

Council

18 December 2019

Report of:	Director of People and Communities
Cabinet Member	Portfolio Holder Corporate Governance, Access and Engagement

EQUALITY SCHEME AND EQUALITY OBJECTIVES (2020 TO 2024)

1.0 Summary:
1.1 The report seeks approval on the new Equality Scheme and Equality Objectives which is a requirement of the Council's reporting procedures.
1.2 The report also sets out the background and legislative requirements together with the results from the recent consultation exercise on the new draft Equality Scheme and Equality Objectives.

2.0 Recommendations
2.1 That Council approve the Equality Scheme and Equality Objectives at Appendix A and Appendix B covering the period 2020 to 2024.
2.2 That Council delegate authority to Portfolio for Corporate Governance, Access and Engagement to approve any subsequent changes to the Equality Scheme or Actions to deliver the objectives should the need arise in line with legislative and/or corporate priority changes over the next four years.

3.0 Report Detail
3.1 Members will be aware that Melton Borough Council (MBC) publishes an Equality Scheme which covers our legal duties as required by The Equality Act 2010. The scheme outlines how Melton Borough Council aims to eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation; advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations in the delivery of our services, supporting our communities and developing our workforce. It also sets out the Council's aims and objectives, governance & performance management arrangements, vision & values. The previous scheme covered a four year period and is due for renewal by end of March 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 covered the period up until April 2016 and the second set is due for renewal by April 2020.
3.3 The Equality Scheme's main delivery mechanism is through the Action Plan which is based on a number of actions designed to deliver the equality objectives. The

actions are based on Melton's priorities, feedback from consultation and good practice guidance by the Local Government Association. The four objectives agreed following consultation are detailed in Appendix B, but can be summarised as follows:

- 1) Engage and communicate in appropriate and accessible ways
- 2) Develop and support a diverse workforce (being recognised as an employer of choice)
- 3) Ensure we commission and deliver inclusive and responsive services
- 4) Foster good relations with and within the community

- 3.4 An Annual Report on progress was presented to the relevant committee each November during the previous four year period of the Equality Scheme. This provided comprehensive detail of the activities undertaken to meet the objectives as listed in the action plan.
- 3.5 A summary of the achievements for the period 2016-2020 can be found at Appendix C.
- 3.6 The concept behind the new Equality Scheme was to produce a simplified, shorter version which uses more user-friendly language.

4.0 Consultation and Feedback

- 4.1 The consultation period lasted for four weeks from Tuesday 10th September to Tuesday 8th October 2019. Residents and employees were invited to comment on both the Equality Scheme and the Equality Objectives by completing an online questionnaire. In addition, a number of local groups representing people with protected characteristics and/or other disadvantaged groups were also invited to comment see Appendix D. The Equality Scheme, Equality Objectives and online survey were available in accessible formats upon request.

Promotional articles were produced for staff in the corporate messenger and to the local community through the Melton Times. A number of twitter/LinkedIn feeds were also used to promote involvement.

Mid-way through the consultation period, staff and the community were reminded about their chance to comment on the scheme through the various media channels. Those groups listed in Appendix D were also contacted again.

- 4.2 A full report on the consultation feedback can be found in Appendix E.

In summary, the responses were positive to both the Equality Scheme and Equality Objectives. Despite the advertising and re-advertising of the consultation process the actual number of respondents was low. A total of 8 respondents completed the on-line survey and two emails were received. Conversely, as a number of local organisations representing the protected groups were involved the weight of consideration is higher due to the amount of views represented.

The survey results were discussed at the Equalities Steering Group (ESG) on 16th October, 2019. Any actions or solutions are reported here together with the results.

4.3 Main headlines - Equality Scheme:

Three questions were about the Equality Scheme:

- 75% of respondents agreed that the scheme was accessible and easy to understand. There were no respondents who disagreed. This was also replicated in the correspondence received.
- 71% of respondents agreed that the content was relevant and no respondents disagreed.
- One respondent identified social mobility in the Melton area as a particular concern. The scheme now addresses this through the inclusion of the Cross Partnership Outcomes Framework found in the Appendices to the Equality Scheme. The framework was developed by the Melton People Board to illustrate success indicators using a life course approach. It demonstrates a series of outcomes from pre birth to death that, if achieved, would show what success would look like over the longer term.
- On the overall/general feedback question it was felt that the Equality Scheme was good in its intent and well presented.
- The East Midlands Ambulance Service noted in their email that they liked the simplistic yet very effective approach to equality and diversity. They felt it is clear, realistic, and achievable and reads very well. In essence they felt we had produced two first class documents. There was also a very positive letter received (through email) from Mrs Louise Richardson, Council Lead Member – Communities and Equalities, Leicestershire County Council – see Appendix F.

4.4 Main headlines – Equality Objectives:

There were nine questions about the Equality Objectives. Respondents were asked to comment on each objective and the actions identified to deliver them. A list of objectives and actions can be found in Appendix B as previously noted.

Equality Objective 1: ‘Engage and communicate in appropriate and accessible ways’

- 71 % of the respondents agreed with the objective and no respondents disagreed. One respondent asked how the objective would be measured. This will be included in the detailed version of the Action Plan. Another respondent saw the objective as empowering.
- 71% of the respondents agreed that the actions would contribute to meeting the objective and no respondents disagreed.

Equality Objective 2: ‘Develop and support a diverse workforce (being recognised as an employer of choice)’

- 86% of the respondents agreed with the objective and no one disagreed. One respondent asked what success would look like. There was also another comment about making sure we continue to employ the best and

most appropriate talent. To address these concerns a new subsidiary heading has been added under the objective which reads '**meeting this objective should enable us to consequently attract & recruit the best talent.**' It is felt that all the actions to deliver the objective would ultimately measure success and attract the best talent fairly.

- 71% of the respondents agreed that the actions would contribute to meeting the objective. One respondent disagreed due to the fact that equalities training was not mentioned. However, this will be included as an action in the Action Plan as part of a wide spectrum of equalities and other relevant training provided.

Equality Objective 3: 'Ensure we commission and deliver inclusive and responsive services'

- 100% of respondents agreed with the objective.

There was a slight amendment to the actual objective itself which now reads to '**Ensure services are in place or commissioned which are inclusive and responsive.**' This is more reflective of the Council's People and Communities organisational structure which complements the co-located and multi agency approach.

- 71% of respondents agreed that the actions would contribute to meeting the objective. One respondent disagreed and wanted more focus placing on working age adults. The scheme now addresses this through the inclusion of the Cross Partnership Outcomes Framework found in the Appendices to the Equality Scheme. This has been previously noted in the report above. Another respondent thought that it was an excellent objective.

Following the public consultation exercise, the Equalities Steering Group identified two additional actions to deliver this Equality Objective.

- There should be an action around using the appropriate tools and data more effectively to target people where need is identified. This is particularly important as information collection and monitoring is an essential part of service provision and also used for the Equality Analysis process.
- The other action added relates to providing a proactive approach to the management of need from our most vulnerable residents. It was felt that all the actions to meet this are encompassed in the partnership outcomes framework which is a whole life approach to the provision of support and services. This has been noted earlier in the report.

These two new actions are found as bullet points 2 & 7 in Appendix B.

Equality Objective 4: 'Foster good relations with and within the community'

- 85% of respondents agreed with this objective and no one disagreed.
- 57% agreed that the actions meet the objective.

There were two respondents who disagreed:

One respondent felt we should move beyond the term 'tolerance' which prompted a wider discussion with the group on the use of the term and whether it had unintended negative connotations. A new subsidiary line has been added entitled 'understanding difference and celebrating diversity'. This is seen as more aspirational for Melton.

There was also a comment about whether our approach would deal with anti social behaviour. It was noted that the action needs to encompass cause and effect. This has now been included under Equality Objective 4 and can be found in Appendix B.

4.5 Overall summary of objectives:

- 100% of respondents agreed that the objectives identified should be the objectives for the scheme.

5.0 Next Steps

5.1 The new agreed Equality Scheme and Equality objectives will be placed on the Council's website together with a link to this report.

5.2 The Equalities Steering Group will lead on developing a detailed action plan to deliver the actions identified by April 2020.

5.3 The Equalities Steering Group will amend the Equality Scheme or Actions to deliver the objectives should new needs arise over the next four years.

6.0 Financial Implications

6.1 There are no financial implications as a result of this report.

7.0 Legal and Governance Implications:

7.1 The Equality Scheme and Equality Objectives have been produced to meet the requirements of the Equality Act 2010.

8.0 Equality and Safeguarding Implications:

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

An EIA is not required as equality and community consultation is the fundamental point of the Scheme and 'due regard' has therefore been given.

9.0 Community Safety Implications:

9.1 The authority 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.

10.0 Other Implications

10.1 None

11.0 Risk & Mitigation:

11.1 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. The Equality Steering 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.

11.2

L I K E L I H O O D	A	Very High				
	B	High				
	C	Significant				
	D	Low			1	
	E	Very Low				
	F	Almost Impossible				
			Negligible 1	Marginal 2	Critical 3	Catastrophic 4

IMPACT

Risk No	Risk Description
1	The Council fails to meet its equality obligations


Background Papers:

There are no background papers.

Appendices

Appendix A: Equality Scheme
 Appendix B: Equality Objectives
 Appendix C: A Summary of Achievements for the period 2016-2020
 Appendix D: List of Groups Invited to Participate
 Appendix E: Equality Scheme & Objectives Consultation Results
 Appendix F: Mrs Louise Richardson, Council Lead Member – Communities and Equalities, Leicestershire County Council

Report Timeline:		Dated: <i>(initials and date)</i>
Equalities Check & Challenge		N/A
SLT Sign off		N/A
Previously Considered by Cabinet		N/A
Director Approval		09.12.19
Chief Finance Officer Sign Off		25.11.19
Monitoring Officer Sign Off		10.12.19
Consultation with Portfolio Holder		09.12.19

Report Author & Job Title
Aysha Rahman, People Manager  : 01664 502502