proposed is intended to deliver a positive outcome for all equality groups. The Equality Impact Assessment can be accessed as a background document.

4.0 Legal Implications

- 4.1 The Council must publish one or more equality objectives by 6 April 2016 in order to meet its legal duties under:
- Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 (the public sector equality duty), and
 - The Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties) Regulations 2011
- 4.2 The Equality and Human Rights Commission has statutory powers to enforce the general and specific duties, ranging from issuing a compliance notice to applying for a judicial review.

5.0 Risk Management

5.1 The risk register includes a risk in the Resources & Organisational Development area of 'Failure in Consultation or Equalities Duty' (RM ROD 010). The purpose of publishing the equality objective, and undertaking the associated actions, is to ensure this risk is anticipated and mitigated.

6.0 Financial Implications

6.1 There are no financial implications arising from the proposals, although there could be financial implications relating to potential legal challenges if the objective is not agreed by the deadline.

7.0 Corporate Outcomes

7.1 The Corporate Outcomes the equality objective seeks to deliver are:

- Effective Management
- High Quality Service Delivery
- Knowledge of Customers and Communities
- Employees and Members with the Right Knowledge, Skills and Behaviours

8.0 Recommendation

8.1 The Committee is recommended to

- consider the Equality Impact Assessment for this decision (see section 3.1)
- approve the proposed equality objectives set out in section 2.4
- agree to undertake consultation on the Equality Objective as set out in this report
- delegate final approval of the Equality Objective to the Head of Resources and Organisational Development in consultation with the Chairman of the Policy and Resources Committee

(Reason: to meet the duties of the Equality Act 2010)

Legal	Power: Equality Act 2010				
	Other considerations:				
Background Papers: East Northamptonshire Story 2015, Equality Impact Assessment					
Person Originating Report: Angela Hook, Corporate Support Manager					
Date: 02 November 2015					
CFO		MO		CX	

(Committee Report Normal Rev. 22)