

KENNET DISTRICT COUNCIL

Resources Policy Committee – 27th November 2007

REVIEW OF CORPORATE EQUALITIES AND DIVERSITY POLICIES

**Report by Director of Community Services and
Head of Human Resources**

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 Earlier this year all our policies and schemes in relation to the different strands of equalities were assessed by consultants from IDeA. The consultant made recommendations for amendments to various documents and these updated documents are attached for approval.

2. FINANCIAL, STAFFING, RISK AND LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 2.1 There are no financial or staffing implications. There was a potential for challenge because the policies were not clear or specific enough, but the changes have addressed and mitigated this.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 Kennet District Council has been participating in the Wiltshire Improvement Plan and its capacity building programme. Part of this work was to assess all of the authorities in relation to the Equalities Standard for Local Government in an endeavour to enabling all authorities to achieve Level 2 of the standard. Within Kennet we considered that we had already achieved Level 3, so were assessed against both Level 2 and Level 3. The review highlighted deficiencies in some of our documentation and processes, which are the focus of this report.
- 3.2 Some of our documentation was prepared in relation to legislation introduced some years ago. Equalities legislation has moved on significantly in the last two or three years and changes were required to ensure that we were fully up to date.

4. CORPORATE EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY POLICY

- 4.1 This document was very out of date having been written some 7 or 8 years ago. It needed to be updated to cover the 6 equality strands – race, gender, disability, age, religion and belief and sexual orientation. The

original document did not refer to the new Gender Equality Scheme or the Disability Equality Scheme. Separately, we have also reviewed and updated the Equal Opportunities in Employment Policy (referred to the Human Resources Committee for approval) and Harassment Policy and reference to these policies is now included.

5. HARASSMENT POLICY

- 5.1 The Council already had a harassment policy for its staff, in relation to employee welfare, but did not have a more general corporate one concerning its duty to the public. This new policy clearly sets out the Council's stance on harassment and the steps it will take to avoid it and handle any complaints.

6. RACE EQUALITY SCHEME

- 6.1 The Council's Race Equality Scheme had been drawn up in 2002 and was due to be reviewed in 2008 (it is a statutory requirement that it is reviewed every 3 years). However, as part of the work by the IDeA it has been reviewed now and amended in the light of the comments we received. In addition it now includes the new Corporate Equalities and Diversity Policy and Harassment Policy. It has been modified slightly to be consistent with other policies.

7. CONCLUSIONS

- 7.1 In order to ensure that the Council complies with current legislation these changes have been necessary. However, the changes go further than this in that they ensure consistency of approach and demonstrate to both our staff and our public that we are a Council that takes its responsibilities within the community seriously and considers the needs of our diverse community.

8. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 8.1 The Resources Policy Committee is recommended to approve the revised and updated policy documents as follows:
- a) Corporate Equality and Diversity Policy
 - b) Harassment Policy
 - c) Race Equality Scheme

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Director of Community Services

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Head of Human Resources