



Annual Equalities Report

Corporate Priority:	Excellent Services positively impacting on our communities. Connected with and led by our community (outward)
Relevant Ward Member(s):	All
Date of consultation with Ward Member(s):	N/a
Exempt Information:	No

1 Summary

- 1.1 This report seeks to provide an update to Council on the progress against our Equality objectives and the work undertaken to meet our public sector equality duty as required by equality legislation, including compliance with the Equality Act 2010, Human Rights Act 1998, the Public Sector Equality Duty. This is demonstrated through progress measured against the Council's Equalities Action Plan.

2 Recommendation(s)

That Council:

- 1. Notes and comments as appropriate on the progress made in meeting the Council's equalities duties and commitments as outlined in this report**

3 Reason for Recommendations

- 3.1 The Council publishes a Single Equality Scheme (SES) which covers all our legal duties as required by The Equality Act 2010. The SES sets out the Council's objectives and approach to advancing equality and diversity, fostering good relations and in tackling discrimination, harassment and victimisation. The current scheme was approved by Council in December 2019 and covers the period 2020-2024.
- 3.2 As the Single Equality Scheme is included within the Council's Constitution, updates against progress and changes to the scheme is required to be presented to full Council for approval.

4 Background

- 4.1 The Council is required by legislation to set one or more specific equality objectives every four years through the Single Equality Scheme (SES). The current approved SES covers the period 2020-2024.
- 4.2 The 4 Equality Objectives for the period 2020-2024 are set out below:
- a) Objective 1: Engage and communicate in appropriate and accessible ways
 - b) Objective 2: Develop and support a diverse workforce (being recognised as an employer of choice)
 - c) Objective 3: Ensure services are in place or commissioned which are inclusive and responsive
 - d) Objective 4: Foster good relations with and within the community (understanding difference and celebrating diversity)
- 4.2.2 The Equality Scheme's main delivery mechanism is through the Action Plan which is based on a number of actions designed to deliver the four objectives noted above.
- 4.2.3 The report considers the progress to date against the 4 objectives. Progress against each objective is included within the Action Plan (Appendix 1 ED Action Plan)

5 Main Considerations

Covid 19 impact and other in-year impacts

- 5.1 This year has of course seen significant pressure put on local authorities due to the urgent response needed due to the Covid 19 pandemic. Naturally, delivery of a number of actions in the Equalities Action Plan have been impacted by the redirection of resources that has been necessary.
- 5.2 A report on disparities in the risk and outcomes from COVID-19 was published in June 2020 by Public Health England, uncovering the impact Health Inequalities may have on Coronavirus outcomes. This report specifically highlighted that those from BAME communities are twice as likely to die from a COVID-19 infection. The report mentions that the impact of COVID-19 has replicated existing health inequalities and in some cases increased them.
- 5.3 Additionally, the report states that the results of this review need to be widely discussed and considered by all those involved in and concerned with the national and local response to COVID-19. They advise that key policies should be adapted and wherever possible mitigate or reduce the impact of COVID-19 on the population groups shown within the review to be more affected by the infection and its adverse outcomes.
- 5.4 The previous twelve months has seen a number of equality related issues that have arisen both nationally and internationally, including the Black Lives Matter movement.
- 5.5 Black Lives Matter (BLM) made national and international headlines for a large part of 2020, bringing to light the inequality and disadvantage many Black communities face. Whilst no direct reports have been made to our Community Safety Team in relation to BLM, data for December 2019 to December 2020 (inclusive) shows that generally hate crimes have increased across LLR, with Melton seeing a 33% increase in hate with 62% being race related.

Public Sector Equality Duty

5.6 The Public Sector Equality Duty needs to be embedded through the Council - this is achieved by compliance to our policies and procedures. The Duty provides three key areas of focus. These are:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct prohibited by the Equality Act 2010.
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it.
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it.

5.7 Equality Impact Assessments (EIA's) help to demonstrate the Council is meeting the Duty: throughout the year, these have been completed and passed on to our Check and Challenge group. This helps to ensure the Equality Duty is met and allows us to produce evidence, if required, that 'Due Regard' has been paid to new service or changes to existing ones.

Corporate Equalities Group and Action Plan

5.8 The Equalities Steering Group has been changed to a Corporate Equalities Group: the Group is responsible for monitoring the Council's performance against the Single Equality Scheme. The first meeting took place on 3rd February 2021 and new terms of reference for the group were agreed and signed off at this meeting. A copy of the terms of reference is attached as Appendix 2 CEG TOR.

5.9 Taken as a whole, the Equality Action Plan is progressing well, with progress noted for most actions, positively reflecting on the "whole Council" approach to Equality and Diversity. Four specific equality strands were chosen to be championed in 2020. However, these have seen a delay due to Covid 19. These areas will be prioritised for 2021. The four strands are as follows:

- Sexual Orientation - LGBT+
- Neurodiversity
- Gypsy, Roma and Traveller
- Race – Anti Racism Motion

5.10 Council may also wish to be aware that Melton has also had a change in Equality Lead, with services now being shared with North West Leicestershire District Council. This arrangement is working well.

Anti Racism Motion

5.11 An Anti-Racism Motion was passed by full Council in July 2020 - Members agreed to reaffirm the Council's commitment to promoting equality and fairness for all, and condemning any and all forms of racism. The motion will feed into this year's work stream. A programme is currently under development to demonstrate the prevalence of racism in the community and how this can be addressed. It is anticipated that this programme will be rolled out to Officers later this year.

Fight For Fairness

5.12 'Fight for Fairness' is the Government's new stance on Equalities. The Governments three proposed aims are:

- Delivering fairness through modernisation, increased choice and openness.
- Concentrating on research and data, rather than campaigning and listening to those with the loudest voices.
- Taking our biggest and broadest look yet at the challenges we face, including the all too neglected scourge of geographic inequality.

5.13 The Government also proposes four core principles:

- Freedom
- Choice
- Opportunity
- Individual humanity and dignity

5.14 With the new agenda being published imminently, we are likely to see significant and fundamental changes in the way we must deliver Equalities work. Whilst full details are pending, it is likely there will be changes made to the Equality and Human Rights Commission Chair and Commissioners, and the launch of an Equality Hub which will undertake the biggest broadest and most comprehensive equality data project to date. We anticipate a significant shift in the Public Sector Equality Duty, not least because two of the recommendations being considered are: (i) the removal of Unconscious Bias training, and (ii) removing the use of protected characteristics. This work will naturally also be a priority for the coming year.

6 Options Considered

6.1 The work detailed in this report forms the response to the Council's statutory duty under the Equality Act 2010, The Human Rights Act 1998 and the Public Sector Equality Duty. Failure to undertake the items contained in this report may leave the Council open to legal challenge.

6.2 Council would also need to be aware of the impending proposed changes to the Public Sector Equality which is likely to see a fundamental shift and move away from being solely focused on protected characteristics.

7 Consultation

7.1 A full consultation on the 4-year Single Equality Scheme took place prior to its implementation and the results of this were included in the Council report of December 2019.

8 Next Steps – Implementation and Communication

8.1 The Corporate Equalities Group will continue to oversee the implementation of the Action Plan.

8.2 The Council's Equalities Champion has been designated as Councillor Freer-Jones who will work alongside the Council's Officer lead and the Corporate Equalities Group to monitor delivery of the objectives set out in the Corporate Equalities Policy

8.3 Equalities Training will be included in the Member Development Programme which is currently being developed for 2021/22.

9 Financial Implications

9.1 There are no financial implications for the Council as the proposed actions and work are contained within existing budgets.

Financial Implications reviewed by: Director for Corporate Services

10 Legal and Governance Implications

10.1.1 Pursuant to the Equality Act 2010, public authorities must have 'due regard' to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination and consider the potential impact decisions and actions on each of the protected characteristics.

10.2 The Council is required by legislation to set one or more specific equality objectives every four years through the Single Equality Scheme (SES).

Legal Implications reviewed by: Monitoring Officer

11 Equality and Safeguarding Implications

11.1 The Equality Scheme and Equality Objectives are specifically designed to address inequalities faced by employees and the community of Melton.

12 Community Safety Implications

12.1 The Council specifically has a duty to 'foster good relations with and within the community' and has a number of actions to help address any community safety issues. The Council in its role as a local leader will set a positive example in relation to promoting diversity and equality issues publicly and proactively.

13 Environmental and Climate Change Implications

13.1 None

14 Other Implications (where significant)

14.1 None

15 Risk & Mitigation

Risk No	Risk Description	Likelihood	Impact	Risk
1	The Council may still fail to meet its equality obligations by failing to follow the identified actions within the plan or failing to give 'due regard' to equality considerations during operational or policy developments.	Very Low	Critical	

		Impact / Consequences			
		Negligible	Marginal	Critical	Catastrophic
Likelihood	Score/ definition	1	2	3	4
	6 Very High				
	5 High				
	4 Significant				
	3 Low				
	2 Very Low			1	
	1 Almost impossible				

Risk No	Mitigation
1	The Corporate Equalities Group is set up to mitigate against this risk and to ensure there is a first point of escalation for concerns relating to our equality obligations.

16 Background Papers

16.1 None

17 Appendices

17.1 Appendix 1 ED Action Plan

17.2 Appendix 2 CEG TOR

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