

Meeting:	Cabinet member finance and corporate services
Meeting date:	21 September 2020
Title of report:	Writing and Publishing Council Plans, Policies and Procedures
Report by:	Assistant Director Corporate Support

Classification

Open

Decision type

Non-key

Wards affected

(All Wards);

Purpose

To seek agreement on the approach to the production and publication of plans, policies and procedures produced by the council. To include a framework for producing policy documents whilst recognising the purpose and intended audiences will influence different requirements. The report also covers the publishing of documents that meet the accessibility standards required by law.

Recommendation(s)

That:

- (a) **Writing and Publishing Council Plans, Policies and Procedures as outlined as Appendix A is accepted.**

Alternative options

1. That the document Writing and Publishing Council Plans, Policies and Procedures is not accepted. This is not recommended as the current policy covering these matters is due

for updating and does not include the new requirements following the accessibility standards.

2. That the status quo is retained. This is not recommended as will not address the inconsistencies of approaches, the requirements for accessibility and other elements to be included in council plans, policies and procedures.

Key considerations

3. The council produces many different documents – for example - plans, policies, strategies, procedures, guidance or statements. Some documents will be a statutory requirement and others desirable to have in place based on the council's priorities. Documents will also be for different audiences, involve partner organisations or part of a funding agreement.
4. The council had in place the "Policy for Writing Council Policies and Procedures" first produced in 2013 and subsequently updated. Appendix A of this report retains the essence of the original policy to create a consistent approach, but provides updated requirements including accessibility.
5. As appendix A outlines it is incredibly important that the reader (either employee of the council or resident) is able to understand the purpose of the document and able to understand its content. This helps with transparency to address some public concerns that the council "hides behind jargon".
6. The document outlines what should be included in terms of key elements of content along with definition and example of what is a plan, policy or procedure.
7. An action in the draft Annual Governance Statement reads "to produce guidance on production of Plans, Policies and Strategies and improve the registration and publication of documents". Approval of appendix A meets the first part of the action, with the second element following with improvement to how documents are published.

Community impact

8. In accepting appendix A there is no negative effect on the community. However in following the requirements outlined in the document plans, policies and procedures produced in the future will include different elements and styles. By having the requirement for outlining outcomes there should be more traction on achievements outlined in a timescale.

Environmental Impact

9. As a content requirement plans, policies and procedures need to outline their contribution to environmental policy commitments. Also as in appendix A documents do not need to be printed which reduces the council's paper consumption with all the climate change benefits that brings from sourcing the raw materials to reducing the need to recycle which creates its own consumables.

Whilst this is a decision on back office functions and will have minimal environmental impacts, consideration has been made to minimise waste and resource use in line with the Council's Environmental Policy.

Equality duty

10. Under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010, the 'general duty' on public authorities is set out as follows:

A public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to -

- (a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;
 - (b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
 - (c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.
11. The public sector equality duty (specific duty) requires us to consider how we can positively contribute to the advancement of equality and good relations, and demonstrate that we are paying 'due regard' in our decision making in the design of policies and in the delivery of services. As this is a decision on back office functions, we do not believe that it will have an impact on our equality duty. The accessibility requirement of documents have been included in appendix A as is one of the drivers to a revised and updated approach. For more information on [accessibility standards](#).

Resource implications

12. There are no direct resource implications to this decision. Though a different style and approach might need to be taken as a result of appendix A requirements - this should not need additional human resource or budget.

Legal implications

13. Some plans, policies and procedures need to be published statutorily.

Risk management

14. The follow risks apply to this decision:

Risk / opportunity	Mitigation
The requirements are not followed making documents inconsistent and not of the required quality.	This is a risk and different documents might need to include different elements. The new requirement will be published and promoted. This will include the Directors and Assistant Directors who will need to sign-off plans, policies and procedures.

Consultees

15. Draft shared with relevant departments and management board for feedback.

Appendices

Appendix A: Writing and Publishing Council Plans, Policies and Procedures.

Background papers

None.