

## **PERSONNEL AND GENERAL PURPOSES SUB-COMMITTEE**

**28th February 2024**

- Present:** Councillor Steve Cockeram in the Chair  
Councillors Cookson, Denham, Murray,  
Round and Stanley (Vice-Chair)
- Officers:** Shane Flynn, Corporate Director, Finance  
and Resources  
Sian Stroud, Corporate Director, Planning  
and Governance
- Apologies:** Councillor Riaz

### **19 Appointment of Substitutes**

None.

### **20 Declarations of Interest**

None.

### **21 Public Participation**

None.

### **22 Minutes**

**RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 18<sup>th</sup> October 2023 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.**

### **23 Referral Report from Joint Consultative and Safety Committee: Revised Equalities Policy for Approval**

The Sub-Committee considered a report on the adopting of a revised Equalities Policy. The Corporate Director – Planning and Governance presented the report and explained that the Council’s existing Equal Opportunities Policy was 10 years old and, whilst it was still legally adequate, the context has changed, notably in relation to the Council’s new Equality Diversity and Inclusion Strategy.

A new Equalities Policy had been drafted with reference to the ACAS policy template but widened out from having an employee-only perspective to take account of the Council’s public sector equality duty. The proposed new Policy contained a set of expectations on employees, other Council representatives (for example volunteers, councillors, suppliers) and customers. The draft Policy was appended to the report.

The proposed new Policy had been approved by the Joint Consultative and Safety Committee at its meeting on 31<sup>st</sup> January 2024.

In the ensuing discussion, a comment was made that the new Policy lacks depth and should be more robust, for example by listing all protected characteristics and

by including reference to direct and indirect discrimination. In response, the Corporate Director explained that the Policy is intended to set out the Council's responsibilities and expectations. It underpins the relevant provisions of the Equalities Act 2010 but it is not intended to replicate the legislation. The Corporate Director suggested that to address the point raised, a glossary could be appended to assist customers and suppliers. Other public bodies have adopted this approach.

Other Members expressed support for the Policy as presented. However, taking into account the comments above, Members stated that they would support giving authority to the Corporate Director to make any changes to the text so that a glossary can be provided.

**RESOLVED: That the Sub-Committee:**

- 1. approve the revised Equalities Policy attached at Appendix 1 to the report; and**
- 2. agree to delegate authority to the Corporate Director - Planning and Governance, in consultation with the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Sub-Committee, to finalise the wording of the Policy.**

**24 Unreasonable Customer Behaviour Policy**

The Sub-Committee considered a report on adopting a new overarching Council-wide policy to deal consistently and fairly with a customer's behaviour when it is considered to be unreasonable. The draft Policy was appended to the report.

The Corporate Director – Planning and Governance presented the report and explained that the Council does not have a Policy currently. The Policy which has been prepared aims to provide clarity for customers on what they can expect and where possible to provide mechanisms for de-escalation and review.

The Corporate Director responded to questions and comments from Committee Members. In the ensuing discussion, there was a discussion about mental health and the extent to which this contributes to customer behaviour. The Corporate Director acknowledged that this is a live issue, however it is difficult to address it in an overarching policy. Frontline staff have raised issues such as training and sharing information, both internally and with other agencies, where it is considered necessary. It may be possible to share information about incidents with other agencies including via the Community Safety Partnership. She suggested that the Joint Consultative and Safety Committee could take responsibility for oversight and monitoring the operation of the Policy.

It was noted that the personal safety of elected representatives will be discussed by the Standards Committee at its forthcoming meeting.

**RESOLVED: That the Sub-Committee approve the new Unreasonable Customer Behaviour Policy attached at Appendix 1 to the report.**

**25 Any Other Business**

None.

**26 Item Involving the Disclosure of Exempt Information**

**RESOLVED: That under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of information as defined in Schedule 12A of the said Act.**

**27 Appointment of Head of Service**

The Sub-Committee agreed to delegate authority to Officers to undertake an internal recruitment exercise in consultation with the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Sub-Committee.

(Exempt – not for publication because the item contains information relating to any individual and also relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person – categories 1 and 3)

**Duration of the meeting: 7.00p.m. – 7.45p.m.**

Chair at the meeting on  
17th July 2024