

**POLICY AND RESOURCES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE –
20TH JANUARY 2009.**

SUBJECT: USE OF THE WORD ‘BRITISH’

REPORT BY: DIRECTOR OF CORPORATE SERVICES

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1 To provide information requested by the Committee.

2. SUMMARY

2.1 Recent media coverage has focused on the council Staff Equalities Handbook and advice contained that is given to staff. The Handbook contains a range of information on a variety of different equalities areas. One of the areas covered deals with ethnicity and nationality and the sensitivity of individuals regarding this issue.

2.2 This report deals with the detail of the advice that is contained in the Handbook on ethnicity and nationality and also the origin of this particular piece of advice. It also provides information about the distribution of this advice.

3. LINKS TO STRATEGY

3.1 Information contained in the Staff Equalities Handbook relates to all strands of equality and all pieces of equality legislation. This information is crosscutting and impacts on every other council policy that is aimed both at the public and council staff.

3.2 It has direct links with a number of council policies and strategies:-

- Community Strategy
- Linguistic Skills Strategy
- Equalities
- Staff Development
- Performance management
- Freedom of Information
- E-Government
- Customer Care
- All Personnel policies
- Recruitment and Selection

4. THE REPORT

4.1 Advice given to Staff

4.1.1 The booklet contains information about the different pieces of equalities legislation and what the council is doing to promote equalities. It also provides general advice on things like how to get information translated, how to cater for people with disabilities and terminology that should be avoided. Specific advice on ethnicity and nationality is as follows:

British

Many would argue that one way to denote ethnic minority people in this country would be to describe them as 'British Asians', 'Chinese British' etc. One advantage is that by referring to two ethnicities it avoids any suggestion that a person has to choose between them for identity. However, the idea of 'British' implies a false sense of unity - many Scots, Welsh and Irish resist being called British and the land denoted by the term contains a wide variety of cultures, languages and religions.

- 4.1.2 This information is not intended to be an instruction but simply an attempt to raise awareness of the sensitivities of different people and the message is that care needs to be taken when referring to people's ethnicity and nationality. It also helps to assert the right of people to be recognised, by choosing to describe themselves as British, Welsh, Irish, Black British, Asian Welsh etc.

4.2 How widely was the advice distributed?

- 4.2.1 This current version of the booklet was produced in the summer of this year (2008), 1000 copies were printed. It has been distributed to a number of areas, mainly on front line staff around the council; copies were also distributed to all elected members in the summer. A version of this handbook containing the section mentioned above was first produced in 2001 and again in 2005. It has been available on the council's intranet for a number of years.

4.3 Whose advice was taken before guidance was distributed?

- 4.3.1 The text on the subject of nationality is the same as the previous versions. It was first produced in 2001 and again in 2005. This version was produced in the summer of 2008. This is not new guidance and like much of the information that is contained in this booklet it was provided by organisations that are expert in their fields. The Valleys Regional Equality Council (VALREC) supplied the information for this particular section of the booklet.

5. CONSULTATIONS

- 5.1 Comments arising from consultation have been incorporated into this report.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 There are no financial implications.

7. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 There are no personnel implications.

8. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 8.1 Members are asked to note the report.

9. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 9.1 Recommendations are in response to questions asked by the Committee.

10. STATUTORY POWER

10.1 The council Staff Equalities Handbook is produced in response to the numerous pieces of Equality legislation. The particular section regarding nationality is related to the council's obligations under the Race Relations Act 1976 (Amended 2000).

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