

REPORT TO: Corporate and Inclusion Policy and Performance Board

DATE: 2nd September 2025

REPORTING OFFICER: Interim Chief Executive

PORTFOLIO: Corporate Services

SUBJECT: Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy

WARD(S) Borough Wide

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 To inform the Board of the recently developed Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy.

2.0 RECOMMENDED: That

- 1) the report be noted; and**
- 2) the Board approves the Policy (Appendix 1.0).**

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

3.1 In 2023, the decision was made to forego a Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Policy in the format of a 30+ paged document, and to present our EDI commitments and aims in Halton Borough Council's EDI Vision and Objectives, as well as the EDI Action Plan. That decision came about due to low interaction and viewing figures of the previous Policy document.

3.2 It has since become apparent that some form of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy is still needed. As a local council, Halton Borough Council (HBC) is liable to receive Freedom Of Information requests, some of which have been EDI focussed and around what information and guidance we publish for:

- a) our workforce
- b) the public

3.3 The establishment of the HBC Corporate Staff Network Groups (SNGs) has also emphasised the need to have the EDI Policy in the format of an informative document. Members of the SNGs are keen to know how they, and others who possess the same Protected Characteristic(s), will be supported at work.

- 3.4** As a public sector body, HBC has specific equality duties that require us to, in the exercise of our functions and decisions, have due regard to:
- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation
 - Advance equality of opportunity
 - Foster good relations
- 3.5** One of the tangible ways to show our compliance is through the physical form of a Policy.
- 3.6** It is for these reasons that we are therefore wanting to implement the accompanying Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy.
- 3.7** The Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Policy sets out how Halton Borough Council meets its duties and responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010. In detail, it covers our vision and commitments, the roles and responsibilities of employees and elected members, and managers; the Protected Characteristics and how HBC supports them specifically, our training and development available to all HBC colleagues, and how we comply with the Public Sector Equality Duty by carrying out Equality Impact Assessments. The Policy also highlights schemes we have in place to advance equality of opportunity, like the Staff Network Groups and Reverse Mentoring.
- 3.8** The Policy will be in place as a source of information for employees and managers.
- a) Employees can learn and understand how they will be supported
 - b) Managers can learn and understand what support they can offer their employees, and be supported in doing so
- 3.9** For specific queries that may not have been covered within the Policy, there is signposting on where and from who more information can be found.
- 3.10** To ensure the Policy is as accessible as possible, the document has been formatted in a specific way. The page colour, font size and type, line spacing, and the alignment have all been chosen to provide accessibility, especially for people with neurodiversity and colour blindness. In the reviewing process, the document was also listened to through Immersive Reader to ensure those using this feature or similar (e.g. screen readers) would have the information relayed to them correctly.
- 3.11** If the implementation of this Policy is approved, we would also like to display the same information within the document on the intranet, to provide a slightly more interactive version for

colleagues. This would be located under the newly added Equality, Diversity and Inclusion section on the Organisational Development page of the intranet. The aim is to achieve more engagement, which usually comes on the back of more interactive content.

4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1** This EDI Policy will work alongside many of the HR Policies, including Bullying and Harassment, and Flexible Working. The content will inform on and act as a source of guidance in the reviewing/ developing of any new and existing HR Policies, especially those relating to specific Protected Characteristics, i.e. pregnancy policies.

5.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1** Implementing this Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy should have no negative financial implications.
- 5.2** With our commitments and our expectations of our workforce clearly defined, the Policy should contribute towards a decrease in successful harassment, discrimination (direct or indirect), or bullying claims made by employees, equating to fewer financial repercussions.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES

6.1 Improving Health, Promoting Wellbeing and Supporting Greater Independence

There are some Protected Characteristics, such as Disability including Neurodiversity, that require reasonable adjustments to enable employees to achieve their full potential. Enforcing and promoting the allowance of these reasonable adjustments could: improve health for those with medical conditions by allowing them to adapt their working conditions as needed, promote wellbeing through the reassurance that as an organisation we are willing to work with colleagues to accommodate their needs, and support greater independence in carrying out their role.

6.2 Building a Strong, Sustainable Local Economy

None at this time.

6.3 Supporting Children, Young People and Families

This EDI Policy applies to Halton Borough Council's workforce, meaning Children and Young People within Halton won't be affected directly by the Policy. However, as the commitments, expectations and support detailed within centre around the Protected Characteristics, one of which being Age, Children and Young People could be affected indirectly. As our commitments

and values are instilled in colleagues through the Policy, they will be able to apply that way of working in their roles, some of which will be focussed around supporting children, young people and families.

6.4 Tackling Inequality and Helping Those Who Are Most In Need

Having the EDI Policy in place will clearly outline the Council's responsibilities and expectations of its workforce in working towards our EDI Objectives. With each of the Protected Characteristics, and the support we provide each of them, defined, the Policy can act as a first port of call on how to tackle inequality within the workforce. The Policy should help guide colleagues on what they may be able to do, either as a manager, or an employee, to support the advancement of EDI within the Council.

6.5 Working Towards a Greener Future

None at this time.

6.6 Valuing and Appreciating Halton and Our Community

The Policy highlights the importance of recognising the benefits of a diverse workforce and community, and the different talents and perspectives those from different backgrounds can bring to the table. Those same diversities and talents will be found in Halton and its communities, meaning if the Policy can instil those values into our employees about our workforce, those same mindsets should be applied when colleagues work in our service delivery areas.

7.0 RISK ANALYSIS

7.1 By agreeing the implementation of the EDI Policy, the risk of non-compliance within the Public Sector Equality Duty will be greatly reduced.

7.2 Setting out our expectations and commitments when it comes to EDI and how it is incorporated in our workforce and the delivery of our services will reduce the risk of discrimination, victimisation and harassment.

8.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

8.1 As stated within the body of the Report.

8.2 An Equality Impact Assessment has been completed to support the Policy.

9.0 CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS

9.1 Not applicable.

10.0 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF
THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

10.1 Equality Act 2010