

HERTFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

CABINET
MONDAY 13 SEPTEMBER 2004 AT 2.00 P.M.

Agenda Item No.

7

PUTTING PEOPLE FIRST

Report of the Corporate Director (People & Property)

Author: Claire Howarth Tel: 01992 556670

Executive Member:- David Beatty

1. Purpose of report

To propose revisions to the County Council's Equal Opportunities Policy.

2. Summary

The County Council launched its Equal Opportunities Policy "Putting People First" in 1999.

This policy has now been revised to take account of changes in legislation and developments in good practice.

The aim is to maintain a contemporary and comprehensive policy which demonstrates the County Council's commitment to continued action in tackling inequality and promoting diversity both as a provider of Services and as an employer.

Copies of the full policy document are available in the Members' Lounge or on request from the Corporate Director (People and Property)

3. Conclusion

Cabinet is asked to consider approving revisions to the County Council's Policy "Putting People First".

4. Background

Since Putting People First was first introduced, there have been a number of legislative developments the main ones being:

- EU Employment Directives on Sexual Orientation, and Religion and Belief, which became law in December 2003 in UK. This made discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation and religion and belief in employment unlawful

- New legal definition of harassment, to incorporate the impact and effect on someone, not just the intent
- Changes in definition of burden of proof, so that the obligation falls on the employer to demonstrate that discrimination has not taken place.

Main Changes in the new Policy:

- Updated preface by the new Chief Executive which acknowledges the progress that has been made whilst acknowledging that there is still some work to do
- New sub title: “A policy for making equality & diversity a reality” (changed from “A policy for making equal opportunities for all a reality”). “Diversity” is a more embracing and positive concept.
- References to legislation and any other relevant policy documents have been updated to maintain currency.
- Updated with reference to Equality Standard in Local Government and requirements under other standards. This makes clear the practical steps the County Council is taking to implement the policy and promotes the equality and diversity systems and procedures which are in place to support the policy objectives.
- Inclusion of Men and Carers as specific target groups. This recognises that Men may be disadvantaged in some situations, and as an organisation with strong commitments to carers we acknowledge there are specific difficulties for carers.

- **Financial Implications**

Some publicity and awareness training will be required, but this can all be funded from within existing budgets.

References:

- Equality Standard for Local Government
<http://www.lg-employers.gov.uk/diversity/equality/index.html>
- General Framework for Equal Treatment Directive (2000/78/EC)