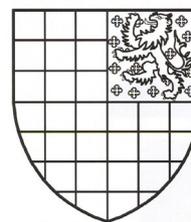


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**LEWES
TOWN
COUNCIL**

MINUTES

of the meeting of the **Working Party** formed to consider the matter of a Diversity policy, held on **Tuesday 19th February 2019** in the **Council Chamber, Town Hall, Lewes** at **7:00pm**.

PRESENT Cllrs S Catlin (*Chairman*); H Jones; I Makepeace; S Murray; R O’Keeffe and E Watts

In attendance: S Brigden (*Town Clerk [TC]*).

DvyWP2018/09 QUESTIONS: There were none.

DvyWP2018/10 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE: Apologies had been received from Cllr Ashby, who had a family commitment; Cllr Baah who had a university commitment; Cllr Barker, who was working, and Cllr Rowell, who was attending training. No message had been received from Cllr Elliott.

DvyWP2018/11 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST: There were none

DvyWP2018/12 MINUTES: The Minutes of the meeting held on 29th November 2018 were agreed and signed as an accurate record.

DvyWP2018/13 REMIT of the WORKING PARTY:

Members considered the remit of the Working Party as set by Council:

Minute extract FC2017/65 refers:

EQUALITIES/DIVERSITY:

Members considered a proposal (*NOM 010/2017 copy in minute book*) to set up a Working Party to look at templates for a Diversity Policy used by other Councils, and to include members of the Community to assist the process. There was an accompanying report (*FC010/2017 copy in minute book*) which apprised Members of the background position.

The motion made reference to the Equality Act 2010 definitions of “protected characteristics” and noted that the Act allowed for positive action in general for the advancement of equality.

In addition the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) also required the Council to have ‘due regard’ to three aims, as part of its decision-making process. The three aims are:

- ⊕ Eliminating unlawful discrimination harassment and victimisation;
- ⊕ Advancing equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not;
- ⊕ Fostering good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not. Fostering good relations is about tackling prejudice and promoting understanding between people from different groups.

Council had acknowledged its responsibilities in this regard in 2011, and had in place appropriate policies related to employment, and engagement with the community. It was nonetheless proposed that a working party be set up to look at policies used by other Councils, and to include members of the Community to assist this process. There followed a short debate, and Members were generally supportive of the principle of a working party to consider an additional policy, but sought training in diversity matters before work was undertaken.

After some debate **it was resolved that:**

FC2017/65.1 Equality/Diversity training will be provided for all Council Members as soon as possible

FC2017/65.2 Following training, a Working Party consisting of Cllrs Ashby, Baah,

Barker, Catlin, Elliott, Jones, Makepeace, S Murray, O’Keeffe, Rowell, and Watts be set up to further consider the matter of a Diversity Policy.

DvyWP2018/14 BUSINESS OF THE MEETING:

1 Members attention was drawn once again to report FC010/2017 (*copy in minute book*) which outlined the Council’s duties regarding Equality. They were reminded that Council had addressed its responsibilities under the Equalities Act and observed relevant principles in all that it does. This had been received by Council in November 2011; formally accepted, and was a matter of public record. Unlike principal authorities, a Parish Council was not required to publish a formal diversity policy. It *was* bound by the general Public Sector Equality Duty (*s149 Equality Act 2010*) and that was believed to be accommodated by a clear decision-making process and the formal recording of such. No statement was required, but it had been noted at the previous meeting that there was no prohibition on ‘going beyond’ statutory requirements in this regard.

2 It had earlier been acknowledged that the Statement of Community Engagement, which defined the ‘Community’ as everyone (*ie* wholly inclusive), was in need of updating and could be amended to refer to the nine ‘protected characteristics’ defined in the Act. This was underway as part of the periodic review of policies and would be confirmed in late March by the review Working Party.

3 The Chairman and others suggested that a practical way forward would be to draft a specific policy statement, and it had been asked that Members research examples from elsewhere. Many examples had all been similar to LTC’s own existing employment-related and community engagement statements, but two examples were presented that appeared to offer a closer ‘fit’ with what the Working Party sought. These were scrutinized, and it was agreed that a slightly modified version of one of these would be appropriate and should be recommended.

DvyWP2018/15 CONCLUSIONS/RECOMMENDATIONS:

Council is recommended to adopt the appended policy and to consider a ‘launch’ event to announce it. It was also considered that an aspiration should be placed on record: that future Mayors aim to be more inclusive of disadvantaged groups when planning civic events.

DvyWP2018/16 There being no further business, the Chairman declared the meeting closed, and thanked everyone for their contribution. *The meeting closed at 7:55pm*

Signed date

Appended: Draft Equality & Diversity Policy



1. Introduction

- 1.1. Lewes Town Council is committed to providing and promoting equal opportunities, eliminating discrimination and encouraging diversity and inclusivity in the Community.
- 1.2. The Council aims to create a culture that respects and values each other's differences and which promotes dignity, equality and diversity.
- 1.3. An up-to-date copy of this Policy shall be maintained on the Council's website.

2. Purpose

- 2.1. The Council recognises that supporting equality is of primary importance. This policy will help Councillors and employees to develop sound and effective policies that impact on the local community, whilst ensuring that the Council meets its duty under the Equality Act 2010.

3. Scope

- 3.1. This policy applies to all employees, volunteers, contractors and elected members of Lewes Town Council.
- 3.2. It is the responsibility of every employee and Councillor to ensure that they do not discriminate in any way. All employees and Councillors have a duty to uphold equal opportunities principles.

4. Equality Act 2010

- 4.1. The Equality Act 2010 ("the Act") applies to public bodies and others carrying out public functions. It supports good decision-making by ensuring public bodies consider how different people will be affected by the activities, policies and services provided.
- 4.2. The Act places a duty on the Council (the Public Sector Equality Duty s149) to take into account, in the exercise of their functions:
 - the need to eliminate discrimination and harassment, victimization and
 - any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Act; and
 - to advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it; and
 - to foster good relations between those who share protected characteristics and those who do not.
- 4.3. No individual will be discriminated against. This includes, but is not limited to the following characteristics as defined in the Act (*pt2 Ch1 s4*):
 - age
 - disability
 - gender reassignment
 - marriage and civil partnership
 - sex
 - pregnancy and maternity (a protected characteristic separate from sex)
 - race
 - religion or belief
 - sexual orientation



5. Equality Commitments

- 5.1. Lewes Town Council supports the principles of the Equality Act 2010 and recognises that it is the duty of all Councillors and employees to accept their personal responsibility for fostering a fully integrated community at work by respecting and adhering to the principles of equality for all.
- 5.2. Lewes Town Council will actively promote equality throughout the organisation through the application of policies which will ensure that individuals receive treatment that is fair and equitable and consistent with their relevant aptitudes, potential, skills, experiences and abilities.
- 5.3. Lewes Town Council is committed to:
 - Promoting equality opportunity for all persons
 - Promoting a good and harmonious environment in which all persons are treated with respect and valued
 - Preventing occurrences of unlawful direct discrimination, indirect discrimination, harassment or victimization
 - Fulfilling its legal obligations under the Equality Act 2010

6. Policy Review

- 6.1. Lewes Town Council will review this Policy as is necessary and appropriate.