1. THE POLICY

1.1 The Council will work towards equality of opportunity for all and will devote its energies and resources to the achievement of this aim.

1.2 The Council will not discriminate on grounds of age, colour, disability, ethnic origin, gender, HIV status, immigration status, marital status, social or economic status, nationality or national origins, race, faith, religious beliefs, responsibility for dependants, sexual orientation, gender identity, pregnancy and maternity, trade union membership or unrelated criminal conviction. The Council will promote equality of access and opportunity for those within our community who suffer from unfair treatment on any of these grounds including those disadvantaged through multiple forms of discrimination.

1.3 The Council will strive to eliminate all forms of discrimination. We recognise that this requires not only a commitment to remove discrimination but also action through positive policies to redress the inequalities produced by past discrimination.

1.4 The Council's services should be equally accessible to all who live, work, study in or visit the Borough, and we are committed to ensuring this. Services (and Information about services) should be designed to be appropriate to the needs of all our service users.

1.5 As the largest employer in the Borough, the Council will act to ensure equal access to our jobs at all levels and to develop all employees to their full potential.

1.6 All parts of our community should be fully involved in the Council’s decision-making and feel they have a voice. It is also essential that all parts of the community participate fully in local and national elections and are represented appropriately on the Council itself. The Council will work towards these aims and will also seek to influence the decisions of other bodies on behalf of all who live, work, study in, or visit the Borough.

1.7 The Council welcomes the diverse communities and cultures in the Borough and sees them as a significant positive force for the good of all through creativity and innovation. Enfield Strategic Partnership’s community cohesion strategy ‘Enfield Together’ demonstrates the Council’s commitment to building a cohesive borough. We want to see a borough where people from a variety of different backgrounds feel they belong. The Council believes this strategy is particularly important in the current international climate to help build understanding and belonging, and to challenge misconceptions in the community. We are committed to achieving understanding and co-operation between the various parts of our community and will work with others to promote this.

1.8 The Council is committed to opposing harassment and victimisation of Borough residents, service users and employees on the grounds stated above in 1.2, and will take positive action to counteract harassment in the community, in the provision of services and facilities and in the workplace.
1.9 Members of the Council and employees are responsible for implementing this policy when carrying out their duties. Members are expected to lead by example through their actions when working with residents, other Councillors, employees and the Council's partner organisations. Employees are expected to participate in the preparation and carrying out of practical measures to improve the Council's performance within their service. Employees are also responsible for their behaviour towards colleagues and users of the Council's services, and are expected to meet the Council’s customer care standards.

2. THE POLICY IS FOR EVERYONE

2.1 This policy is for everyone. Its aim is to ensure fair treatment and equality of opportunity for all Borough residents, users of the Council’s services and Council employees. Everyone is affected by inequality within society and at some time in their lives all people are likely to experience discrimination and/or harassment. Research has shown that some people experience higher levels of discrimination and the main grounds for this discrimination are listed in paragraph 1.2 of this policy.

3. WHY WE HAVE A POLICY

3.1 The Council has a legal duty to provide all services and employment opportunities fairly and without discrimination. This duty arises from the general and specific duties under the Equality Act 2010. The Council will also comply with all relevant codes of practice. We are committed to self-assessment, audit and scrutiny using national and local performance indicators. The Council also has a moral and social duty to acknowledge that discrimination and inequality occur in our society, and to find ways to tackle discrimination and follow legal options to promote equality.

3.2 Inequality due to direct and indirect discrimination is a powerful factor in our society. People's daily lives and their life chances are affected significantly by whether they are black or white, male or female, gay or heterosexual, disabled or not, their faith, and by whether they are seen to be "too young" or "too old".

3.3 The adverse effects of being excluded from opportunities by discrimination and harassment can be very severe. They can include violent racial attack, inability to get a job suited to one's skills or to get a job at all, or being hindered in performing the daily necessities of life by the physical obstacles and emotional barriers that our society presents to disabled people. The effects of such discrimination can be continuous and permanent, for example, the feelings of anguish, low self-esteem and of being an outsider that constant racist remarks and innuendo can produce in black people and people from the minority ethnic communities.

3.4 Local authority services and other activities are in no way exempt from the general position in our society. Services based on traditional assumptions will usually not provide equal access to, for example, people from minority ethnic communities, disabled people, and women.

3.5 Participation in local democratic life and in the Council's decision-making can also be adversely affected for the "excluded" or "under-represented" groups unless particular
efforts are made to involve them in ways suited to their situations and needs. Historically, such efforts have not been made, and, as a consequence, people from the excluded groups experience barriers to participation. Therefore the Council has to reach out to them in order to overcome these barriers and provide equal access. Providing the same thing to everyone does not ensure equal access.

3.6 The same is true for local authorities as employers. Inadequate methods of recruitment and selection and working practices have produced workforces that are far from representative of local populations. People from minority ethnic communities and disabled people tend to be under-represented at all levels in the workforce, as do women at senior and middle management levels. Older and younger people can also be under-represented. Employees from a range of different groups experience harassment and victimisation in the workplace.

3.7 Improvements in personnel practice to help ensure that good candidates apply from all parts of the community and that the best person for the job is appointed, usually produce significant alterations in the recruitment and promotion profiles and hence eventually in workforce composition. Other positive action such as employee development initiatives, flexible working arrangements and anti-harassment policies, can help meet the needs of those responsible for dependants, attract people back from career breaks, and advance people in the workforce who are disadvantaged by a lack of attention to their varied and legitimate needs as employees. It is in these and other ways that the present barriers to equal access to local authority jobs can be removed.

3.8 Exclusion from opportunities not only disadvantages those who experience discrimination and harassment but also deprives the wider community of the full contribution of their talents and energies. Empowering people to contribute more fully enriches our communal life.

3.9 It is for these reasons that a wide range of local authorities, private companies and other public sector bodies, with guidance and encouragement from various government departments, have adopted and energetically pursued action plans on service delivery, democratic participation and employment to begin to remove the barriers to equal opportunities. Such plans often include action in partnership with other key bodies to tackle major community issues including harassment and attack, and domestic violence. The most effective plans fully involve those who experience discrimination and harassment.

4. THE POLICY IN MORE DETAIL

4.1 The Council recognises that the discrimination affecting different groups in our community takes specific forms and has particular effects. We are committed to taking action that is effective in dealing with this situation and which respects the distinct experiences, needs and aspirations of those groups. The Council will take action to combat direct, indirect and institutional discrimination, and to afford people equality of opportunity.
4.2 Age

Discrimination against people because they are "old" or "young" is endemic in our society. Inaccurate assumptions based on prejudice and stereotypes are often made about the abilities and characteristics of younger and older people that adversely affect them. Too often, younger and older people are denied full involvement in decisions about their lives, and are not allowed the independence and responsibility that is their right. Exclusion from employment is experienced by many and, with other factors, leads disproportionately to poverty, low income and inability to enjoy the good things in life. Younger people experience high levels of physical violence, and fear for their safety confines many older people to their own homes. Younger and older people who are from minority ethnic communities are often doubly disadvantaged.

The Council will take action to combat this discrimination and to afford equality of opportunity for older and younger people.

4.3 Disability

Many people in our community are disabled, including people with mobility difficulties, people with sensory impairment, people with learning difficulties, and people with mental health problems. The needs and wants of those with different disabilities vary considerably. However, they all share the adverse effects of prejudice and stereotyping in the wider community that lead to inaccurate assumptions about their abilities. For many, this is aggravated by a physical environment designed by, and for, non-disabled people – the Council therefore recognises that people with disabilities are disabled more by social, attitudinal or physical barriers rather than their actual disability – this thinking reflects the social model of disability. Disabled people also often lack access to information, and are discriminated against by a neglect of their particular rights and needs because of the way that services and work are organised. As a result, many disabled people are excluded from the facilities and opportunities that others take for granted including reasonable independence, immediate and accessible information and responsibility for making decisions about one's own life. This is often associated with poverty or low income. Disabled people who are from minority ethnic communities are often doubly disadvantaged. The Council will act in accordance with the Disability Discrimination Act Codes of Practice.

4.4 HIV and AIDS

Both adults and children with HIV or AIDS are the subject of widespread fear and rejection in our society. There remains much ignorance and misinformation in our community about the risk of infection. Often there are also irrational and punitive attitudes towards people with HIV or AIDS based on assumptions about their lifestyle or sexual orientation. As a result people with HIV or AIDS can suffer great disadvantage including loss of job and denial of essential services. Discrimination also occurs as a result of services not being sufficiently flexible to the sometimes rapidly changing needs of people with AIDS. The Council is committed to ensuring that the fear of people with HIV or AIDS is dispelled and that they are supported both in the workplace and through equal access to appropriately designed services in which they have a say.
4.5 **People from Black and Minority Ethnic Communities**

Racism is a powerful destructive force in our society. Prejudice and stereotypes about people from the many different minority ethnic communities lead to both direct and indirect discrimination. This discrimination is experienced as a daily fact of life. It ranges from unequal access to services to less favourable treatment in the recruitment process, to racist remarks and innuendo, and in its most extreme forms to racial harassment and attack. Many people from minority ethnic communities live in fear in our community.

The Council welcomes the diverse communities and cultures in the Borough and sees them as a positive force for the good of all. We are committed to promoting understanding and co-operation between our various communities and to the combating of racial discrimination in all its forms. The Council is opposed to discrimination against all minority ethnic communities.

4.6 **Gender**

Women in our community are often disadvantaged in a variety of ways by the manner in which our society is organised. The roles of men and women are socially defined and are strongly influenced by the power that men hold. As a result, women experience disadvantage from both direct and indirect discrimination that can prevent them from reaching their full potential and from having the control over their lives that they wish to have. The discrimination women experience ranges from unequal access to services which often do not respect the particular needs and aspirations of women, to greater difficulty in achieving advancement in the workplace due to the way in which work is organised, for example in relation to the care of dependants, to sexual harassment in the workplace, and to the fear of sexual violence. Many women in our community are fearful for their safety. Often women from minority ethnic communities are doubly disadvantaged. Men can be discriminated against by the way some services are organised. Members of the transgender community are also often discriminated against in respect of employment opportunities, and are often subjected to ridicule, harassment and abuse.

The Council is committed to promoting equal opportunities for women, men and transgender people, and will take action to remove direct and indirect discrimination in the services we provide, in our employment policies and practice, in access to local democratic processes, and in the wider community through initiatives such as the improvement of women's safety.

4.7 **Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Community**

Members of this community experience widespread discrimination in our society that exhibits high levels of intolerance towards them. Attitudes are so hostile that many people who are gay or lesbian do not feel safe enough to acknowledge this to the wider world. As a result they have the daily experience of denying a major part of their own identity. Coming out and being out often lead to victimisation, harassment and attack. The Council is committed to reducing the hostility towards, and fear of, members of the LGB community, and working to a position where there is full acceptance as equal and valued members of the local community.
4.8 Faith and Belief

People can experience discrimination because of their faith or religious belief. Members of different faiths can experience discrimination in our society that exhibits high levels of intolerance towards them based on a lack of understanding of their beliefs and practices. In the past, this discrimination has resulted in violent physical attacks.

The Council welcomes the diverse communities and cultures in the Borough and sees them as a positive force for the good of all. We are committed to promoting understanding and co-operation between our various communities and to the combating of discrimination of people because of their faith or belief in all its forms.

4.9 Trade Union Membership and Activity

Trades unions do much to promote and protect the interests and rights of employees and of those without employment. The right to be a member of a trade union and to benefit from union representation and activity is, therefore, of considerable importance to employees including those who might otherwise be more vulnerable to exploitation or unfair treatment. This right, however, is too often not respected and those who wish to join a union may be deterred by fear of discrimination or victimisation. Some employers refuse to recognise trades unions and may discriminate against employees or applicants who belong or wish to belong to a union.

As an employer the Council recognises trades unions and is committed to an open and constructive relationship with them. The Council encourages its employees to become union members. The Council is also committed to taking action that helps to ensure that all who live or work in the Borough can benefit from trade union membership.

4.10 Other forms of discrimination

People can also experience discrimination because of their marital status, whether they are pregnant, their caring responsibilities or past unrelated convictions. People can also be discriminated against on grounds of their perceived social or economic status, or because they are homeless or have a history of dependency on alcohol or drugs. Many people experience double disadvantage as a result of being members of more than one group e.g. black disabled people, disabled women, and disabled lesbians and gay men. The Council is opposed to discrimination on these grounds.

4.11 Discrimination and harassment defined

Direct discrimination takes place when a person is treated less favourably than others are in the same circumstances on the grounds listed above in 1.2.

Indirect discrimination is when a condition or requirement is applied which adversely affects a particular group considerably more than another which cannot be justified in terms of genuine requirements for the job or need for a service.
Harassment is unwarranted behaviour that is objectionable to the recipient. Harassment can be on the grounds listed above in 1.2. It has many forms and could include physical contact, intimidation, bullying, threatening behaviour, derogatory references, remarks, jokes that are found offensive or objectionable, displaying or distributing obscene or offensive materials, making stereotyped assumptions about people, deliberately undermining others’ abilities and confidence, or refusing to work with, or serve, a group.

Institutional racism is defined as ‘the collective failure of an organisation to provide an appropriate and professional service to people because of their colour, culture or ethnic origin. It can be seen or detected in processes, attitudes and behaviour that amounts to discrimination through unwitting prejudice, ignorance, thoughtlessness and racist stereotyping that disadvantages minority ethnic people’.

As part of its equal opportunities in employment initiatives, the Council aims to promote a work environment free of harassment.

5. WHAT WE WILL DO

5.1 In providing services to the public, the Council will

- review and improve our services regularly to make sure they respond to the needs of all parts of the community, making particular efforts to involve the usually under-represented groups
- take action on issues of major importance to the diverse communities who make up Enfield’s population
- prepare and adopt service strategies that properly address the needs of traditionally under-represented groups
- improve access to the Council’s services by providing appropriate information, translation and interpreting services, induction loops, minicom facilities, training of relevant staff and adaptation of buildings
- lead, train and encourage staff and elected members to become responsible for the achievement of equality of opportunity in their services and portfolios
- ensure that the specifications for contracted out or purchased services require contractors and sub-contractors to meet the needs of all sections of the community and monitor their performance to ensure that they do
- as an aid to the improvement of service quality, take steps to ensure that the workforce of each service better reflects the composition of the local community, and
- monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of all our services in meeting the needs of all parts of the community. This will include monitoring information about use and non-use of Council services. The analysis of such information will be used to plan our services.
5.2 As an employer the Council will

- take action to ensure that the Council comes to be seen as a more attractive and safe place in which to work by all parts of the community, and as an employer of choice
- make sure that all parts of the community are aware of Council job opportunities
- introduce policies and practices that better reflect the needs of the under-represented groups, for example, in relation to the care of dependants
- regularly monitor the composition of the workforce to ensure that there is fairness in its employment policies and practices, and to establish the nature of positive action to redress imbalances as required. This will include recruitment, promotion, training opportunities, pay, grievances and exit from employment
- make further efforts to ensure that our recruitment and selection procedures lead to the appointment of the best person for the job.
- ensure that our employee development and training policies for all our employees give fair and equitable attention to the needs of under-represented groups, and
- continue to take determined action to ensure that employees are protected from all forms of harassment.

5.3 The Council will seek to promote a more effective "voice" for traditionally under-represented groups by

- setting up new means of consultation and involvement in the Council's decision-making that are more appropriate to their needs. This will be reflected in the Council’s Engagement Framework and the Sustainable Community Strategy
- developing existing means of consultation and involvement
- advocating their views to other key bodies that have significant effects on their lives
- encouraging groups to express their own views and promoting opportunities for them to do so
- working to ensure that all parts of the community have an equal opportunity to vote in local and national elections, and
- discussing issues of under-representation with the local political parties responsible for nominating candidates.
5.4 In its relationship with other bodies and interests in the Borough, the Council will

- recognise and value the diversity that exists in the voluntary and community sector
- work to redress the disadvantage created by past discrimination
- ensure equal access to the Council's support through grant aid and in other ways
- seek to ensure equal access to other sources of funding and support
- ensure that the bodies supported by the Council through grant aid and in other ways have effective equal opportunities policies
- take action to ensure that the talents of traditionally under-represented groups are developed to the full, and
- work to ensure that the particular aspirations and needs of under-represented groups are understood and acted upon

5.5 The Council will also act in appropriate ways to encourage understanding and co-operation between the various parts of our community.

6. HOW WE WILL IMPLEMENT THIS POLICY

6.1 Action Plan - The Council will after consultation with relevant interests including traditionally under-represented groups, adopt a practical action plan for turning these words into reality. The action plan will be monitored and renewed on a regular basis. Service reviews and service plans will also address equalities issues.

6.2 Reporting - The Council will report publicly on its progress on a regular basis and will consult with all parts of the community. Progress will be measured against a range of performance indicators and targets.

6.3 Clear responsibility - The Council has allocated responsibility for implementation of the policy as follows -

Cabinet - The Cabinet has overall responsibility for the Council's Valuing Diversity and Equal Opportunities Policy and will consider and decide all major policy issues arising in its implementation. The Cabinet will monitor progress in implementing the policy.

Councillors - Members of the Council are responsible for implementing this policy when carrying out their duties and for leading by example through their actions when working with residents, other Councillors, employees and the Council's partner organisations.
Director of Finance and Corporate Resources - The Director of Finance and Corporate Resources is responsible for ensuring that the policy is implemented and for its review at regular intervals. This will be carried out in co-operation with the Council’s Corporate Management Board, and the Corporate Equalities Group, which includes representatives from all service departments.

Directors - Directors are responsible to the Chief Executive for ensuring that the policy is implemented within their Departments, and will adopt action plans for this purpose after considering the views of the Corporate Management Board and the Corporate Equalities Group. These plans will support the Council’s Equality and Diversity Action Plan for the Council as a whole as well as addressing other issues of particular importance to the service departments.

Service Managers - Service managers are responsible to Directors and the Chief Executive for ensuring that the Valuing Diversity and Equal Opportunities Policy is acted upon within their service, and is properly reflected in service plans and in the objectives and development of individual employees.

Employees - All employees are responsible for implementing the Valuing Diversity and Equal Opportunities Policy and are expected to participate in the preparation and carrying out of practical measures to improve the Council’s performance within their service. Employees are also responsible for their behaviour towards colleagues and users of the Council's services, and are expected to meet appropriate standards. The Council will support all employees by making sure they know what the Policy is, involving them in service planning, providing supportive management, arranging training and other activities to improve understanding and knowledge, and by making sure they understand their responsibilities under the law.

Contractors - Some of the Council's services are provided by external contractors on the basis of a specification set by the Council. Contractors are responsible for implementing the Valuing Diversity and Equal Opportunities Policy when providing these services on the Council's behalf - this applies also to subcontractors. The Council will monitor the performance of contractors and take all necessary steps to ensure good performance.

6.4 Resources - The Council recognises that implementation of the Valuing Diversity and Equal Opportunities Policy requires resources. We will consider high priority needs as possible claims on existing budgets or for support in other ways. In assessing priority, the Council will take account of the extent to which bids arise directly from needs that the community regards as important and of their likely effectiveness in meeting those needs. The Council will also take account of historical discrimination against the group concerned and of its resultant disadvantage. This will be done in light of other priorities and of the Council's overall financial resources. The Council’s Corporate Equalities Group has a budget specifically earmarked for improving the organisation's equality practice.

6.5 Schools - Governing bodies are responsible for the adoption and implementation of equal opportunities policies in schools, and all schools have such policies. The Council works closely with its schools and other partners to ensure the effective implementation of equal opportunities policies throughout the service. This Council
policy is commended to governing bodies for their adoption in light of local circumstances and needs.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION ON ANY ASPECT OF THIS POLICY, PLEASE CONTACT THE CORPORATE IMPROVEMENT DIVISION IN THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE’S UNIT