

KENNET DISTRICT COUNCIL

Human Resources Committee – 22nd November 2007

EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES POLICIES

REPORT BY THE HEAD OF HUMAN RESOURCES

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek approval of the Human Resources Committee to amended and updated Equal Opportunities policy documents in the light of the latest legislation and good practice.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Kennet has had for many years an equal opportunities policy which has been updated and amended a number of times in the light of new legislation. There has been a significant amount of changes in the last few years and keeping pace with the changes has been difficult. As a result when our policies and procedures were reviewed as part of the Wiltshire Improvement Partnership Capacity Building project on Equalities and Diversity it was identified that we had a number of deficiencies. These documents have been completely overhauled and are presented now for approval.

3. EQUALITIES STRANDS

- 3.1 There are now six main equalities strands covering, race, gender (including transgender issues), disability, religion and belief, sexual orientation and age. For some of these we are required to produce Equalities Schemes and these have been completed, but elsewhere our documentation has failed to pick up on all these strands as effectively as could be.

4. EQUALITIES STANDARD FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT

- 4.1 As part of our work towards meeting the requirements of legislation we have also signed up to meeting the above standard. We have been working towards this for a number of years and had considered that we were at Level 3 out of 5 levels. However, the work that has been undertaken by the IDeA on behalf of the Wiltshire Improvement Partnership has identified weaknesses in our existing processes and documents, indicating that we are currently only at level 2. The changes that were required to our documents to bring us up the required standard and to comply with existing legislation are given below.

5. CHANGES TO DOCUMENTS

- 5.1 Equal Opportunities in Employment** : This document has been completely rewritten and it attached for approval. It did not reflect properly the six strands of equalities, and failed to make reference to monitoring staff and harassment (copy attached).
- 5.2 Harassment Policy** : This document has also been completely re-written to cover the latest legislation, and in particular it did not cover transgender and transsexual people (copy attached).
- 5.3 Code of Conduct** : This required a minor change to the equalities section to reflect the six strands.
- 5.4 Recruitment and Resourcing Policy** : This required a number of changes to ensure that we were complying with current legislation. These changes are indicated within the document by underlining. The changes are mainly relating to references to job evaluation, the requirement to monitor, and the six equalities strands. The whole document is long and contains guidance for managers. Only the first part of the document is attached showing the changes. The second part of the document required no changes, but can be viewed in the HR Section if required.
- 5.5** All of the main documents have now been linked together for consistency, following broadly the same format which will make it easier for staff to maintain up to date and easier to read and understand. The amendments to the race, gender and disability schemes where applicable will be referred to Resources Committee as they are not specific to the employment of staff.

6. CONCLUSIONS

- 6.1** In order not to lay the Council open to legal challenge it is important that it complies with legislation and updates and maintains up to date all its documentation relating to the employment and retention of staff. We are satisfied that with these changes we are as up to date as we can be at the present time. Documents will be closely monitored in future to ensure compliance with legislation as it changes.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 7.1** The Human Resources Committee is asked to approve the changes to the Policies listed in paragraph 5 and as attached to this report.

Anne Ewing
Head of Human Resources

Background Papers

Current legislation
Report by consultant from the Wiltshire Improvement Partnership