

# Title of report: Equality Policy 2024-27

**Decision maker: Cabinet Member Finance and Corporate Services**

**Decision date: 10 May 2024**

**Report by: Equality Officer**

## **Classification**

Open.

## **Decision type**

Key

## **Wards affected**

All wards.

## **Purpose**

To approve the Equality Policy 2024–2027.

## **Recommendation(s)**

### **That:**

- a) the Equality Policy and associated appendices are approved for publication.**

## **Alternative options**

1. To not produce or update the Council's Equality Policy. This is not recommended. There is no legal obligation to produce an equality policy, so we have the option not to publish (although it is considered good practice to have a policy in place). However it is a statutory requirement that we publish at least one Equality Objective so, in the absence of an equality policy, we would have to identify another method of publishing our objectives.

## **Key considerations**

2. The proposed policy sets out our commitment to equality and inclusion. It details some of the main initiatives that we already undertake (and signposting to further information), and it lays out our Equality Objectives.
3. The Equality Objectives detailed in the policy are:

- 3.1 To incorporate equality considerations into our service planning template

3.2 To improve the equality information on the council website relating to decisions

4. An addendum to our Equality Objectives confirms that we will comply with any future requests from central government (ie. it has recently been suggested that local authorities will have to produce productivity plans).
5. The policy supports the “Community” ambition in the County Plan (2020-2024) to strengthen communities to ensure that everyone lives well and safely together.
6. The policy also supports the “People” ambition in the draft County Plan (2024-2028), namely to:
  - 6.1 tackle inequality by focusing on early intervention and prevention activities that support people to live independent and fulfilling lives
  - 6.2 ensure people feel safe and respected in their communities

### **Community impact**

7. The most vulnerable people in our society are often voiceless or unheard. Setting out our commitment to equality in this public-facing policy is a reassurance to those people that we care about creating an inclusive society and taking their needs into account

### **Environmental Impact**

8. There is no environmental impact associated with the proposed policy.

### **Equality duty**

9. 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.
10. This policy directly supports the General Duty by setting out our Equality Objectives, and by signposting to targeted work being carried out to eliminate discrimination (eg. health inequalities, Prevent, Learning Disability Strategy, etc).
  11. This policy sets out our duty under the Equality Act 2010, and details the corporate standard for values and behaviours. It demonstrates that the council takes its responsibility seriously and it could be used to support or inform grievances, disciplinarys or formal complaints.
  12. An Equality Impact Assessment is attached as an Appendix to this report.

### **Resource implications**

13. There are unlikely to be any resource implications arising from the policy.

## Legal implications

14. The Equality Act 2010 protects people from unlawful discrimination in the provision of services and public functions, employment, premises, education and associations. Its broad purpose is to integrate consideration of equality and good relations into the day-to-day business of public authorities.
15. There is no formal legislative requirement for an Equality Policy although the adoption of such ensures that users and staff are clear as to the Council's aims in respect to equality. A formal policy also ensures that priorities are documented and performance against such can be evaluated. There are specific requirements to publish certain information annually and set an equality objective under the [2017](#) Regulations and this policy delivers to this requirement.

## Risk management

16. There are unlikely to be any risks arising from the policy.

## Consultees

17. A public and staff survey was open from September-November 2023 for comments and contributions to the policy. This was promoted through the council's website and social media accounts, and a targeted e-mail was sent to various local organisation to encourage their involvement (eg. Hereford Disability United, Hereford Pride, Services for Independent Living).
18. 18 responses were received, of which at least three were from local organisations (ECHO, Herefordshire Women's Equality Group, and West Mercia Rape & Sexual Abuse Support Centre).
19. Consultees were given the opportunity to ask for a personal response from the Equality Officer when responding to the survey. Three people requested direct contact, and all were contacted personally.
20. There were three particular areas of interest raised by the consultation:
  - 20.1 Domestic abuse and sexual violence (reference is made to this within the policy, but only by signposting readers to the relevant policies)
  - 21.2 Local democracy (reference is made to this with the policy, and public comments were forwarded to Democratic Services for their information)
  - 21.3 Internal HR considerations, particularly disability and the maternity policy (reference is made to this with the policy, and public comments were forwarded to HR for their information)

## Appendices

- Appendix A: Equality Policy 2024-2027
- Appendix B: Appendices to Equality Policy
- Appendix C: Equality Impact Assessment

## Background papers

None.

## Report Reviewers Used for appraising this report:

Please note this section must be completed before the report can be published

Governance	Click or tap here to enter text.	Date Click or tap to enter a date.
Finance	Click or tap here to enter text.	Date Click or tap to enter a date.
Legal	Sean O'Connor	Date 18/04/2024
Communications	Luenne Featherstone	Date 26/03/2024
Equality Duty	Click or tap here to enter text.	Date Click or tap to enter a date.
Procurement	Lee Robertson	Date 21/03/2024
Risk	Click or tap here to enter text.	Date Click or tap to enter a date.
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