



*Making life better*

# **GENDER EQUALITY SCHEME**

**Improving quality of life for all by providing high quality services to  
our communities and helping to deliver community needs**

## FOREWORD

This Gender Equalities Scheme sets out the Council's commitment to the promotion of equal opportunities (together with the associated Race Equality Scheme and Disability Equality Scheme).

At Hambleton, we are proud of our record as a dynamic and highly successful authority that serves its community's interests efficiently to a high standard.

We believe that the equality of opportunity is central to our business plans and even more importantly to the way that we deliver services and offer employment opportunities. The Council has a statutory duty to publish a Gender Equality Scheme and this reinforces the work already taken with respect to our business planning and performance management processes.

The Council would welcome your views on this Gender Equality Scheme and the accompanying action plan. If you have any comments or concerns, then please turn to page 12 of the scheme where contact details are given.



Arthur Barker  
Leader

## INTRODUCTION

### OUR AIM

To meet the expectations of our community we recognise the need to work with a wide range of partners. The Council has led the development of the Hambleton Strategic Partnership which has created its own vision for the district. This is:

**“A Hambleton of sustainable, safe, healthy and prosperous communities where people feel part of their community and work together to improve quality of life for all and participate in decisions what affect them, which is welcoming, values diversity and supports the disadvantaged.”**

The Council has used this process to develop a new vision of its own **“making life better - improving quality of life for all by providing high quality services to our communities and helping to meet community needs.”**

Following on from this we have developed the following aim:

**“Hambleton District Council, in its role as Community Leader, believes that equal opportunities should be placed at the heart of its service provision. The Council is committed to the promotion of equality of opportunity. It will take positive action to ensure its workforce is representative of the community it serves and that its services are equally accessible to all its citizens.”**

Through engaging with the community, this aim is translated into actions which in turn are incorporated into service plans and targets. These plans also provide a mechanism for actions to be evaluated and our performance management system ensures we continually strive to improve. Elected Members and senior officers receive regular reports of the progress made.

All the documents referred to in the Gender Quality Scheme can be found on the Council's website on [www.hambleton.gov.uk](http://www.hambleton.gov.uk).

Different formats of this scheme are available on request.

## **SECTION 1: THE COUNCIL'S COMMITMENT TO GENDER EQUALITY**

The Equality Act 2006 amended the Sex Discrimination Act 1975 and placed a statutory duty and a legal requirement on all local authorities, when carrying out their function, to have due regard to the need:

- To eliminate discrimination and harassment that is unlawful under the Sex Discrimination Act 1975 (SDA) and discrimination that is unlawful under the Equal Pay Act 1970 (EqPA)
- To promote equality of opportunity between men and women

This amendment is known as the “general duty” and came into effect on 6 April 2007.

As part of the duty, public authorities are required to have due regard to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination and harassment in employment and vocational training (including further and higher education), for people who intend to undergo, are undergoing or have undergone gender reassignment. The expression “transsexual people” is used to refer to the people who are covered by those provisions.

To support progress in delivering the general duty, there are also a series of “specific duties” which apply to local authorities, in brief:

- To prepare and publish a Gender Equality Scheme, showing how it will meet its general and specific duties and setting out its Gender Equality objectives.
- In formulating its overall objectives, to consider the need to include objectives to address the causes of any gender pay gap.
- To gather and use information on how the public authority's policies and practices affect gender equality in the workforce and in the delivery of services.
- To consult stakeholders (ie employees, service users and others, including trade unions) and take account of relevant information in order to determine its gender equality objectives.

This means that the duty is not a negative or passive one, but requires public authorities to adopt a pro-active approach to meeting the duty. The Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC) and subsequently the Commission for Equality and Human Rights (CEHR) and Public Sector Inspectorates would be looking for evidence of action and positive change when monitoring and evaluating compliance with this duty.

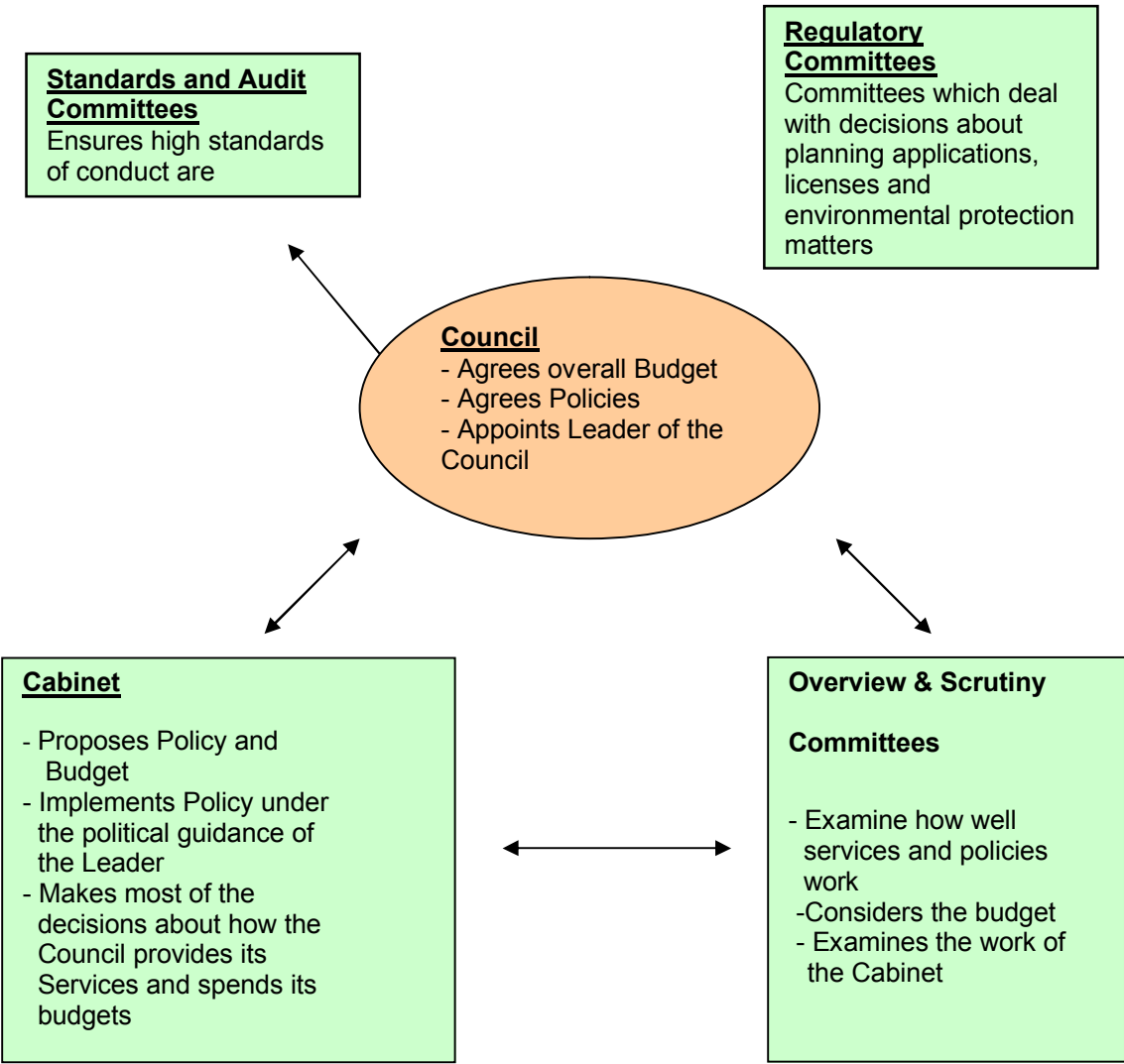
**SECTION 2: THE COUNCIL'S ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE, FUNCTIONS AND POLICIES**

**THE POLITICAL STRUCTURE OF THE COUNCIL**

Councillors are elected, every 4 years by the residents of the particular Ward the Councillor represents. In Hambleton there are 44 Councillors.

The role of Councillors is to listen to the concerns and views of residents and to bring those issues into the work of the Council. This can be done in a variety of different ways, through the political structures of the Council.

Details of individual Councillors and the Ward they represent can be found on the internet at [www.hambleton.gov.uk](http://www.hambleton.gov.uk) The following diagram summarises the Council's political structures.



Full details of the Council's services can be found on our website [www.hambleton.gov.uk](http://www.hambleton.gov.uk)

## SECTION 3. THE COUNCIL'S FUNCTIONS AND POLICIES

The Council's vision for Hambleton is: 'Making life better.... Improving quality of life for all by providing high quality services to our communities and helping to deliver community needs.'

This vision has been translated into 5 broad themes with priorities for each theme as follows:

**Prosperity** – To build a sustainable, modern and productive community that delivers economic well-being to the whole community

- That provides all sections of the community access to good quality and fulfilling jobs
- Through the growth and development of local businesses rather than relocations
- With improved accessibility to jobs and services by sustainable forms of transport

**Target areas:** helping local businesses, better skilled jobs, sustainable tourism, vibrant and prosperous market towns and a skilled workforce, community transport, improved access to services

**Health** – To promote healthier communities and reduce health inequalities;

- That provides all sections of the community with Leisure and cultural opportunities
- Through health and lifestyle improvement

**Target areas:** improving leisure opportunities, developing arts & cultural opportunities, supporting local provision, combating health inequalities

**Safety** – to enhance personal safety:-

- That reduces crime and the fear of crime for all sections of the community
- Through effective partnership working

**Target areas:** reducing crime, reducing fear of crime, addressing anti-social behaviour, CCTV, public lighting and safe car parks

**Environment and Housing** – to protect and enhance the environment :-

- With strong protection for environmental assets
- With leadership on reducing the adverse impacts society on the environment and responding to climate change
- with access to housing for all sections of the community

**Target areas:** Cleaner streets, more local recycling schemes, better housing, maintaining the character and appearance of the district, providing quality and affordable housing, customer focussed housing benefits service

**Citizenship** – To support the development of strong and engaged communities:-

- creating the capacity for self help
- engaging communities in decisions
- aligning our services to community needs

**Target areas:** listening to people, being available and accessible, responding to what we hear, working in partnership, involving the community and voluntary sector in the democratic process

These priorities will be achieved through the implementation of the Council's strategies, policies and procedures.

## **SECTION 4: OBJECTIVES OF GENDER EQUALITY SCHEME**

### **Service Delivery**

The Council will continue in its commitment to achieving equality for all those who live, work and visit Hambleton to ensure that:

- Our services are accessible
- Our services are flexible and responsive to the needs of the community
- All users of our services will be treated equally and all complaints are dealt with fairly
- We will consult widely within the community on the way in which services are planned and delivered
- We will establish systems to monitor our services and put in place plans to achieve continual improvement
- We will publish the results of our consultations and monitoring and make sure our citizens have access to the information provided
- We will monitor all contracts to ensure contractors comply with the Gender Equality Scheme
- Elected Members and employees will receive training in the authority's equalities policies and other relevant policies and procedures

### **Employment**

The Council is committed to eliminating discrimination in employment through the establishment of good employment practices applied equally to all employees. All employees will:

- Have equality of opportunity with respect to all Council policies
- Be consulted on the way in which policies are developed and implemented
- Have any complaints fairly and properly investigated
- Receive training on the Council's Equality policies to enable them to understand their responsibilities for equality and expected standards of behaviour

## **SECTION 5. PUTTING POLICY INTO PRACTICE**

Mechanisms to collate data throughout our workforce and services to evaluate our performance are firmly in place along with regular reporting systems.

The Council's performance is monitored externally by Government inspectors on a number of national, best value performance indicators (BVPIs). These range from specific equality indicators on corporate health, employment and community safety as well as general indicators around satisfaction, complaints and access to services.

Every year as part of the Government's best value regime, the Council publishes a best value performance plan based on the national best value performance indicators. A summary document consisting of information which is contained in the best value performance plan, sets out what our priorities are in delivering services, what our performance has been like to date and what our targets are for the future, is produced. The document includes a small selection of performance indicators to show how we are performing compared to previous years and how we compare to the average performance for all English councils. The best value performance plan is available in libraries and both documents are available on our website.

***The BVPIs relevant to the Gender Equality Scheme are:***

**BVPI 11a: % of top five percent earners that are women:**

This is a best value performance indicator that has been set nationally to ensure progression of women into the top level of the organisation

Our recruitment policies and processes are closely monitored on a regular basis to identify any patterns or trends that may be attributable to a gender bias across all grades. The Council also continues to take a pro-active approach in ensuring that vacancies are accessible to as many potential applicants as possible, regardless of gender. We work to maximise the newest technology available, such as online applications, to ensure that we are reaching a wide range of people who may be interested in working for us. We ensure that any promotional or advertising material that is used is positive in its language and images. We continue to develop partnership working in order to share best practice, learn lessons and maximise resources, such as a shared electronic portal which allow applicants to access not only the Council's vacancies, but those of our partners as well.

Our HR policies are continually revised and developed and a recently implemented working time policy is designed specifically to promote flexible working to ensure that family, child care and caring responsibilities are taken into account in the management of our staff.

We have a Job Evaluation Scheme, in line with the national agreement, with full involvement of the union to ensure there is no gender equality in pay between men and women across all pay grades and posts within the authority.

Also, the Council promotes a women's development programme within the national Springboard framework to support women moving into management.

**BVPI 2a: The level of the Equality Standard for Local Government (ESLG) to which the authority conforms**

The Council's commitment to equality is demonstrated by its determination to achieve level 4 of the Equalities Standard for Local Government (ESLG). This is a framework which was developed to help local authorities to embed equality into all of its functions including employment and service delivery.

Along with a number of other measures, one of the requirements of the ESLG is to undertake equality impact assessments for gender, race and disability. The ESLG is currently under revision to include assessment for sexual orientation, age and faith. Undertaking these assessments allows the Council to identify discriminatory or negative effects if any, of its functions, policies, procedures or services on any particular groups or members of the community. These assessments enable the Council to determine whether it is taking into account the needs and concerns of all people on the basis of gender.

**Action plan:**

<b>Action/task</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>	<b>Outcome</b>	<b>Date</b>
<b>Gender Impact Assessment</b>			
Draw up a priority list of HDC employment policies to be assessed	<b>HR Manager</b>	Rolling programme – basis for GIA to be conducted by the Equalities Group	Sept 07 meeting of the Equalities Group
Conduct assessment of the policies	<b>Equalities Group</b>	HDC employment policies in line with employment legislation and standards of best practice	On-going rolling programme
Collect appropriate data	<b>Equalities Group</b> To commission eg HR Manager to collect data relating to employment	Set and monitor progress towards targets	
<b>Breaking Down Gender Stereotypes</b>			
Consult staff	<b>Equalities Group</b>	To identify key issues	
Raise awareness of key supportive policies eg flexible working, career breaks etc	<b>Equalities Group</b>	To increase take up in the provisions of these policies	
Review /monitor key training and development activities egs recruitment/selection, induction and appraisal training	<b>Equalities Group</b>	To ensure that gender stereotypes are removed and that positive role models are highlighted/emphasised	

Meet relevant targets included in BVPI -the level of the equality standard achieved etc – the the % of the top 5% of earners who are women	<b>Equalities Group</b>	To ensure that realistic/pragmatic targets are set and that progress towards these targets is monitored.	
Build gender equality training into Member development and leadership programmes	<b>Equalities Group</b> To commission those responsible for organising training and development in these areas	To ensure that gender equality is embedded in the vision and culture of HDC	
<b>Achieving Gender Equality in Service Delivery</b>			
Monitor the satisfaction/ take up levels of services as well as complaints in a gender equality context.	<b>Equalities Group</b> To commission those responsible for service provision to provide data	To make gender equality integral to all service activities and ensure that services are equally accessible to women and men	
Assess whether there is an adverse impact by gender in the provision of a service.	<b>Equalities Group</b> To commission those responsible for service provision to provide data	To ensure that any adverse gender impact is identified	
Carry out gender impact assessments across all services	<b>Equalities Group</b> To commission those responsible for service provision to provide data	To ensure that any adverse gender impact is identified	
Take positive action to address any inequality, disadvantage or discrimination	<b>Equalities Group</b> To commission those responsible for service provision to provide details of measures taken	To ensure that any adverse gender impact is removed	
Encourage women and/or men to use Council services where evidence shows that either gender have a low level of take up of particular services	<b>Equalities Group</b> To commission those responsible for service provision to provide details of measures taken	To make gender equality integral to all service activities and ensure that services are equally accessible to women and men	

## **SECTION 6: TELL US WHAT YOU THINK**

If you have any comments on the content of the scheme you can contact us on tel:  
01609 767066 or 01609 767014

Alternatively you can write to:

The Personnel Unit  
Hambleton District Council  
Civic Centre  
Stone Cross  
Northallerton  
North Yorkshire DL6 2UU

## HAMBLETON DISTRICT COUNCIL

### GENDER EQUALITY SCHEME – ACTION PLAN

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