London Borough of Havering

Policy and Strategy Development Framework

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Document Control

Sign off and ownership details

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Author	Jodie Gutteridge – Service Improvement Officer
Owner	Lucy Goodfellow – Policy and Performance Business Partner
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Revision history

Version	Date	Revision description / summary of changes	Author
V0.1	25-11-2019	Incorporated comments from Lucy Goodfellow	Jodie Gutteridge
V0.2	04-12-2019	Incorporated comments from Julia Blow and John William Jones	Jodie Gutteridge
V0.3	09-01-2020	Incorporated Comments from Louise Warner	Jodie Gutteridge
V0.4	13-01-2020	Incorporated comments from Lucy Goodfellow and Sandy Hamberger	Jodie Gutteridge
V0.5	21-01-2020	Incorporated comments from SLT	Jodie Gutteridge
V0.6	31.01.2020	Incorporated comments from Andrew Beesley and Sandy Hamberger	Jodie Gutteridge
V0.7	04.02.2020	Incorporated comments from John William Jones	Jodie Gutteridge
V0.8	11.02.2020	Incorporated comments from Opportunities Theme Board	Jodie Gutteridge

Equality & Health Impact Assessment record

1	Title of activity	Policy and Strategy Development Framework
2	Type of activity	Framework highlighting best practice in writing and developing a policy or strategy.
3	Scope of activity	The purpose of the framework is to provide guidance for policy and strategy development. The framework aims to ensure there is a consistent approach to policy and strategy development across the Council and relevant, up-to-date, governance documentation.

4a	**Are you changing, introducing a new, or removing a service, policy, strategy or function?**	~~Yes~~ / No		
4b	**Does this activity have the potential to impact (either positively or negatively) upon people (9 protected characteristics)?**	~~Yes~~ / No	If the answer to <u>any</u> of these questions is **'YES'**, please continue to question **5**.	If the answer to <u>all</u> of the questions (4a, 4b & 4c) is **'NO'**, please go to question **6**.
4c	**Does the activity have the potential to impact (either positively or negatively) upon any factors which determine people's health and wellbeing?**	~~Yes~~ / No		
5	**If you answered YES: (Please complete the EqHIA in Section 2 of this document.** Please see Appendix 1 for Guidance.)	**Please complete the EqHIA in Section 2 of this document.** Please see Appendix 1 for Guidance.		
6	**If you answered NO: (***Please provide a clear and robust explanation on why your activity does not require an EqHIA. This is essential in case the activity is challenged under the Equality Act 2010.)* *Please keep this checklist for your audit trail.*	The Framework is an internal document to guide Council employees in the development of policy and strategy. While individual policies and strategies may have equalities and/or health impacts, the overarching framework does not.		

Date	Completed by	Reviewed by
09/01/2019	Jodie Gutteridge	

Introduction

The Council's policies and strategies provide guidance to employees by setting out the vision and priorities through which we comply with the statutory duties placed on us by Central Government. This framework sets out how policies and strategies should be developed, reviewed and updated with effect from March 2020.

The terms policy and strategy are closely related and are often used interchangeably. For the purposes of the Policy and Strategy Development Framework, policies and strategies are defined as follows:

Policy sets the rules and/or direction for decision-making; usually stated as an intention or principles for action on a particular issue. A policy should be set within the context of legislation, regulation and guidance. Policies may be set at the national or local level and may be corporate, directorate or service specific.

Strategy sets the approach for implementing policy by establishing 'where we are now', 'where we want to be' and 'how we will get there'. A strategy is usually time limited and should include an action plan that sets out the detailed actions that will be taken to implement the strategy.

Procedure describes the method for implementing a policy or strategy; often as a step-by-step guide or flow chart.

Purpose of the framework

The purpose of this framework is to provide guidance for policy and strategy development, setting out the key considerations for the various stages – from inception to development, authorisation, implementation publication and review. The framework aims to ensure that the Council has consistent, relevant and up-to-date governance documentation.

The framework will also ensure that equalities and health implications are considered at an early stage and that all policies and strategies are authorised at the appropriate level, regularly reviewed, and all relevant stakeholders are aware of any changes.

All Council policies and strategies should be aligned to corporate objectives and new documents should not be developed in isolation from existing policies and strategies. Crucially, the Council should be able to evidence how its policies and strategies are impacting positively on outcomes for local people. The framework is a key element of the Council's strategic planning and commissioning ambition.

All policies, strategies and procedures must be developed, implemented, monitored and reviewed in accordance with this framework.

Guiding principles

When developing a new policy or strategy, the following may serve as a useful checklist of points for consideration. Further guidance is available within this framework by clicking on each heading.

Document control

- Has a document control page been included on the policy or strategy? ☐
- Is ownership of the policy or strategy clearly documented? ☐
- Does the policy have a lifespan of no more than five years? ☐
- Does the strategy have a clear end date and include a SMART action plan? ☐
- Has an Equality & Health Impact Assessment (EqHIA) been considered? ☐

Style

- Has a standardised template been used? ☐
- Is the document written in a clear, concise and readable format? ☐
- Has Plain English been used? ☐
- Have you minimised the use of information that quickly becomes out of date such as names and hyperlinks? ☐
- Where appropriate, have you explored accessible versions? ☐

Approval and review

- Has consultation (internal, external or both) taken place, including legal advice where required? ☐
- Has Lead member consultation taken place at the earliest opportunity? ☐
- Has the document been approved via the correct route? ☐
- Has a review date been agreed and a process for termination of the policy considered? ☐
- Have you sent the completed documents to the corporate Policy team to upload onto the central documentation portal? ☐

Roles and Responsibilities

- Are those involved in the production, review and approval of the Policy / Strategy clear about their role? ☐
- Do all parties understand what responsibilities they hold under this framework? ☐

Document control

Scope and ownership

It is important to define the type of policy or strategy that you are seeking to develop or refresh, as this will determine the level of authorisation required to develop it, the scope of the development work (including the level of consultation and engagement required) and the required route of approval.

The first page of the policy and strategy must contain a document control page, which should include policy-sign off details, an ownership section, revision history and an EqHIA checklist.

Every policy and strategy must have an individual post-holder as the owner. The owner will be responsible for development, dissemination, maintenance and review. The owner is often the author of the policy or strategy but this may not always be the case.

It is good practice for policies to last no more than five years, so that they are kept up to date with relevant legislation. Strategies on the other hand are usually more time sensitive and should include a SMART (specific, measureable, achievable, relevant and time-bound) action plan.

Equality and Health Impact Assessment

Equality and Health Analyses must be carried out as required by the Public Sector Equality Duty under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010. This requires the Council, when exercising its functions, to have due regard to:
(i) The need to eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Equality Act 2010;
(ii) The need to advance equality of opportunity between persons who share protected characteristics and those who do not, and;
(iii) Foster good relations between those who have protected characteristics and those who do not.

The requirement to consider equality implications and risks also applies to all policies and strategies, therefore a completed Equality & Health Impact Assessment (EqHIA) checklist should be included in the document control page. Completing the checklist will determine whether a full EqHIA is required.

The Council wishes to ensure that its activities are 'fit for purpose' and meet the needs of Havering's increasingly diverse communities and employees. The Council's EqHIA process ensures that any potential detrimental effects or discrimination is identified and removed or mitigated, and that positive impacts are enhanced.

For further information, please refer to our [EqHIA Guidance and Template July 2018](.).

Style

To ensure that the Council's policies and strategies meet the agreed requirements, are consistent in style and compliant with this framework, [standard templates](.) are provided for the development of policy and strategy.

The Council encourages all publications, including policies and strategies, to be written in a clear, concise and readable format and recommends the following:

- Use active rather than passive verb and avoid jargon as advised by the [Plain English](.) Campaign.
- Avoid using information that may quickly become out of date (for example, use job titles rather than names of individuals).
- If acronyms are used, the full wording should be used in the first instance, with the acronym in brackets.
- Formatting should be consistent with the template.

- Where possible and appropriate, accessible versions such as child or learning difficulty friendly should be considered.

Approval and review

Consultation

For the purposes of this framework, consultation is defined as the way we capture the views of local people with the objective being to influence decisions, policies or programmes of action.

There are a small number of policies that must, in law, be consulted upon with local people and on those occasions the Council's 'Consultation strategy' should be adhered to. With regards to any other policies and strategies, it is deemed good practice to consult with key stakeholders but this is at the discretion of the owning service. If consultation does go ahead this should take place early on in the development stage to inform an initial draft of the policy or strategy. Further consultation should also take place once a 'good' draft of the document has been produced and can be circulated to stakeholders for comment.

The scale of the consultation will be determined by the subject matter and potential impact of the policy or strategy. When developing a policy, early legal advice should be sought on the implications of such a proposal. It is also usual to consult with the relevant Lead Member and Director and/or Senior Leadership Team during the process of writing any policy or strategy.

Approval process

External policies and strategies

The policy or strategy Lead is responsible for ensuring the policy or strategy is authorised correctly and in accordance with the scheme of delegation. The first step when developing a policy is therefore to establish where responsibility lies for the decision required, i.e. whether it is a Council or Executive function. This is set out in the Local Authorities (Functions and Responsibilities) (England) Regulations 2000 and reflected in the Council's Constitution.

Council policies and strategies make up the 'Policy Framework' and are usually statutory, unless shown otherwise in the Constitution. Full Council or a delegated committee will approve such policies and strategies.

Executive policies and strategies are all other policies and strategies affecting Havering residents and these will be approved by either Cabinet, an individual Cabinet Member, or an officer (usually at Director level).

The diagram below sets out the approval requirements and some examples of Council and Executive policies.

| Council | → | Full Council
OR
Delegated Committee
(e.g. Planning or Licencing) | → | **Examples**
- Budget Policy Framework
- Gambling Policy |
| Executive | → | Cabinet *OR*
Individual Cabinet Member
OR
Officers | → | **Examples**
- Library Strategy
- Complaints Policy |

Any policy or strategy that requires Cabinet / Cabinet Member sign-off will be subject to the Executive Decision Making process and entered on the Corporate Forward plan. This is a comprehensive weekly document giving notice of all executive decisions to be made, either key or non-key, and is issued to Members, Senior Leadership Team, Corporate Leadership Team, stakeholders and Business Partners. It ensures all decisions are planned and examined well in advance, enabling all relevant government procedures to be met in a timely fashion.

For policies or strategies requiring an Executive Decision, the Lead will need to follow the process set out in i'decision on the intranet in order for the document to be added to the Corporate Forward Plan.

Internal policies and strategies

Internal policies and strategies are those which may have an impact on staff or across a number of Council services but with no direct external impact.

The diagram below sets out the approval requirements and some examples of internal policies and strategies:

| Internal | → | Director / Assistant Director | → | **Examples**
- Workforce Training & Development Strategy
- Family Friendly Policy |

Internal policies and strategies affecting only one service will need to be signed off by the relevant Director or Assistant Director. It is deemed good practice to consult with staff in the service and also the Director / Assistant Director at an early stage.

For policies or strategies affecting more than one service, a single Lead should be identified who will work in consultation with all services affected. Once all parties are in agreement of the final product, it will need to be signed off at Director / Assistant Director level. As all Directors that the policy / strategy affects should have sight of the document, Senior Leadership Team (SLT) would usually be the most appropriate forum for sign off to take place.

For key internal policies and strategies directly affecting staff, e.g. the Council's Leave Policy, consultation should also take place with the trade unions at the Corporate Consultative Negotiating Forum (CCNF) prior to formal agreement by the relevant Director. The Director will consult with their Lead Member as appropriate.

Dissemination of policies and strategies

For both internal *and* external policies and strategies, once approved, the Lead must ensure communication of the policy / strategy to the relevant Assistant Directors and Heads of Service. The Lead must also liaise with the corporate Policy and Strategy function at an early stage in development, to ensure that strategic oversight of all policies and strategies in development across the Council is maintained. The corporate function will work with the policy or strategy Lead to ensure that the final version of the document is made available on the Council's Intranet and/or website and that key details are added to the Key Policy and Strategy Library for monitoring and review purposes.

Review Process

All policies and strategies must be evaluated and reviewed on a regular basis to ensure they remain fit for purpose and compliant with current legislation and/or regulation. A typical timeframe for review would be within two to three years of implementation, with a maximum review period of five years. In some cases, review may be required earlier if there is a legislative or regulatory requirement or significant change. The review period should be clearly set out in the document and the date for review entered in the document control section.

Key considerations when reviewing a policy or strategy include: any changes in legislation; research and intelligence; best practice in other local councils and other sectors (private or voluntary); public attitudes and expectations; recommendations from assessments/inspections and customer feedback; links to other policy or strategy; alignment to corporate priorities; equality analysis; impact on outcomes for local people; governance and risk.

It is the responsibility of the policy owner to establish the review date and complete the review at the appropriate time. The Corporate Policy function maintains a list / library of all key policies and strategies across the Council and will monitor review dates, ensuring contact is made with the owner/author to prompt a review at least three months in advance of the specified date.

In addition to formal reviews, policy owners should ensure that an annual check of any hyperlinks and roles referred to within the policy / strategy is undertaken. If any changes are required, the revision table at the front of the policy should be updated and the revised document should replace the old version on the intranet / website.

The life span of a policy will be as stated in the document control page. Any policy or strategy that is no longer needed for one reason or another (e.g. the service is no longer being provided or one policy has been subsumed into another) will need to be formally decommissioned. This should be done in one of two ways:

1. If the policy or strategy is being re-written or subsumed into another, the previous policy / strategy title should be included in the introductory text confirming the change of policy name and the reason for the new policy.

2. If the policy or strategy is no longer needed, then a report should be taken through the same route by which the policy / strategy was originally approved, i.e. Cabinet, Lead Member, or Director sign-off, confirming that the policy is being decommissioned and the reason for this. If the policy is a high profile document, further communications may be required to ensure all staff and residents are aware that the policy is no longer in use.

Roles and responsibilities

There should be clear designation of responsibility and accountability with clear lines of communication between all involved in writing and reviewing a Policy or Strategy. All individuals with responsibilities under this framework should understand their roles as set out below.

The **Leader and Cabinet** will lead on their relevant areas of policy management according to the Council's scheme of delegation (as set out in the Constitution).

Overview and Scrutiny Board has a remit of undertaking effective scrutiny and this includes a role in the development and on-going review of policy. An effective policy framework is fundamental in underpinning the scrutiny function. All decisions made by the Executive are subject to review by the Council's Overview and Scrutiny function.

The **Chief Executive** with head of paid service responsibility has overall accountability for the effective implementation and management of Council policy and strategy. Constitutionally, in practice, elements of this are delegated to Directors and Assistant Directors.

Directors/ Assistant Directors/ Head of Service are responsible for identifying the need for a particular policy to help the Council meet its strategic objectives and ensure legal and regulatory compliance. They are also responsible for disseminating the policy or strategies to the relevant staff and officers affected by it.

Service Managers are responsible for ensuring that all staff are aware of where and how documents can be accessed within their areas of work.

The **Policy or Strategy Lead / Owner** (usually a manager within the service area relevant to the policy or strategy subject matter) is responsible for overseeing the development and review of a policy and strategy, including the consultation process, prior to submission for consideration and/or authorisation. The Lead is also responsible for ensuring that the policy / strategy remains in accordance with legislation and any subsequent statutory changes that may occur. They are responsible for monitoring the implementation of any new or revised policy or strategy and ensuring it is effectively communicated to the relevant target audience. They may not necessarily be the document author.

The **Policy or Strategy Author** is responsible for the main authoring of the document; generates management updates; completes the Equality and Health Impact Assessment and liaises with corporate and other services to provide overall co-ordination.

The **Corporate Policy function** is responsible for this Framework, its supporting documentation, and the maintenance of the Key Policy and Strategy List, which provides details of all current policies, strategies and plans. The team will support Directorates and services across the Council in the development (including consultation) and implementation of high quality policies and strategies, as well as undertake in-depth policy and other research projects where appropriate. The team should be advised of any new or revised policy and can assist with research towards policy development or review. The team will also work with the Policy / Strategy Lead / Owner and Author to ensure all policies and strategies are accessible by adding them to the central documentation portal, and keeping the key policy list up to date.