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## POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND REVIEW COMMITTEE

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**MINUTES** of the Meeting held in the Council Chamber, Swale House, East Street, Sittingbourne, Kent, ME10 3HT on Wednesday, 18 March 2015 from 7.00 - 8.14 pm.

**PRESENT:** Councillors Lloyd Bowen (Chairman), John Coulter, Sue Gent, Mike Henderson and Peter Marchington.

**OFFICERS PRESENT:** Kellie MacKenzie and Bob Pullen.

**ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:** Councillor Ted Wilcox (Cabinet Member for Performance).

**APOLOGIES:** Councillors Monique Bonney, Andy Booth and Ben Stokes.

### 564 MINUTES

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 14 January 2015 (Minute Nos. 429 – 434) were taken as read, approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

### 565 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No interests were declared.

### 566 CORPORATE EQUALITIES STRATEGY

The Chairman welcomed the Cabinet Member for Performance and Policy and Performance Officer to the meeting.

The Cabinet Member for Performance introduced the report and explained that Swale Borough Council (SBC) had a duty under the Equality Act 2010 to fulfil its moral, social and legal obligations in relation to the Act. He reminded Members that the Council had produced a Corporate Equality Scheme (CES) in 2011 and explained that this needed to be replaced and this report enabled the Committee to influence how the new scheme was developed at an early stage.

The Cabinet Member for Performance drew attention to paragraph 3.6 which set out questions designed to enable the Committee to explore what approach the Council may wish to take.

The Policy and Performance Officer stated that all public authorities were required to comply with the requirements of the Equality Act 2010, as set out in Appendix I of the report. He also drew attention to Appendix II of the report which provided data on the equality and diversity key characteristics for Swale.

Members considered the report and made the following comments: should seek to promote the CES externally, as well as internally; explore whether the document could seek to alter the perception of certain minority groups, particularly the gypsy and traveller community; the wording for the second priority listed on page 2 of the

report in relation to the CES should be broader to include the need to promote equality outside of SBC; unclear about the meaning of the third priority; suggest a fourth priority be included stating that SBC would take action where it identified inequalities; title of the document did not make it clear whether it is an SBC or Swale wide strategy; second priority should include diversity; would prefer the use of visual charts to show the Equality and Diversity Key Characteristics statistics set out on Appendix II which should be made available online; and should include the disadvantages encountered by young and old people.

Following discussion about the inclusion of a further priority, Councillor Mike Henderson moved the following motion: That the following priority be included: action be taken where the Council identifies inequalities. This was seconded by Councillor Lloyd Bowen. On being put to the vote the motion was agreed.

There was some discussion about the areas of improvement and SBC's Procurement Policy and the following recommendations were proposed:

Councillor Lloyd Bowen moved the following motion: That Cabinet be asked to investigate the possibility of ensuring that 'ethics' be included within the Council's Procurement Policy. This was seconded by Councillor Mike Henderson. On being put to the vote the motion was agreed.

Councillor Mike Henderson moved the following motion: That the Action Plan for 'areas of improvement' be published. This was seconded by Councillor Sue Gent. On being put to the vote the motion was agreed.

In response to queries, the Cabinet Member for Performance stated that equal pay was a requirement of the new scheme, and confirmed that this protected equality was in relation to male and female employees and not general salary levels, which was covered by separate minimum pay legislation. He explained that externally SBC had limited control in terms of procurement, but that elected Members had a role to play in bringing evidence of inequality forward, he considered that Borough Councillors should also be included within the document.

With regard to the focus of the scheme, some Members considered it should be about community cohesion and ensuring all parts of society were treated equally but agreed that it was important to apply the correct wording. The Policy and Performance Officer agreed to explore this.

In response to queries, the Policy and Performance Officer stated that local community groups, focus groups, Swale Youth Forum and others would be consulted on the scheme.

The Chairman thanked the Cabinet Member for Performance and Policy and Performance Officer for the report.

**Resolved: That the above comments from the Committee be submitted to Cabinet to consider, specifically:**

**(1) That the following priority be included: action be taken where the Council identifies inequalities exist.**

- (2) That Cabinet be asked to investigate the possibility of ensuring that 'ethics' be included within the Council's Procurement Policy.**
- (3) That the Action Plan for 'areas of improvement' be published.**

## 567 REVIEW OF THE COMMITTEE'S FIRST YEAR

The Policy and Performance Officer introduced the report which provided a brief history of the Policy Development and Review Committee's first year of operation. He drew attention to the Committee's Terms of Reference, attached at Appendix I of the report, and stated that the report was not an annual report, but gave Members an opportunity of what they would like to see included within the annual report.

A Member stated that whilst he had found it very interesting and positive working on the Committee, he felt that it had been wrong to amend the Terms of Reference of the Committee so that legally it was not a scrutiny committee. He considered the involvement of junior members of staff was worth developing and that Cabinet needed to be made aware of the importance of allowing the Committee to make recommendations on SBC policies. The Member stressed the importance of ensuring that any recommendations the Committee made to Cabinet were expressed in the best way to influence SBC policies.

The Chairman thanked Members of the Committee for their work throughout the past year. He welcomed the attendance and input provided by junior staff which he considered not only benefited the Committee, but also helped the officers personal development.

The Chairman also thanked the Policy and Performance Officer and Democratic Services for their support.

***Resolved: That the report be noted.***

Chairman

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All Minutes are draft until agreed at the next meeting of the Committee/Panel