

## **Employment Matters Committee**

**4 December 2024**

### **Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy**

Report from: Nicola Trainor, Head of Council Planning and Programmes

Authors: Nicholas Morgan, HR Business Partner  
Lesley Jones, Corporate Performance Management Lead

#### **Summary**

The requirement for a revised Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Policy has been driven by two main factors. Firstly, the current Fair Access, Diversity and Inclusion policy (Appendix A) is due for review as the last iteration was updated in 2012. The main issue with this policy is the lack of detail which results in a broad statement rather than a defined policy direction. As a result, changes are required to make this a meaningful document.

Secondly, a new EDI strategy has been launched which details the Council's commitment and measurable outcomes over the next five years (up to 2028), a new policy helps support this strategy by detailing the commitments of the Council in respect of EDI which align with the proposed actions and outcomes within the overarching strategy.

#### **1. Recommendations**

1.1 The Committee is asked to agree the adoption of the revised Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy attached at Appendix B to the report.

#### **2. Budget and policy framework**

2.1 The policy forms part of the Workforce Strategy within the Council Plan supporting 'Our Values and behaviours' and 'Our Principles – Equality and Diversity in all we do'. As this is to implement a revised policy which impacts employees it is therefore a matter for this Committee. The existing Policy is attached at Appendix A for information.

#### **3. Background**

3.1 The Council's aim is for Medway to be a fair and inclusive place where everyone, employees, and community, have equal access to opportunities and services, and are included and represented in decisions that affect them.

3.2 An EDI policy is crucial for several reasons, impacting both organisational culture and performance. Some of the key reasons to have a policy detailing Medway Council's commitment to EDI are listed below:

### 3.3 **Enhances Innovation and Creativity**

**Diverse Perspectives:** A mix of different backgrounds, experiences, and viewpoints leads to more creative solutions and innovative ideas.

**Problem-Solving:** Teams that include diverse members are better at problem-solving because they can approach challenges from multiple angles.

### 3.4 **Improves Employee Engagement and Retention**

**Inclusive Environment:** When employees feel valued, included, and their voices heard job satisfaction and engagement levels increase.

**Retention:** A positive, inclusive workplace culture helps to reduce turnover, saving costs related to hiring and training new employees and retaining knowledge and experience.

### 3.5 **Reflects and Understands Diverse Customers**

**A diverse workforce:** Has a greater understanding to meet the needs of a diverse customer base and community, leading to better customer service, satisfaction and outcomes.

**Representation:** Customers are more likely to feel connected to an organisation that represents their diversity.

### 3.6 **Promotes Fairness and Legal Compliance**

**Equitable Opportunities:** Aims to ensure all employees have equal access to opportunities and resources, reducing biases and discrimination.

**Legal Compliance:** Helps organisations comply with laws and regulations regarding workplace equality and non-discrimination, reducing the risk of legal issues.

### 3.7 **Builds a Positive Reputation**

Companies known for their commitment to EDI are more attractive to talent and are viewed more favourably by customers.

**Social Responsibility:** Demonstrates a commitment to social justice and ethical practices, enhancing the organisations standing in the community and standing as an example to other businesses and organisations in the area.

### 3.8 Enhances Organisational Performance

**Productivity:** Diverse teams are often more productive due to a wider range of skills and experiences.

**Financial Performance:** Studies have shown that companies with diverse leadership teams often perform better financially.

### 3.9 Mitigates Unconscious Bias

**Awareness and Training:** EDI policies often include training programs to help employees recognise and mitigate their own biases.

**Inclusive Practices:** Encourages the development of more inclusive hiring, promotion, and decision-making processes.

### 3.10 The new policy includes the following key areas:

- Section 2.1 and 2.2 sets out the Councils overall commitment to EDI.
- 6.0 Elimination of Discrimination.
- 7.0 Details of Positive action and what this means for the Council
- 11.0 Declaration – this section details how we encourage employees and those applying for roles to declare if they may need additional support.

Although the whole policy should be reviewed for approval the above sections are likely to be areas which may cause an impact on current processes/procedures.

## 4 Advice and analysis

- 4.1 This is a revised policy which will be communicated to all employees, as set out in Appendix B to the report.
- 4.2 Diversity Impact Assessments (DIA) will be undertaken in relation to any changes that are made because of this policy. A DIA is attached as Appendix C to this report.
- 4.3 This revised policy will provide a reference document to continue the journey to improve equality, diversity, and inclusion and support the new EDI strategy.

## 5 Risk management

Risk	Description	Action to avoid or mitigate risk	Risk rating
Reputational Risk	By not having a robust EDI policy the council is at risk from not fully adhering to	Policy adoption and communication across the organisation.	C - II

Risk	Description	Action to avoid or mitigate risk	Risk rating
	Equality Act 2010 requirements to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation; advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between people.		
Recruitment and Retention	With the aim of being an employer of choice an EDI policy helps to communicate the councils commitment to EDI. Not only to those looking to work for the council, but also reiterates the importance to current staff re the support the council has for EDI across the organisation.	Policy adoption and communication across the organisation.	C -III

Likelihood	Impact:
A Very likely	I Catastrophic
B Likely	II Major
C Unlikely	III Moderate
D Rare	IV Minor

## 6 Consultation

6.1 To inform the development of the EDI Policy, a draft was shared with the Equality Board, Trade Unions, Employee forums and Medway Makers. During

these consultations, we asked for feedback on the revised policy. Any feedback has been considered and incorporated into the policy where appropriate.

- 6.2 The new strategy will be communicated to all staff who will be kept informed of any proposed changes to practice and are invited to comment and provide feedback directly, through Medway Makers, and other employee forums.

## 7 Climate change implications

- 7.1 There are no climate change implications arising from this report.

## 8 Financial implications

- 8.1 There are no financial implications directly arising from this report.

## 9 Legal implications

- 9.1 The Equality Act 2010 includes a requirement on public sector organisations to give 'due regard' to the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation; advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between people. The Council is committed to ensuring that no service user, employee, job applicant, those with care experience, partner, contractor, supplier or member of the public will be unlawfully discriminated, harassed or victimised on the grounds of race; ethnicity; nationality; ethnic or national origin; colour; disability; gender identity or presentation; marital or civil partnership status; maternity or pregnancy; family and caring responsibilities; sex; sexual orientation; age; HIV status; religion or belief; political beliefs; social class; trades union activity; or irrelevant spent convictions.
- 9.2 The adoption of the revised policy will assist the Council to achieve the commitments set out in 9.1.
- 9.3 A Diversity Impact Assessment has been carried out in relation to the revised policy and is attached as Appendix C to the report.

## Lead officer contact

Nicola Trainor, Head of Council Planning & Programmes,  
nicola.trainor@medway.gov.uk, 01634 332594

## Appendices

Appendix A: Fair Access, Diversity and Inclusion Policy (current published policy statement)

Appendix B: Revised Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy

Appendix C: DIA for EDI policy

Background papers

None