

# GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE

21 NOVEMBER 2017

## REPORT OF THE CORPORATE DIRECTOR

### ANNUAL REPORT ON EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY

#### 1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To update the Governance Committee on the progress made by the Council to embed Equality and Diversity within service, policy development and delivery; work undertaken to meet our public sector equality duty as required by equality legislation and deliver services which are accessible and meet the needs of Melton's residents.

#### 2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 ***That the Committee note and comment as appropriate on the progress made in meeting our equalities duties and commitments as outlined in this report.***

#### 3.0 PROGRESS

- 3.1 Members will be aware that Melton Borough 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 initial scheme which ran from 2012-2016 was updated and agreed by the Governance Committee in November 2015 and by full Council in December 2015. It covers the period 2015/16 - 2020.
- 3.2 The Council is also required by legislation to set one or more specific equality objectives every four years. The first set of objectives ran until April 2016. A second set of equality objectives were agreed at the Governance Committee in November 2015 and form part of the SES. They build on the work that the Council has undertaken and have been identified as being the most relevant to the authority and the Community.
- 3.3 The 4 equality objectives for the period 2016-2020 are set out below.
- Ensure that we engage, consult and communicate in appropriate and accessible ways and empower under-represented groups and individuals to participate in society and at work.
  - Ensure services are accessible, responsive and appropriate for all our community
  - Instil confidence within the community to report, tackle and prevent discrimination, bullying, harassment and hate incidents experienced by people in relation to their protected characteristic

- Be recognised as an employer of choice for people from all communities ensuring fairness and equality of opportunity for all

3.4 As the Single Equality Scheme is included within the Council's Constitution any changes to the scheme will need to be presented to full Council for approval.

#### **4.0 Equality Impact Assessments**

4.1 Due to a number of staff changes since the previous report was submitted, the Check and Challenge group has gone through another refresh of its membership. The group provides advice and guidance to managers on any equality implications when undertaking an Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) relating to policies, practices, procedures, services or functions. The group also forms part of the formal approval process and monitors actions arising from completed EIAs whilst ensuring completed EIAs are published on the Council's website.

4.2 A training session was provided to all members of the Check & Challenge group in May on the EIA form and the role of the group.

4.3 Demographic data relating to the equalities profile of the Melton area (including some mid-term statistics) has been collated and provided for staff to ensure easy access to the data for officers undertaking an EIA and to provide consistency of approach.

#### **5.0 Training**

5.1 During 2017:

- Two new Members who were elected in 2017 received Equality & Diversity training in October.
- New online equalities training packages have been developed including; A guide to reasonable adjustments; Disability Discrimination; Equality in the Workplace; Dignity at Work and the Equality Act. There is still some work to do on two modules namely, Equality Impact Assessments (EIA) and Modern Councillor.
- As noted, EIA training was provided to the Check and Challenge group in May 2015.

#### **6. Town Centre Access Audit**

##### **Background**

6.1 In February 2016, the chair of the Melton Access Group attended the Equalities Steering Group (ESG) meeting and highlighted a number of Town Centre access issues faced by disabled people.

6.2 Subsequently in May 2016, ESG agreed to a proposal by the Centre for Accessible Environments to undertake a general access audit of the town centre to address some of the issues identified.

- 6.3 Following the audit a report was presented to Melton Borough Council in August. A number of access themes were considered including; the presentation of access information on the Council's website; way-finding and signage; parking; crossings; circulation; sanitary and welfare accommodation; street furniture; retail units and stalls. The audit identified several areas where improvements could be made. Some of the work relating to property issues had already been commenced.

### **Progress**

- 6.4 Officers from Melton BC prepared detailed spread sheets which identified the initial responsibilities of different sections within the Council and partner agencies. Unfortunately, during 2017 progress has been rather limited due to the lack of response from partner agencies and staff changes within Melton Borough Council. The Melton Economic and Environmental affairs Committee is due a further report on progress.

## **7. Employment issues**

### **7.1 Staff Survey**

- 7.2 The previous Staff Survey took place in November 2016 which was after the annual report was produced. From an equalities perspective, the results were very positive with 86% of staff saying they thought the council is committed to promoting equality of opportunity and 94% clear what their equalities responsibilities are (up 2%).

- 7.3 However, those who felt they are treated fairly at work went down slightly from 86% to 81%. Officers are currently investigating this data to see if there are any trends within particular teams or related to the protected characteristics.

### **7.4 Disability Confident**

- 7.5 Melton Borough Council (MBC) recently signed up to the 'Disability Confident Scheme' which replaced the former two tick disability status. The aim of the scheme is to successfully employ and retain disabled people and those with ongoing health conditions. The scheme focuses on two key themes;

- Getting the right people for the organisation
- Keeping and developing people

- 7.6 As a disability confident employer, MBC pledges to support the employment of individuals with declared disabilities in a number of ways including:

- Actively looking to attract and recruit disabled people
- Providing a fully inclusive and accessible recruitment process
- Offering a guaranteed interview to disabled applicants who meet the minimum criteria for the post
- Flexibility when assessing people to allow disabled applicants to have the best opportunity to demonstrate that they can do the job
- Supporting employees to manage their disabilities or health conditions

- Ensuring that employees have appropriate disability equality awareness
- Providing an environment that is inclusive and accessible for staff, clients and customers

## **8.0 Equalities Monitoring**

8.1 Equalities monitoring is now part of Melton Borough's 'Consultation Toolkit' and process. Analysis of each consultation exercise includes detail on the people who have responded (or not) so that this can be taken into account when decisions are made.

## **9.0 Procurement**

9.1 Following a presentation on Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking to the Equalities Steering Group in July, the Head of Procurement is now reviewing the processes which will include the approach to Modern Slavery. An equalities update will shortly feature in Corporate Messenger with a focus on modern slavery.

## **10. Community Safety**

10.1 The Council continues to be represented across the County on the Community Safety Partnership. In particular work continues on the Prevent and Hate Crime agenda. As part of National Hate crime during 14-21st October 2017, a number of events were organised including:

- Campaign posters being displayed at; The Cove Youth Club, The Edge Youth Club, Fairmead Youth Club, Phoenix House, Venture House, Melton Library and Melton Police Station
- Staff at the youth clubs delivered a short presentation about the campaign
- Information was relayed via Radio Eye
- Information about the awareness was circulated to the residents groups in Melton
- A Banner was displayed in the main offices building and enquiries directed to the Anti Social Behaviour (ASB) officer at Melton BC
- Information about the awareness appeared in the press; the 'Rage' news and In Touch & Tweets
- Awareness sessions were delivered by the ASB officer to residents groups including the 'Rage' and 'Town Centre'
- Town Centre chat (various locations at different times) - Police & ASB Officer
- Joining the national campaign 'thunderclap' which is the first crow-speaking platform that helps people and organisations to be heard by a larger audience by saying something together.

## **11. Other activities**

- The Council continues to play an active role in the Leicester Shire Equalities Forum
- The Council has been represented at the annual Police Inter-cultural Awareness event

- Menopause session held in October 2017 at University of Leicester communicated to staff

## **12.0 POLICY AND CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS**

- 12.1 In order to ensure good corporate governance the Council is required by legislation to ensure that in the exercise of its functions, it has paid due regard to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations.
- 12.2 The Council has undertaken to comprehensively refresh the Council's Corporate Priorities for 2015/16-2020. Equality is an integral and direct feature within the Council's eight corporate priorities, which are based around three core themes of: Place, People and Agile council, by promoting equality of opportunity, good relations and look to tackle issues in relation to discrimination and harassment. As a key policy document the One Council Corporate Plan provides a robust approach to supporting the single equalities scheme; ensuring that our vision, priorities and spending decisions are based on sound evidence, extensive engagement and a thorough understanding of community needs – helping to align the Council's focus and resources so we can encourage sustainable communities within a stronger, fairer and prosperous place.

## **13.0 FINANCIAL AND OTHER RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

- 13.1 The council's annual budget associated to resourcing for Equality and Diversity has been decreased to £4k from 2014/2015. Support is provided through an agreement with an Equality and Diversity specialist. However, additional duties can be purchased as required – e.g. Members Equality and Diversity Training. Additional funds of £4,500 from the Commercialism budget have been used for backfilling for the current post-holder.

## **14.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS/POWERS**

- 14.1 There are no specific legal implications aspects to this report. However, failure to comply with the public sector equality duties could result in the Council facing a legal challenge and its reputation being damaged.

## **15.0 COMMUNITY SAFETY**

- 15.1 There are no specific community safety aspects to this report.

## **16.0 EQUALITIES**

- 16.1 Good practice requires that regular equality and diversity progress reports are provided for scrutiny against agreed objectives for the council.

## **17.0 RISKS**

- 17.1 There are no direct risks associated from this report.

## **18.0 CLIMATE CHANGE**

18.1 There are no specific climate change implications relating to this report.

## **19.0 CONSULTATION**

19.1 There has been no direct consultation with officers of the council or the communities of the borough. The delivery of the equality and diversity agenda is driven by equality legislation.

## **20. WARDS AFFECTED**

20.1 There will be a positive impact on all wards as a result of the delivery of the equality and diversity agenda.

---

Contact Officer: Martyn Bowen

Date: 24/10/17

Appendices:

Background Papers: N/A

Reference: