

Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council

Corporate Equality Plan

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CONTENTS

Page

1. Introduction

1

2. Overview

2.1 Equality Act 2010 – Public Sector Equality Duty

1

2.2 Protected Characteristics

2

2.3 Equality and Diversity in Practice

2

2.4 Mainstreaming Equality and Diversity

2

3. Equalities Priorities

3.1 EP1: Seek to make the borough a welcoming place for everyone

3

3.2 EP2: Seek to make sure relevant services are accessible to all

3

3.3 EP3: Seek to provide fair treatment that meets individual needs

4

3.4 EP4: Commit to having an increasingly diverse workforce

5

4. Monitoring and Evaluation

6

Examples of work with groups and organisations

7

1. Introduction

This Corporate Equality Plan aims to embed the principles of equality and diversity¹ in everything that Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council does. This includes: the work of councillors in the community, the provision of services, work with partner organisations and the development of the council's workforce.

It provides a comprehensive picture of the council's equalities priorities, giving examples of what these mean in practice and outlining actions that will ensure that these priorities continue to be met. It also demonstrates the work that the council is doing to meet the Public Sector Equality Duty (see below for more information).

The council's overarching Equality Statement is: 'The council strives to advance equality, eliminate discrimination, build strong community relations and deliver accessible services that meet the needs of everyone in the borough.'

The equalities work carried out by the council goes beyond meeting legal duties and is aimed at making the borough a place where everyone is treated fairly and with respect.

This plan is for residents and visitors, partners and stakeholders, council employees, councillors and all others acting on behalf of the council including contractors and volunteers.

2. Overview

2.1 Equality Act 2010 – Public Sector Equality Duty²

The council is committed to fulfilling its obligations under the Equality Act 2010, including the Public Sector Equality Duty (Section 149). This duty includes a general duty and specific duties. The general duty requires public bodies to have 'due regard' to the need to:

- eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act;
- advance equality of opportunity between people from different groups; and
- foster good relations between people from different groups.

To help the council meet the general duty, there are specific duties. These require the council to publish equalities information annually and to set and publish one or more measurable equality objective, which will further the three aims of the Equality Duty, every four years (see Corporate Equality Action Plan more details).

¹ Equality means people being treated fairly and with respect and that everyone has the same chances in their lives. Diversity is about recognising, respecting and valuing people's differences.

² For more information about the Public Sector Equality Duty see: <http://tinyurl.com/3repek>

2.2 Protected Characteristics

The Equality Act 2010 protects people from being treated less favourably because of certain characteristics. These are known as 'protected characteristics' and include:

- Age
- Disability
- Race
- Sex (gender)
- Gender reassignment
- Marriage and civil partnership
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Religion or belief (or lack of belief)
- Sexual orientation

Every person has one or more of the protected characteristics, which means that the Act aims to protect everyone against unfair treatment. When considering the impact of service provision, policies and practices on different groups, the council also takes into account social or economic disadvantage.

2.3 Equality and Diversity in Practice

This Plan is put into practice by the following people:

- the Council, Cabinet, councillors, corporate leadership team and senior managers
- Equality Strategy Group (ESG), including directors, senior managers and councillors
- Equality Working Group (EWG), including representatives from business units
- partner organisations, council employees, contractors and volunteers.

2.4 Mainstreaming Equality and Diversity

This Plan links directly to core council strategies and policies to ensure that equalities work is mainstreamed into the council's everyday business. These include the: Council Plan and Shared Vision, Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy, Procurement Strategy, Business Unit Plans and the Performance Framework.

The council has gained an 'Achieving' status from the Local Government Association through its work with the 'Equality Framework for Local Government' (EFLG). This is a tool that enables equalities to be mainstreamed into every aspect of the council's work. A copy of the final EFLG report is available [here](#) and case studies of work carried out can be found [here](#).

3. Equalities Priorities

3.1 EP1: Seek to make the borough a welcoming place for everyone

a. Building good community relations

The council works with a range of people from different communities in the borough. Councillors are elected to represent the people in their local areas and building good relations between different groups and individuals is at the heart of their role.

A number of council business units work closely with local residents to build welcoming, strong and stable communities in the borough. These include the Neighbourhood Planning, Housing and Community and Wellbeing teams.

b. Creating neighbourhoods where people feel safe and want to live

To make the borough a welcoming and safe place where people want to live the council is working towards:

- keeping streets safe and crime and anti-social behaviour low through joint working with the Police and Community Safety Patrol Officers
- delivering affordable housing to a diverse range of people, where it is needed, through joint working and support for homelessness people.

The council has also supported work in Basingstoke town centre that has led to it being awarded a Purple Flag by the Association of Town and City Management. This is an indicator of where to go for a good night out in a clean, safe and welcoming environment.

3.2 EP2: Seek to make sure relevant services are accessible to all

a. Removing barriers to accessing services

Potential barriers

Some people find it more difficult to access council services than others. These barriers can be physical, sensory and sometimes emotional. By working closely with local communities, barriers to access can be identified and action can be taken to overcome them. Making reasonable adjustments for disabled people forms a key part of the Equality Act 2010. An example of this would be the provision of British Sign Language translation and drop counters at the council's reception.

Customer feedback

The council is committed to providing customers with high quality accessible services and welcomes feedback, good or bad, about its services. A comments and complaints system is in place to make sure that people have the chance to say when something is working well or not (contact details are at the end of this document). Another way that the council finds out about people views to inform the planning and delivery of services is through service specific surveys and a bi-annual residential market research survey.

Buying services (procurement)

The council buys a wide range of goods and services. It is committed to ensuring that services provided on behalf of the council by major suppliers and contractors are accessible. The council follows guidelines put in place by the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) to make sure that equality and diversity forms a core part of the process of buying of services.

b. Assessing the impact of the council's work

To find out how policies, schemes and services will affect different groups, the council uses Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs). These help identify any barriers to accessing services and potential positive or negative impacts of proposed actions, before a decision is taken. EIAs make sure that, where possible, plans are put into place to overcome these issues and provide evidence to demonstrate that 'due regard' has been paid to the Public Sector Equality Duty. For more information on the council's EIAs please click [here](#).

3.3 EP3: Seek to provide fair treatment that meets individual needs

a. Understanding and meeting the needs of local people

To improve the council's understanding of local communities and better target services to suit people's needs, general equality and diversity information about the local population is collected and analysed. Some of the key points from this research to date include:

- **Age:** The borough has a higher percentage of children under 15 and middle-aged adults than any other age groups.
- **Race:** The percentage of ethnic minority groups in the borough has almost doubled over the past decade.
- **Disability:** Approximately one fifth of households in Basingstoke and Deane have one or more persons with a long-term health problem or disability.
- **Religion or belief:** Since the 2001 Census, the percentage of people who describe themselves as Christian has declined slightly and there has been an increase in the percentage of people that stated that their religion was 'other than Christian'. The percentage of residents who stated they had no religion at 2011 has almost doubled over the last ten years.
- **Sex (gender):** Below the age of 20, the percentage of males in the borough is slightly higher than that of females. Above the age of 65, the percentage of females is slightly higher than that of males.
- **Marriage and civil partnership:** Since 2001, there has been a slight increase in the percentage of adults who are divorced and a marginal decline in the percentage of residents who are married.
- **Pregnancy and maternity:** Over the last decade, the increase in the number of births in the borough was double that of the Hampshire average.

For more information on the other protected characteristics groups, including gender reassignment and sexual orientation, and the local equality and diversity profile of the borough's population, click [here](#).

b. Improving engagement and consultation with local communities

The council wants everyone in Basingstoke and Deane to feel included in the local community and to have access to high quality services that are designed to respond to their needs. Work is carried out with local groups and partners to improve engagement with local communities through a range of methods including: community projects, consultations, focus groups and customer satisfaction surveys. Examples of specific activities are included in the Appendix. This work encourages local communities to participate in the design of services that respond to their needs.

3.4 EP4: Commit to having an increasingly diverse workforce

a. Working towards having a council workforce that reflects the local working population

Council employees are central to making services and work with local communities a success. Staff members come from a range of different backgrounds and the council celebrates this diversity as an added value to the services it provides.

To improve internal performance and equalities practice, the council is committed to developing its workforce to better reflect the diversity of the local community to encompass the wide range of skills; knowledge and experience people in the borough have to offer.

The council is taking steps to ensure that people from groups that are currently under-represented in the workforce are encouraged to find employment at the council. An example of this the council's participation in the Government's 'Two ticks Scheme', which guarantees disabled people an interview if they meet the basic conditions for the job.

The principles of equality and diversity are embedded in all aspects of employment at the council including: advertising vacancies, recruitment and selection, terms and conditions of employment, training and personal development and monitoring of reasons for ending employment.

The council's Equality and Diversity Employment Policy is directly linked to this Plan and aims to reflect the needs of employees and equalities legislation.

Click [here](#) for more information about the council's 'Workforce Equality and Diversity Profile 2013'.

b. Supporting employees, managers and councillors to have due regard to equality

To ensure that council employees have a good understanding of equality and diversity, training is carried out via a comprehensive e-learning package. To

complement this training and reinforce learning, face-to-face training sessions have been carried out. Managers are also given individual support to work more effectively with diverse range of communities.

The council's Equality Strategy Group and Equality Working Group (reference p.2) support all areas of the council to embed equality and diversity into their day-to-day practices at both a corporate and service level.

4. Monitoring and Evaluation

This Corporate Equality Plan will be updated when there are any amendments to equalities legislation or significant changes in the local borough population profile.

The implementation of the Corporate Equality Action Plan will be monitored on a regular basis and will be updated where necessary. General performance monitoring of equalities priorities will continue to be carried out as part of Business Unit plan reviews.

Equality and diversity information on the local borough population and the council workforce is published annually and is used to inform equalities priorities and objectives to ensure compliance with the Public Sector Equality Duty. For more information, please click [here](#).

If you would like to discuss this plan or need this information in a different format (for example large print, Braille, audio tape) please contact us by:

Email: customer.service@basingstoke.gov.uk

Telephone: 01256 844844

BT Relay: 18001 01256 844844

SMS Text Messaging: 07797 87 006

Post: Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council, Civic Offices, London Road, Basingstoke, RG21 4AH

Appendix

Examples of work with groups and organisations

Basingstoke Voluntary Service (BVS) – the council works with the local Council for Voluntary Service to support diverse communities through a wide range of projects.

Basingstoke Multicultural Forum – is supported by the council to bring together culturally diverse groups, build the capacity of the local Black and Minority Ethnic communities and promote better understanding between different groups. It provides a channel for communities to raise issues and find practical solutions to their concerns.

Basingstoke and District Disability Forum – the council supports the forum to achieve its aims including: to be an independent umbrella organisation of and for disability organisations and disabled people in the borough and to be an expert voice of and for local disabled people by lobbying, campaigning and participating in consultations.

Multi-Agency Diversity Forum – the council works with BVS to bring together the voluntary/ community sector and other partners to share information on equalities issues, help to develop services and a local community where everyone has equal opportunities.

Basingstoke and District Learning Partnership – the council provides support to the volunteers responsible for the management of community centres and village halls. This enables local people to determine the type of activities they need for themselves.

Citizens Advice Bureaux (CABs) – the council works with CABs to support a range of vulnerable groups in the borough.

Over 55s Forum – the council supports this forum to raise issues with local service providers, challenge age discrimination and to ensure a better quality of life for over 55s in the borough.

Transgender – the council supports Chrysalis, a local voluntary organisation, which offers counselling and support to transgender individuals.

Youth of Peace – the council's Diversity Community Development Officer supports this group to hold several events, including regular meetings and a cultural youth exhibition.

Multi-Cultural Seniors Forum – the council established this forum to better understand, support and overcome barriers faced by the growing number of culturally diverse older people within the borough and for it to help make Basingstoke a better place for these groups.

Basingstoke Faith Leaders Forum – is a network between diverse faith communities, supported by the council. The forum aims to promote mutual respect and understanding and members work together to identify and support the needs of all local faith groups.

Basingstoke Youth Movement – the council supports this organisation to have a recognised mandate to talk on behalf of young in people the borough. This is being done through providing support to become an independent organisation with a constitution, policies and action plan.

The council also works with a wide range of other Voluntary and Community Organisations to support local groups including, Shopmobility, youth groups etc.