

MEETING:	CABINET
DATE:	21 OCTOBER 2010
TITLE OF REPORT:	HEREFORDSHIRE EQUALITY AND HUMAN RIGHTS CHARTER
PORTFOLIO AREA:	CORPORATE AND CUSTOMER SERVICES AND HUMAN RESOURCES

CLASSIFICATION: Open

Wards Affected

County-wide

Purpose

To approve the Herefordshire Equality and Human Rights Charter.

Key Decision

This is a Key Decision because it is likely to be significant in terms of its effects on communities living or working in an area comprising one or more wards in the County. It was included in the Forward Plan.

Recommendation(s)

THAT: the Herefordshire Equality and Human Rights Charter be approved as the overarching equality policy for the Council;

Key Points Summary

- The Herefordshire Equality and Human Rights Charter will provide a focus to ensure that we meet our obligation under the Human Rights Act 1998, and the detailed requirements of the Equality Act 2010.
- The Charter demonstrates our commitment to dignity, respect and human rights in everything that we do.
- The charter also sets out the framework to move our organisation forward from regarding human rights as important, to being a “human rights based organisation” where human rights are fundamental to who we are and what we do.
- The joint management team have endorsed the charter and the Action Plan that has been developed to implement it. Monitoring will be through the Joint Corporate Diversity group with an annual review to JMT. All Directorates have been reminded of the requirement for

Further information on the subject of this report is available from
Carol Trachonitis, Equality and Diversity Manager, (01432) 260616

regular updates on equality matters as part of Management Team meetings.

Alternative Options

There are no Alternative Options. It is a legal requirement that as a public service provider we set out our commitment with regards to Equality and Human Rights legislation.

Reasons for Recommendations

This charter replaces the Comprehensive Equality Policy and approval will ensure continued compliance with legislative requirements.

Introduction and Background

1. This charter is the result of working with Local Government Improvement and Development (formerly the IDeA) and the British Institute of Human Rights. Herefordshire is one of 5 pilot projects looking at how a human rights perspective can help local authorities and public bodies improve service delivery. It is intended to take human rights out of the courtroom and assess their usefulness in the complex and diverse world in which public services operate.
2. As Herefordshire formalises its partnership working, it has already been agreed that all our equality policies should cross boundaries across the three organisations, and we have successfully achieved this by producing both a joint Disability Equality Scheme (Oct 2009) and, more recently, a joint Gender Equality Scheme (May 2010). We are now embarking on the next level by demonstrating in this charter our commitment to improving life chances, quality of life, health and well being of all the people in the county.
3. A similar report is being presented to NHS Herefordshire and Hereford Hospitals Trust boards

Key Considerations

4. In developing this charter we recognise that inequality is caused by the way in which society fails to meet an individual's needs. This charter sets out our commitment to take positive steps to eliminate discrimination in our policies, practice and procedures, and empower individuals to take control of their lives, and to live independently.
5. This charter demonstrates to our communities our shared commitment to equality and human rights and that, by working in partnership, the Council, NHS Herefordshire and Hereford Hospitals NHS Trust are committed to promoting human rights and equality of opportunity, good community relations and to tackling all forms of unlawful discrimination.

Community Impact

6. The charter underpins the priorities for Herefordshire as set out in Herefordshire's sustainable community strategy. The charter also sets out specific priorities around community cohesion and support for the new and emerging communities in the county and further develops the "No Prejudice In HEREfordshire" campaign
7. The values and principles set out in the document complement the guiding principle as stated in the Herefordshire Partnership's sustainable community strategy.

Financial Implications

8. The Corporate Diversity Team, with the support of the British Institute of Human Rights and Local Government Improvement and Development, has borne the cost of developing this partnership document within existing budgets.
9. There are no significant negative financial implications with regards to the action plan that has been developed to aid implementation. JMT have reinforced the requirement for Directors to embed this work into core business.

Legal Implications

10. This charter sets out the legal framework within which we work with regards to our general and specific duties, and takes into account the new Equality Act 2010.

Risk Management

11. Each public sector organisation has a statutory responsibility to ensure that equality and human rights is adequately embedded within their organisation. Failure to do this could leave the organisation vulnerable to litigation, unwitting discriminatory practice and reputational risk.

Consultees

12. There has been an extensive consultation process that has incorporated presentations, direct mailing, awareness and training sessions, support from the BIHR and LGID as well as internal and external stakeholders events concluding in a 6 week consultation period on the final document. Details are at Appendix 2

Appendices

Appendix 1. Herefordshire Equality and Human Rights Charter

Appendix 2 Consultees

Background Papers

- None identified.