

Report to the Cabinet

Report reference: C-016-2020/21
Date of meeting: 11 October 2021



**Epping Forest
District Council**

Portfolio: Corporate Services – Cllr D Sunger

Subject: Equality Policy

Responsible Officer: Lorraine Miles: (01992 562719)
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Democratic Services: Adrian Hendry (01992 564246)

Recommendations/Decisions Required:

- 1. That Cabinet considers any matters arising from the Stronger Council Select Committee review of the Equality Policy and Equality Objectives. This includes whether to undertake public consultation on the Equality Objectives.**
- 2. That Cabinet adopt the Equality & Inclusion Policy and the Equality Objectives it contains.**

Executive Summary:

Epping Forest District Council is committed to advancing equality and inclusion for all. The Council's new Equality & Inclusion Policy demonstrates our commitment to equality and our responsibility to our communities and our workforce. The Equality Objectives contained in the Policy set out how we will deliver this commitment, recognising the need to continuously improve and build on our past achievements to ensure excellent equality practice.

Reasons for Proposed Decision:

To demonstrate EFDC's commitment to advancing equality under the Equality Act and Public Sector Equality Duty. Subject to approval by Cabinet, the proposed Equality Objectives will be published on the Council's website and embedded across all strategic policies and plans.

Other Options for Action:

Not applicable

Report:

- The Equality Act 2010 and Public Sector Equality Duty 2011 require public authorities to set and publish at least one Equality Objective every four years to demonstrate how they will eliminate discrimination and advance equality. They also require public authorities to publish information to show their compliance with the Public Sector Equality Duty, at least annually. Typically, this takes the form of an annual Equality Report or Statement. In addition to the Equality Act, the Council has a statutory duty to reduce health inequalities many of which are associated with protected characteristics under the Equality Act.



2. In our 2020 Equality Statement we made the following commitments:

- In 2021 we will review our Equality Objectives and produce a new Equality Policy.
- Our Equality Objectives will be supported by a framework for measuring performance and evaluating the effectiveness of our work on equality.
- Each Service Plan will describe how it is working to improve equality and will report on the delivery of equality.
- We will review our Equalities Impact Assessment to focus more on the role of analysis in understanding the impact of our policies, practices, events and decision-making processes. This supports our commitment to ensure that these are fair and do not present barriers to participation or disadvantage to any protected groups from participation.
- We will engage and learn from our communities about the challenges they face and ensure that policy development, innovation and growth are inclusive and put people on an equal footing.
- We will continue to promote the District as a place where diversity of background and thought are valued.

3. Our new Equality Objectives build on our previous objectives. They focus on what we will do to advance equality and how we will do it. The following Equality Objectives (2021-2025) are recommended to Cabinet.

- **Equality Objective 1:** To develop, and deliver in partnership, a District-level approach to growth and recovery that builds, and can demonstrate, an Epping Forest that works for all.
- **Equality Objective 2:** To drive improvement in service delivery through the use of equality data and data on socio-economic deprivation.
- **Equality Objective 3:** To develop a research and consultation strategy to understand the needs and experiences of our communities with a clear pathway or process to embed their knowledge and experience into service design, development and delivery.
- **Equality Objective 4:** To understand, and evidence, the impact of our workforce initiatives on improving equality.

These Equality Objectives will enable EFDC to:

- Better understand our diverse communities and the relationship between protected characteristics under the Equality Act and socio-economic deprivation.
- Embed this understanding into policy and practice, particularly in relation to growth and recovery.
- Demonstrate inclusive leadership, partnership and a clear organisational commitment to be a leader in equality and inclusion.
- Develop services that are relevant and responsive to people's experiences and the challenges they face in a digital world.
- Provide better evidence of the impact of our workforce initiatives

4. The Equality Policy sets out our commitment to whole council approach to equality and inclusion and actions to ensure continuous improvement. These include adopting the LGA Equality Framework for Local Government (EFLG). They also include identifying Officer and Elected Member leads to provide the linkages between the Equality Policy and other policies and strategies e.g., The Health and Wellbeing Strategy, national strategies and Service Plan objectives.

To deliver the Equality Policy the following actions will be undertaken

- 2021 - Establish the foundation to deliver our Equality Objectives, building on our current commitments.
- 2021 - Collect baseline measures to inform and set targets, integrate existing Equality Impact Assessments into Corporate Equality Impact Assessment Framework.
- 2021 – Develop Equality Monitoring and Evaluation Plan
- 2021 - Review Equalities Impact Assessment to focus on the role of analysis in understanding the impact of our policies, practices, events and decision-making processes.
- 2022 - Ensure higher standards being met in all areas. Address challenges.
- 2023 - Model good practice across the organisation. Self-assessment against EFLG
- 2024/5 - Review Equality Objectives, produce new Equality Policy

Resource Implications:

Commitments made in the Equality Policy will be met within existing resources.

Legal and Governance Implications:

The adoption of the Equality Policy and Equality Objectives will ensure that the Council meets its legal requirements under the Equality Act (2010) and the Public Sector Equality Duty (2011). The Policy has been reviewed by the Shared Head of Legal Services & Monitoring Officer and Deputy Monitoring Officer & Information Governance Officer. Suggestions have been made and incorporated.

Safer, Cleaner and Greener Implications:

There are no implications in respect of the Council's commitment to the Climate Local Agreement, the Safer, Cleaner and Greener initiative, or any crime and disorder issues.

Inequality and sustainability interact and there are different kinds of inequality many of which overlap. This Policy makes the case for better understanding the relationship between protected characteristics under the Equality Act and the socio-economic factors that produce inequalities of wealth. These, in turn, are associated with differences in environmental impact and the carbon footprint of individuals. The data from the actions in this Policy will be used to ensure that inequality and environmental issues are not considered in isolation and that growth is both fair and green.

Consultation Undertaken:

Consultation has been undertaken with Service Managers, the Leadership Team and Service Directors. Responses were overwhelmingly positive. No substantive amendments were proposed to the Equality Policy or Equality Objectives and minor comments have been incorporated.

There is no statutory duty to consult on the production or publication of Equality Objectives. Many councils do, however, decide to consult to ensure full transparency and provide an opportunity for community engagement.

Background Papers:

None

MC 16/02/17 v2

Risk Management:

The setting and publication of Equality Objectives will ensure that the Council is not in breach of its statutory duty and that mitigating action is not required.

Equality Impact Assessment

The following EIA has been conducted on the Equality Policy and the Equality Objectives it contains

Section 1: Identifying details
Your function, service area and team: Strategy, Delivery and Performance
Title of policy or decision: Equality Policy
Officer completing the EqlA: Lorraine Miles
Date of completing the assessment: 26/08/2021

Section 2: Policy to be analysed	
2.1	<p>Is this a new policy (or decision) or a change to an existing policy, practice or project?</p> <p>New policy. Replaces previous Equality Policy (2016)</p>
2.2	<p>Describe the main aims, objectives and purpose of the policy (or decision):</p> <p>Public authorities must demonstrate that they are advancing equality under the Equality Act and Public Sector Equality Duty. The Council has a legal duty to publish at least one Equality Objective every four years. Four Equality Objectives have been developed to show how EFDC will advance equality. These are set out in the Equality Policy.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Equality Objective 1: To develop, and deliver in partnership, a District-level approach to growth and recovery that builds, and can demonstrate, an Epping Forest that works for all. • Equality Objective 2: To drive improvement in service delivery through the use of equality data and data on socio-economic deprivation. • Equality Objective 3: To develop a research and consultation strategy to understand the needs and experiences of our communities with a clear pathway or process to embed their knowledge and experience into service design, development and delivery. • Equality Objective 4: To understand, and evidence, the impact of our workforce initiatives on improving equality <p>What outcome(s) are you hoping to achieve (ie decommissioning or commissioning a service)?</p> <p>Equality is embedded in all that we do. We want Epping Forest to be “a great place for living, working, learning and leisure”, a district with “people who feel valued and included”</p>



	<p>(Corporate Plan 2018-2023). Our Equality Objectives focus on bringing our actions to light through the improved use of evidence and data. They will help EFDC to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Better understand our diverse communities and the relationship between protected characteristics under the Equality Act and socio-economic deprivation. • Embed this understanding into policy and practice, particularly in relation to growth and recovery. • Demonstrate inclusive leadership, partnership and a clear organisational commitment to be a leader in equality and inclusion. • Develop services that are relevant and responsive to people's experiences and the challenges they face in a digital world. • Provide better evidence of the impact of our workforce initiatives
2.3	<p>Does or will the policy or decision affect:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • service users • employees • the wider community or groups of people, particularly where there are areas of known inequalities? <p>All of the above</p> <p>Will the policy or decision influence how organisations operate?</p> <p>Yes at EFDC</p>
2.4	<p>Will the policy or decision involve substantial changes in resources?</p> <p>No</p>
2.5	<p>Is this policy or decision associated with any of the Council's other policies and how, if applicable, does the proposed policy support corporate outcomes?</p> <p>The Equality Policy is a corporate policy and supports the vision for equality and inclusion articulated in the Corporate Plan. The proposed Equality Objectives will be embedded across all strategic policies and plans.</p>

Section 3: Evidence/data about the user population and consultation¹

As a minimum you must consider what is known about the population likely to be affected which will support your understanding of the impact of the policy, eg service uptake/usage, customer satisfaction surveys, staffing data, performance data, research information (national, regional and local data sources).

3.1	<p>What does the information tell you about those groups identified?</p> <p>A range of evidence and data on protected characteristics under the Equality Act and socio-economic disadvantage was used to develop the Equality Policy. The information highlighted the opportunity to improve work on equality and inclusion and the potential for the positive impact of the Policy on groups with protected characteristics.</p>
3.2	<p>Have you consulted or involved those groups that are likely to be affected by the policy or decision you want to implement? If so, what were their views and how have their views influenced your decision?</p> <p>There is no statutory duty to consult on Equality Objectives. Many councils do, however, consult on their Equality Objectives to ensure full transparency and provide an opportunity for community engagement. Advice is therefore sought on whether to undertake public consultation.</p>
3.3	<p>If you have not consulted or engaged with communities that are likely to be affected by the policy or decision, give details about when you intend to carry out consultation or provide reasons for why you feel this is not necessary:</p> <p>See above</p>

Section 4: Impact of policy or decision

Use this section to assess any potential impact on equality groups based on what you now know.

This assessment has not highlighted any negative impact on protected groups. Instead, it shows the potential for positive impact across all protected characteristics

Description of impact	Nature of impact Positive, neutral, adverse (explain why)	Extent of impact Low, medium, high (use L, M or H)
Age	Positive. We will ensure that we understand the needs and experiences of our communities, including older and younger people. Our Equality Objectives will impact positively on a range of age groups.	Existing Equality Impact Assessments will be combined into an overarching, cumulative, Corporate Equality Impact Assessment Framework. Baseline measures will be set to determine the current impact of our work on all protected characteristics under the Equality Act (L,M,H) and progress measured against baseline.
Disability	Positive. We will address the broad inequalities faced by disabled people within our communities and workforce. Our Equality Objectives will impact positively on disabled people.	
Sex	Positive we will ensure that no-one is discriminated against because of their sex.	
Gender reassignment	Positive. We aim to promote equality for all Trans people across our service users, residents and workforce.	
Marriage/civil partnership	Positive. We aim to promote policies and ways of working that advance equality for people who are married or in a civil partnership in the workplace.	
Pregnancy/maternity	Positive. We will protect against any unfavourable treatment on the grounds of pregnancy or maternity.	
Race	Positive. We will ensure that our policies and practices do not discriminate or disadvantage anyone on the grounds of race. Our Equality Objectives will impact positively on race.	
Religion/belief	Positive. We will ensure that our policies and practices do not discriminate on the grounds of religion or belief. We will consider the interests and concerns of all religious and non-religious groups.	

Sexual orientation	Positive. We aim to protect LGB people from being discriminated against or treated unfairly across all areas of our work.	
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Section 5: Conclusion

		Tick Yes/No as appropriate	
5.1	Does the EqlA in Section 4 indicate that the policy or decision would have a medium or high adverse impact on one or more equality groups?	No X	
			If ' YES ', use the action plan at Section 6 to describe the adverse impacts and what mitigating actions you could put in place.

Section 6: Action plan to address and monitor adverse impacts

What are the potential adverse impacts?	What are the mitigating actions?	Date they will be achieved.

Section 7: Sign off

**I confirm that this initial analysis has been completed appropriately.
(A typed signature is sufficient.)**

Signature of Head of Service: Andrew Small

Date: 26/08/2021

Signature of person completing the EqIA: Lorraine Miles

Date: 26/08/2021

Advice

Keep your director informed of all equality & diversity issues. We recommend that you forward a copy of every EqIA you undertake to the director responsible for the service area. Retain a copy of this EqIA for your records. If this EqIA relates to a continuing project, ensure this document is kept under review and updated, eg after a consultation has been undertaken.