

Epping Forest District Council

Equality Scheme 2012-2016



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1. Foreword

To be completed by portfolio holder

Communicating with you is very important to us. Our aim is to provide as much information as possible and to provide it effectively and efficiently in a range of different ways. We can provide most Council documents in alternative formats, for example, other languages, large print, Braille, or audio, and use interpretation and translation services including British Sign Language, to help communication with customers where necessary.

A wide range of information can be found on our website including key documents and plans, application forms for services, and press releases. To provide greater transparency around Council decision making, many meetings are webcast and made available on our website. We are currently renewing the website to make it easier to use and more accessible to people with visual and hearing impairment. The Council's magazine, *The Forester*, providing news and information about services is published three times a year and delivered to all households in the district.

We welcome your views and comments and our contact details are on pages 36 and 38.

2. Introduction

What do we mean by equality?

Equality is about treating individuals fairly and equally and no less favorably specific to their needs. An equal society is one where everyone can participate and has the opportunity to fulfill their potential. The Council strives to deliver equality for all our communities and employees and deliver services which are personal and fair.

Epping Forest District Council is proud to serve the people who live, work, study and do business in the district and we aim to provide a high standard of service which is accessible and fair to all. We are aware of our role as Community Leader and our responsibility to promote good community relations and help to develop the district where our residents share the values of fairness and respect. Reducing inequality is therefore an integral part of Council business and we will treat everyone equally and fairly according to their needs. We are actively seeking to narrow the gap between those people who are disadvantaged in comparison to their peers. As an employer, the Council promotes equality of opportunity for all employees and wants to be recognised as an employer of choice, attracting and retaining high calibre people able to provide excellent services.

We recognise we cannot do this alone and that we need to work with our employees, partners and service users to ensure positive outcomes are achieved. We also recognise the need for tangible results, therefore our performance is monitored.

This Equality Scheme sets out our four year commitment to improving access to services, promoting good community relations, and reducing inequalities. Our Equality Objectives identify areas of improvement and focus upon improving access to services for vulnerable people and, in doing so, enhancing the life chances of the most disadvantaged.

The scheme replaces our existing Disability, Race and Gender Equality Schemes and provides a summary of our achievements to date against our Equality Framework for Local Government Action Plan. The progress to date provides a firm foundation for the Council to set more challenging goals and to ensure that we appropriately meet all the obligations placed on us by equality legislation. This Scheme and Action Plan are considered to be living documents and therefore subject to regular review and update.

We have a vision to make our District a great place to live, work, study and do business. To achieve this, we must recognise and welcome the diversity of our local communities and be sensitive to the particular needs that arise from that diversity. We must make sure that all our services are fair and accessible to everyone, and therefore helping people to be the best that they can be.

3. Statement of Commitment to Equality

Short Statement:

'Epping Forest District Council will treat everyone equally and fairly according to their needs'

Full Statement:

Epping Forest District Council is committed to ensuring that all individuals and groups are treated with respect and are valued equally

We will endeavour to make our services accessible to everyone, irrespective of the protected characteristics of age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation

We will endeavour to eliminate discrimination against people who are perceived to have, or are associated with someone who has a protected characteristic

We will consult and involve relevant people and groups from our community where appropriate in the design and monitoring of our services

We will collect information about our customers to ensure our services are accessible and provided equally to all in our community

Where necessary we will take positive action through our service provision to meet the particular needs of disadvantaged groups in our community

We will endeavour to promote understanding and good relations between communities

We will consider taking positive action to address under-representation and promote diversity in our workforce profile

We will publish sufficient information to demonstrate how we have complied with the general equality duty

We will use our procurement opportunities to drive equality, for example, by working proactively with key suppliers to promote equality and positive practices in their operations and in the provision of services

We will ensure appropriate resources are available to meet our statutory equality responsibilities

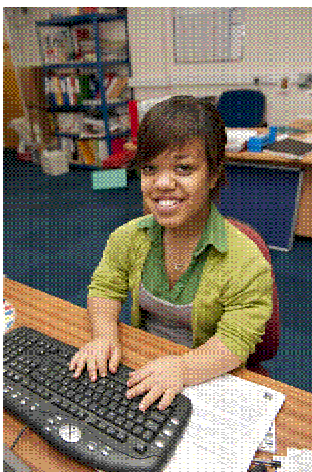
We will make sure that appropriate equality and diversity training is provided for all Members and staff of the Council.

4. Why an Equality Scheme?

Whilst there is no legal requirement that the Council produce an equality scheme, it is a useful approach for organising and communicating the equality plans and information.

This is the first integrated equality scheme to be produced by Epping Forest District Council and it builds upon and replaces our earlier Race Equality Scheme 2007, our Disability Scheme 2007 and our Gender Equality Scheme 2007. The Equality Scheme brings together under one overarching scheme our equality and diversity commitments and goals and is a strategy and set of objectives and associated actions to promote equality in the Council both as an employer and a service provider.

This Equality Scheme acknowledges that inequality and prejudice can be perceived and experienced on multiple levels and that the separation of issues around personal characteristics eg disability or race, can lead to an artificial understanding of need. An equality scheme aims to place the individual at the centre of our understanding and approach to equality and diversity rather than the personal characteristic. Therefore this Scheme is not constructed around the characteristics protected under legislation, but instead considers the individual and their environment.



Documents related to the Scheme include:

- the Equality Policy 2011 which sets out the Council's commitment to equality, and outlines how we will embed equality into our service roles and responsibilities;
- the Equality in Employment Policy 2011 for employees, which sets out how we will embed equality into our employment practices; and
- the Annual Equality Report for residents and customers setting out our progress towards meeting our Equality Objectives

Photograph reproduced courtesy Office of Disability issues

5. What does the Council have to do?

Legislation relating to equality and diversity has been in existence for many years and the Council has a long history of working to achieve a more equal environment for our residents and employees. Recently much of the existing equality legislation was brought together and strengthened under the Equality Act 2010. This all inclusive framework gives the same rights and protection to all groups covered in previous legislation, standardising and harmonising equality law.

Whilst this Scheme relates to our responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010, there is other legislation which the Council has to comply with, for example The Human Rights Act 1998 which gives effect to rights and freedoms under the European Convention on Human Rights; and the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 under which we have a duty to make reasonable adjustments to our facilities to allow disabled people to be able to access them.

A protected characteristic is:

- Age
- Disability
- Faith or belief
- Gender
- Gender reassignment
- Marriage and civil partnership (unlawful discrimination only)
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Race
- Sexual orientation

The Equality Act 2010 places a number of responsibilities and requirements on the Council.

We have a *General Equality Duty* to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation
- Advance equality of opportunity between those who share a protected characteristic and those who do not
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not

The purpose of the general equality duty is to integrate consideration of equality and good relations into our day-to-day business.

It entails giving appropriate weight and priority to the need to:

- Remove or minimise disadvantages
- Take steps to meet the needs of people with protected characteristics
- Encourage people with protected characteristics to participate in public life

We also have *specific duties* to:

- Publish information to show that we are complying with our duties and to show how much progress we have made
- Carry out equality analysis on our services using information about those services and the views and experiences of customers who use those services (engagement)
- Prepare and publish Equality Objectives which can meet one of more aims of the general duty

6. The Epping Forest District - a diverse area

The Epping Forest District is culturally and socially diverse, and covers 131 square miles made up of a contrasting mixture of urban and rural life. The district has six main centres of population (Buckhurst Hill, Chigwell, Epping, Loughton, Chipping Ongar and Waltham Abbey) and numerous villages but no natural centre. Approximately half of the 123,900 residents live in the areas comprising 5.2% of the district close to the boundary with London whilst the remainder live in a mixture of market towns such as Epping and Chipping Ongar, large villages such as Sheering, Theydon Bois and Nazeing or in small rural hamlets such as the Lavers.



The Epping Forest District - a diverse area

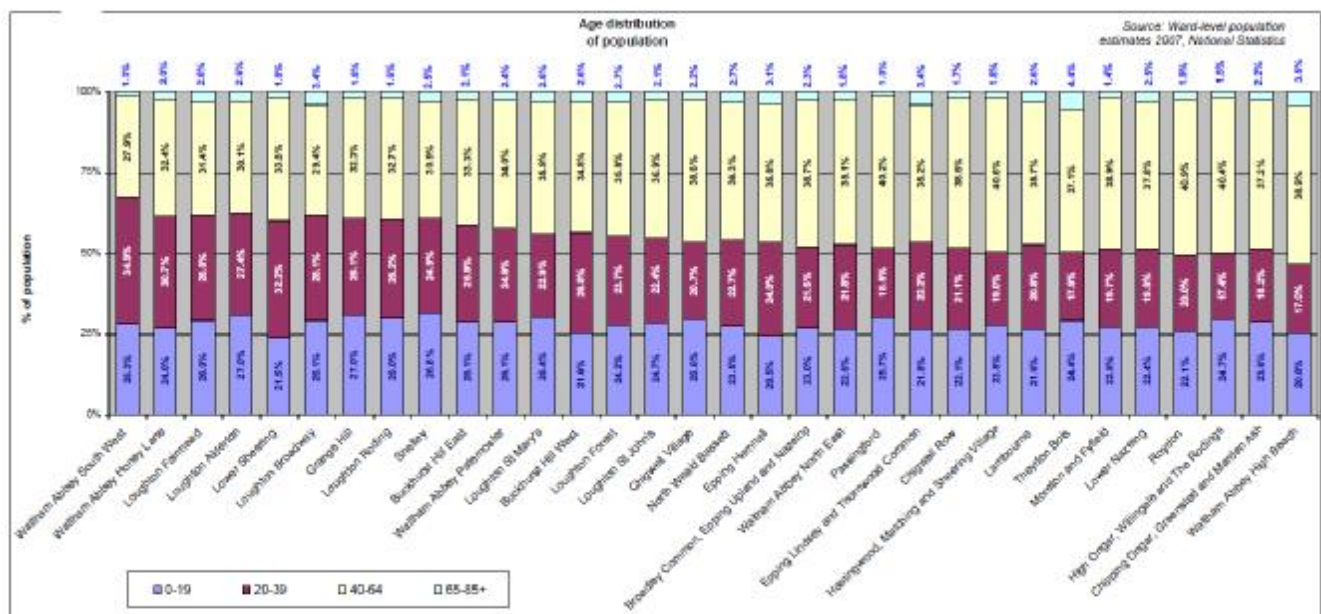
Gender

Based on 2008 figures, 51.25% of the population of the district are female and 48.75% are male.

Age

The population is ageing, with the 2015 age projections showing a increase in the higher age bands and a relatively significant decrease in the age range of 35-44.

Age distribution of population



This graph shows the age split of the population as at the last Census (2001). Wards are not listed alphabetically, but are arranged from those with the 'youngest' population on the left, to the 'oldest' population on the right.

While many of the wards are very similar, there is a marked difference between the 'youngest' and 'oldest' wards.

Waltham Abbey South West is the 'youngest', with just over 60% of its population being under 40 years of age. Waltham Abbey High Beach is the 'oldest' ward, with almost 75% of its population being over the age of 40.

Black and multi ethnic community

The district has one of the highest number of Black and Multi Ethnic (BME) (which is defined as anything other than white British) residents in Essex, and it is estimated that over 10% of the residents of the district belong to BME groups. The wards with the highest BME populations are Chigwell Row, Chigwell Village, Grange Hill, Buckhurst Hill West and Loughton Forest, where the two largest BME groups are White Irish and other White, and Asian and Asian British. The district has one of the largest traveller populations in Essex, (almost 15% of the total for the county), with around 90% of caravans being stationed on authorised sites with planning permission.

Sexual orientation

Statistics concerning sexual orientation are not available locally. However ONS statistics place adults identifying as lesbian, gay or bi-sexual at 1-2% of the adult population (ONS Measuring Sexual Identity: An Evaluation Report 2010).

The Epping Forest District - a diverse area

Disability

The 2001 census showed 30% of households in the district as reporting having at least one person with a limiting long-term illness, health problem or disability which limited their daily activities or the work they can do, including problems due to old age, which was slightly less than the Essex average of 32%. The Lambourne, Loughton Alderton, Loughton Broadway and Paternoster wards reported higher levels than the district average. Data relating to disability benefits is another indicator of the number of people with a disability. In August 2008 Waltham Abbey and Loughton had the highest numbers of residents claiming Disability Living Allowance (DLA) within the district overall, with Waltham Abbey having 23% and Loughton having 25% (Source ONS neighbourhood statistics).

Social Housing and Homelessness

Currently the district has 54,000 homes with 85% in the private sector, 12% Council and 3% owned by social landlords. Around 70% of the Council's properties are in the urban areas of Buckhurst Hill, Chigwell, Loughton and Waltham Abbey. The Council has a Homeless Persons Hostel and works in partnership with East Thames Group to provide 'move on' accommodation for victims of domestic violence.

At March 2011, 5392 households were on the Council's Housing Register of people who have applied for social housing, or to be nominated for housing association accommodation, an increase of around 500 over the previous year. The district has slightly higher than the regional average for homelessness acceptances.

Migrant workers

In 2007 the district had the third highest level of migrant workers (plus dependents registered to work through the Worker Registration Scheme) in Essex, comprising 0.71% of the population of the district between May 2004 and June 2007. The significant majority of migrant workers come from Poland, Lithuania and Slovakia.

Wealth and disadvantage

The district is considered to be relatively affluent and unemployment is lower than the national average, however some of the larger towns (including Loughton and Waltham Abbey) have pockets of deprivation where population groups are concentrated in high numbers. In August 2010 the district had 8290 people of working age claiming benefits (defined as people in receipt of Job Seeker's Allowance or Incapacity Benefits, Lone Parents and others on Income Related Benefits), 14% of which were lone parent households (ONS Neighbourhood Statistics Benefits Data: Working Age Client Group).



7. Context for our equality work



How we are organised

We have implemented a clear structure to identify responsibilities for equality work:

Executive responsibility for equality lies with the Leisure and Wellbeing Portfolio Holder, the Deputy Chief Executive has operational responsibility, and Directors have day to day responsibility.

The Corporate Equality Working Group has responsibility for the direction and progress of all equality work and is supported by the Staff Equality Group which is open to all staff employed by the Council. The Performance Improvement Unit carries out appropriate activities to meet the Council's equality duties.

Union representatives and Councillors sit on the Joint Consultative Committee and we consult with them on equality practices relating to staff. We report progress on equality work to the Finance and Performance Management Scrutiny Panel.

All employees have a duty to comply with legislation and codes of practice as well as act in the spirit of them.

How the Scheme fits into Organisational Aims and Objectives:

We set aims and objectives to focus and direct our work taking into account local and national priorities and the priorities of our residents and our partners.

We want the Council to be high-performing and deliver top-quality and cost effective services, ensuring that the views and priorities of our service users are integral to all that we do.

We want the Council to be innovative and transparent, and provide community leadership to the people of the district.

These Council aims and objectives are reflected throughout this Scheme ensuring a co-ordinated approach to the overarching themes of community engagement, community leadership and community development.

Context for our equality work - Data

Data

We use a wide range of data and information to determine the Council's priorities, help us identify and set corporate and service aims and objectives, and to improve services. This data could be collected by the government, by our partners, or by ourselves. Data and information has been used to inform work already undertaken to progress equality, and the knowledge gained from that work will be considered along with more recent data to identify four year equality objectives.

We use some of this data to plan services:

- Indices of Multiple Deprivation
- Office of National Statistics data
- National indicators and targets
- Health profiles
- Compliments and complaints data
- Customer Impact Assessment data
- Service user profiles
- Customer consultation
- Customer service feedback
- Workforce Monitoring Information
- Customer monitoring data
- Employee surveys

Data used to target CCTV:

Detailed crime and anti-social behaviour pattern analysis and neighbourhood statistics were used to evaluate existing Closed Circuit Television (CCTV) provision in Debden Broadway and to assist in the decision whether or not to install additional systems. The analysis identified hotspots and peak times for crime and anti-social behaviour and suggested where to direct CCTV for maximum benefit



Context for our equality work - Working in partnership

Partnership working

The Council works effectively with its partners to develop cross-cutting initiatives, deliver service improvement and reduce costs wherever possible. Partnerships are regarded as an effective way of enhancing service provision or of providing facilities where none currently exist. The commitment to working in partnership is reflected in the Council's key objectives by a commitment to work in partnership with Essex County Council and other statutory and voluntary agencies to ensure the effectiveness of local arrangements and services to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and young people. For more information on partnership working see pages 19-20.

Context for our Equality work - Equality Framework for Local Government

The Equality Framework for Local Government is an equality focussed benchmarking and performance management tool against which the Council aligns its equality related work and measures its progress. This progress is reported to Members of the Council via a formal Performance Indicator.

The Framework focuses on five key areas:

- Knowing your community and data mapping
- Place shaping, leadership, partnership and organisational commitment
- Community engagement and satisfaction
- Responsive services and customer care
- Modern and diverse workforce

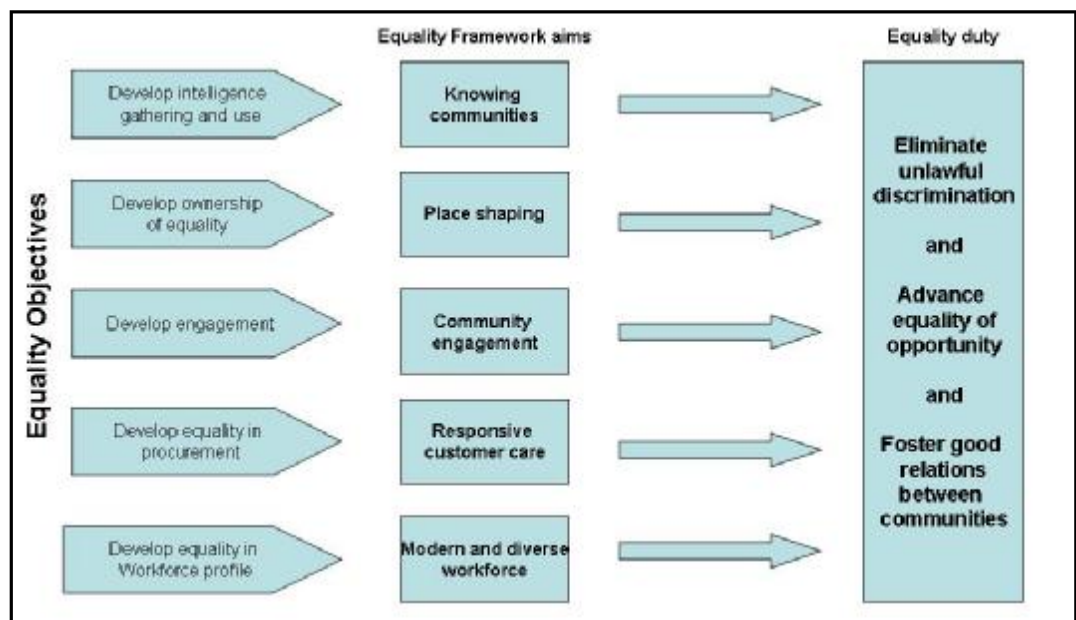


The Framework has three levels of accreditation: Developing, Achieving, and Excellent. The Council is currently at the Developing level and working towards Achieving. In March 2010 we undertook an informal peer review of our progress by an external independent consultant. The conclusion of the review was:

“...it is the view that Epping Forest District Council is further along its journey towards being assessed as an “achieving authority” that it gives itself credit for”

In view of current cost pressures we have decided against applying for formal accreditation to the Achieving Level of the Framework. However we will continue to progress our equality related work in line with the Framework by ensuring our Equality Objectives are aligned with the key areas of the Framework.

This chart shows how our Equality Objectives are linked to the aims of the Equality Framework and meet the aims of the Equality Duty. For more information about Equality Objectives see pages 30-35



8. Our Approach to our equality work



In planning and organising our equality related work we have taken the following into account:

- The requirements of our equality duties
- Our progress so far
- Guidance on our equality duties by the Equality and Human Rights Commission
- Our working practices and corporate aims and objectives
- Best practice in delivering greater improvements to equality and diversity
- Relevant equality and diversity case law
- The requirements of the Equality Framework for Local Government
- Information and data on our customers, communities and employees
- Our commitment to Partnership working

analysis commissioning commitment communities customers data
 discrimination diversity employees engagement equality fairness
 information involvement members monitoring objectives opportunity partnerships planning
 procurement publishing reporting scrutiny services staff training understanding

Our approach includes:

- Equality screening and analysis of our activities
- Collecting and publishing equality information
- Engaging with our communities, outreach work and community development
- Working with Partners
- How we commission and procure goods and services
- Our business planning and reporting arrangements
- Monitoring of customers, employees and services
- Equality training for employees and Councillors
- The development of equality objectives
- The use of data and information to improve the equality of our services
- Scrutiny arrangements



9. How we meet our equality duties - Equality screening and analysis

We analyse the effect of our activities on all protected groups to assess how they impact on people and how the activities help us to meet our equality duties. Whilst our equality duties apply to everything we do, not all our activities are relevant to all the aims of the duty or to all protected groups. We screen all existing activities every three years to determine their relevance to our equality duties and assess their level of priority. We carry out equality analysis via a Customer Impact Assessment according to a three year schedule, on all activities which are assessed as relevant to equality. The Assessment includes a consideration of information available on the activity, for example customer feedback, and details of consultation and engagement undertaken with people who use the service. Potential equality improvements are identified and a report, and an associated Action Plan which is linked to service business planning arrangements, are produced. Progress against the schedule is monitored by the Corporate Equality Working Group and reported to the Finance and Performance Management Scrutiny Panel. We publish the assessments on the Council's website.



New policies or activities When we develop a new service or propose to make significant changes to existing services a Customer Impact Assessment is carried out before those changes are made or the service is brought in. This is to make sure that the equality impact on customers of new services or service changes are fully considered.

Equality and diversity training for staff and councillors

The equality duty involves generating a culture where equality issues are viewed as a matter for everyone and that everyone is aware of their obligations. We provide equality and diversity training for all our staff and councillors. Training is mandatory for all managers and all customer facing staff, and recommended for all other staff and for councillors. The training informs staff of the Council's approach to equalities issues and includes cross cultural communication and an understanding of prejudice, stereotyping and discrimination. Awareness raising sessions and workshop style support is available for all staff involved in carrying out equality analysis via Customer Impact Assessments. We are developing systems to monitor the uptake of equality and diversity training and developing e-learning systems to reduce the costs in providing training.



How we meet our equality duties - Engagement with our customers

Why we engage with our customers:

Engagement is the process of interacting with our customers and employees and can include a broad range of different activities from formal public consultations to direct engagement with people from different community groups.

We place great value on the views and priorities of all our customers and employees. Engagement can provide valuable information, particularly on groups for whom little other data or information is available, which we can add to the evidence base for Council decision making including setting our equality objectives.

Engagement with protected groups can help to identify needs and pinpoint where efforts can be best directed to reduce inequalities and foster good relations between communities. It can help us to design initiatives to meet needs and overcome barriers, and increase the sustainability and cost effectiveness of services by delivering services which meet particular needs.



Our approach to engagement:

The Council has a formal approach to consultation and engagement which is set out in a Consultation and Engagement Strategy. The Strategy ensures our engagement is focussed on Council priorities, is inclusive, cost-effective, and that results are acted upon wherever possible.

Consultation exercises are coordinated, and undertaken with partners wherever possible to make best use of resources and avoid consultation fatigue.

We will:

- Use the results of the engagement to inform our equality objectives
- Use consultation to fill gaps in our equality information
- Publish details of the engagement we have undertaken
- Publish the results of equality related consultation
- Ensure consultation is adequately resourced
- Ensure consultation is confidential
- Make it as accessible as possible

Reaching out:

Some people or groups can find it difficult or are unable to take up opportunities to engage with us. This could be because of disability, language or cultural difference, social expectations or financial constraints. People who may be hard to reach and engage may include homeless people, refugees, gypsies and travellers, people who live in rural areas, or people disengaged from society. We are imaginative in reaching out to people who may lack a voice in the district, for example we are working with a local lesbian, gay, bi-sexual and transgender (LGBT) voluntary group to undertake research and consultation on our behalf to find out the views and experiences of LGBT people in the district.

How we meet our equality duties - Engagement Groups



Staff Equality Group

We established and support a Staff Equality Group so that staff can help the Council to further develop equality for all its employees. The Staff Equality Group has worked with the Council on:

- A refurbishment of the Staff Recreation Room to improve its accessibility for disabled staff and visitors and to make it a more welcoming environment for all
- A Staff Equality Survey in 2009/10 to learn the views, experiences and perceptions of employees of the Council

Joint Consultative Committee

The Council has a formal arrangement for consultation with staff on employee related matters. The Joint Consultative Committee is made up of elected Councillors and employee trade union representatives and it considers any relevant matter relating to staff referred to it, including equality related matters.

The Disability Equality Involvement Group is supported by the Council. Its aims are to:

- Improve car parking and transport for people with disabilities
- Improve housing/building accessibility for people with disabilities
- Improve information for people with disabilities
- Raise awareness of disability

Some of the Group's achievements include:

- Obtaining an undertaking that the Lifetime Homes Standard will form part of the Local Development Framework for new homes
- Assisting us to identify a system for visually impaired people to manage their recycling
- Contributing to a training package for licensed taxi drivers
- Holding outreach events including Disability Aware? 2011, to raise awareness of the needs of disabled people and services and support available locally

Disability Aware? 2011

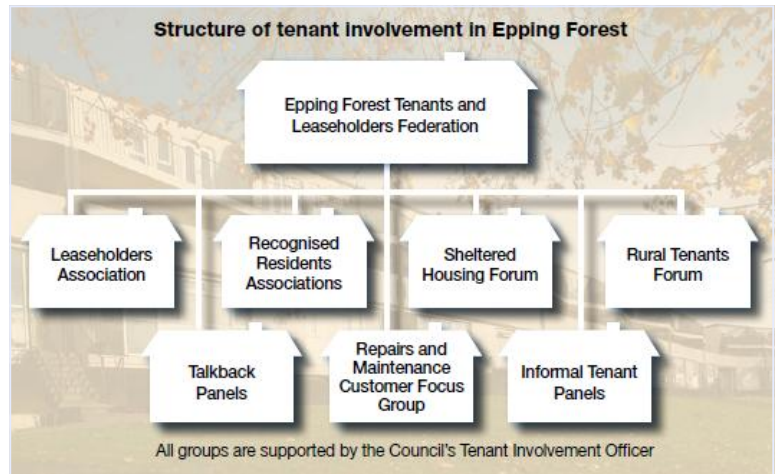


ü 86% of the Council employees feel positive about working for the Council and that they are being treated fairly by their manager

How we meet our equality duties - Engagement Groups

Involving our tenants

The Council is landlord to around 6500 residential properties and about 900 leasehold flats and maisonettes including sheltered accommodation for older residents, properties with adaptations for disabled people and many properties in rural areas. We have a long history of consulting and involving tenants and leaseholders in decisions on housing issues which affect them.



Involving private sector housing residents

We consult our Home Improvement Agency, Caring and Repairing in Epping Forest (C.A.R.E) Advisory Panel and C.A.R.E Service User Forum on our work with residents of private sector housing.

ü A dedicated Housing officer supports tenants with disabilities requiring adaptations to their homes. In 2010/11 we carried out disabled adaptations to 230 properties

The Epping Forest Youth Council was formed in 2007 in response to the Council's statutory responsibility to promote local democracy. The Youth Council is a body of democratically elected young people aged 13 - 19 who live in the district and are working together to give young people a voice in their communities. The Council provides officer support and resources to ensure the Youth Council can operate.

Priorities for the Youth Council include anti-social behaviour, the stereotyping of young people, and activities for young people. Their achievements include:

- Staging the 2010 Promoting Local Democracy Conference
- Completing a community mapping exercise of youth activities in the district
- Introducing a Youth Project of the Year Award scheme
- Obtaining funding for and producing a safety DVD and booklet for year 8 and 9 pupils called 'How safe are you?'



How we meet our equality duties - Working with our partners

We understand that working with partners on common issues can achieve more for communities than we can achieve alone. Working together brings many benefits, it simplifies the local working arrangements and can give more recognition to common interests. To make sure residents get the best services we are committed to working in partnership with other organisations including those from the voluntary sector, other councils, the business sector, the Police, Fire and Rescue, and Health Services. We will continue to work in partnership to achieve greater equality for our residents and service users through our service provision and leadership role in the district.

Voluntary Action Epping Forest (VAEF) provide support and encouragement for the development of voluntary groups and organisations in the district. The Council works in partnership with VAEF in support of the interests of the community by providing advice, financial support, and other assistance under a service level agreement providing a stable operating environment.

One Epping Forest, is a local strategic partnership of representatives of local councils, education, police, health services, and business and community groups. It exists to promote and enhance the economic, social and environmental well being of the community. At the core of the Partnership is the commitment to promoting equality and supporting community cohesion.

We are not limited by existing boundaries. The local strategic partnerships for Epping Forest, Harlow and Uttlesford have come together in the West Essex Partnership to examine new opportunities for joint working across existing boundaries, to promote the interests of West Essex and to better deliver on behalf of all our communities.

Through the Herts Essex Energy Partnership we work with other Councils across Hertfordshire and Essex to deliver free or discounted energy efficiency measures to eligible local residents

Some of our partners and partnerships



How we meet our equality duties - Working with our partners

The Council has a 'strategic housing role' which is an overarching responsibility to work in partnership with other organisations to undertake strategic decisions and activities around planning for future housing including affordable housing. We produce a Housing Strategy setting out how we meet our strategic housing role and undertake Strategic Housing Assessments to identify the requirement for affordable housing. Affordable housing and the provision of suitable accommodation for people with special needs are key Housing Objectives.

ü In 2010/11 we worked in partnership with local housing associations to increase the supply of affordable homes in the district by 151 new homes

ü We work with Occupational Therapists and Social Care to assist residents with disabilities to adapt their homes. In 2010/11 the Council spent £400,000 on disabled adaptations to Council homes

The Safer Communities Partnership is a partnership of Epping Forest District Council, Essex County Council, the health service, the police and probation services and the fire service with a remit to tackle crime and disorder and help create safer communities.

The Community Safety Partnership's Hate Incidents Panel looks at cases of hate crime within the district, and considers ways to tackle issues such as supporting victims, investigating incidents and taking action against perpetrators. For more information on Hate Crime and the work of the Hate Incidents Panel see pages 20 - 25

To learn more about the work of the Safer Communities Partnership see the Community section of the Council's website www.eppingforestdc.gov.uk

ü The Council worked with Essex County Council to raise awareness of domestic abuse through Domestic Abuse Awareness Week in November 2011, highlighting that domestic abuse can happen to anyone and that support is available

DOMESTIC ABUSE
Is home where
the hurt is?



National Domestic Violence Helpline 0808 2000 247
Mens Advice Line 0808 801 0327 Child Line 0800 1111

How we meet our equality duties - Safeguarding children and vulnerable adults

When we carry out our work we are required to have regard to safeguarding children and vulnerable adults and to promote the welfare of children in our district. Our staff, volunteers and contractors have different levels and types of contact with children and vulnerable adults who use our services, for example, the museum, playgrounds, parks, sports centres, holiday play-schemes, or our housing, homelessness, and community safety services. It is important our staff know how to provide safe environments for children and vulnerable adults, to recognise signs of abuse or neglect, and to know how to act upon their concerns about the welfare of a child or vulnerable adult. We have a role to raise awareness and promote the welfare of children and vulnerable adults and work with other public and voluntary services and organisations to safeguard them from harm.

A vulnerable adult is any person aged 18yrs or over who is or may be in need of community care services by reason of mental, physical or learning disability, age or illness, and who is or may be unable to take care of themselves or unable to protect themselves against significant harm or serious exploitation.

The Corporate Safeguarding Group of representatives from our services where staff come into contact with children and vulnerable adults meets regularly to share information and address areas of concern. We also:

- Nominate senior officers with responsibility to lead our safeguarding work
- Implement policies which provide protection for children and vulnerable adults
- Carry out Criminal Records Bureau checks for relevant employee positions
- Use safe recruitment procedures for all posts and particularly those working with children, young people and vulnerable adults to protect them from harm
- Use a Common Assessment Framework to enable children and young people to access additional support where needed
- Undertake an annual audit of our staff to identify safeguarding training needs
- Ensure appropriate training is provided and taken up, and
- Make referrals to appropriate agencies where we suspect abuse or identify concerns

Our safeguarding work is coordinated with those of other agencies across Essex and in particular the Essex Safeguarding Boards for children and vulnerable adults to ensure the effectiveness of our work and to improve outcomes for children and vulnerable adults in the district



Our approach to safeguarding children and promoting the welfare of children has been recognised by the Essex Safeguarding Children Board as a good example of a corporate approach to our duty of care towards safeguarding children

How we meet our equality duties - Working with communities

In our role as community leader we are committed to building and promoting sustainable communities across the district based on social justice and mutual respect. We aim to remove barriers and enable people to participate in activities and processes which shape their lives. A dedicated Community Development Section delivers a range of initiatives to support the development of active, sustainable communities and enhance the quality of life, skills and opportunities, and to develop community cohesion.

5 key values shape our approach to working with communities:

- *Encouraging people to get involved*
- *Encouraging people to work together towards common goals*
- *Raising awareness of inequality and challenging discrimination*
- *Recognising and developing learning and skills*
- *Investing in the capacity of people and groups so change lasts*

We use government statistics and local research to focus our community development work in areas of greatest disadvantage. Mapping exercises are used to learn about the needs and aspirations of local residents, to identify gaps in service provision, and to identify potential initiatives and projects to meet those needs and aspirations.

Music at the Museum 'I love music', a musical exhibition covering popular music originating in Essex and the East of England, hosted by Epping Forest District Museum, saw local creative talent, Loughton Youth Project and Epping Forest Arts coming together to perform in various musical genres from indie and hip hop to folk and rock. 'I Love Elvis', a video documentary made by local disabled group, 'Artability' together with local band 'Reachback' was also screened at the event.

Case study...

Consultation with residents in Waltham Abbey showed that young people living on the Ninefields Estate in Waltham Abbey would benefit from diversionary activities.

'Taster' activity sessions were organised by the Community Development Team for 11-19yr olds living on the estate and in 2009 the "We Don't Do Bored" club was formed, managed by a local resident and supported by a coach from the Tottenham Hotspur Football Foundation. External funding was obtained to secure the Club's first 2years, and fund young people on the estate to work with a professional artist to produce a piece of sculpture for the front wall of the community building. A Steering Group of young people meet to plan future activity programmes and local volunteers provide help to make sure the Club is sustainable.

Reachback performing at 'I love Music'



How we meet our equality duties - Working with communities

We work with Communities to help to keep them safe by educating them on how to avoid becoming a victim of crime. Recent initiatives by the Safer Communities Partnership include the Crucial Crew and Reality Show projects aimed at young people aged 10-14 years to empower them to live safely in today's environment, and the Theatre Project for older people focussing on distraction burglary.

Young people and people with learning disabilities worked together on a project called 'Our House' designed to break down social barriers formed through fear, lack of knowledge and misconceptions from both groups. Loughton Youth Theatre and residents from Woodredon House for people with leaning disabilities, worked throughout the summer of 2010 to produce a body of impressive installations



and a site-specific performance within the grounds of Woodredon House



Older people, young people and people with disabilities came together in 'Makedo&mend', an arts project to recycle fashion, music and film from the '40's to create new and original work. The project which was designed to facilitate a crossover between generations in a meaningful way, was exhibited at Epping Forest Museum

'Zinc' is a 'disabled led' arts organisation based in the district working to promote the creativity, culture and heritage of disabled people and socially excluded groups for the benefit of all. Under a three year Service Level Agreement the Council provided £4529 to help Zinc provide arts for disabled people.

Community Grants

We award grants to organisations involved in providing community work and cultural or sporting activities to enable them to deliver successful services in the district. Priority is given to those groups or projects working in the following key areas:

- Children and young people
- Safer communities and domestic violence
- Environmental projects
- Elderly, disadvantaged or disabled people
- Encouraging a healthy lifestyle
- Supporting community development and involvement

In 2011 the Council granted £4235 to The Lambourne End Centre for Outdoor Learning, to replace worn out mountain bikes. The Centre, a registered charity, provides personal development experiences to young people including those who may be under achieving at school, be disabled, a carer, or have a history of offending. Cycling at the Centre provides health benefits from exercise, and increased confidence by learning to work in a team.

How we meet our equality duties - Hate Crime



Someone is a victim of a hate crime or incident if they are targeted because of their personal characteristics or perceived difference. Hate crime can include verbal abuse, threats, assault, intimidation, criminal damage or offensive graffiti and it can be targeted against whole communities as well as towards individuals, for example offensive graffiti in public places or acts of terrorism. Hate crime in the district is tackled by Safer Communities Partnership Hate Incident Panel which works with police, schools, local businesses, service providers, and housing providers to protect victims. Although it is widely recognised that hate crimes go unreported because of a lack of confidence they will be taken seriously, or for lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender people, they may want to keep their sexuality private, 101 incidents of hate crime were reported to the Hate Incident Panel in 2010/11.

The Council through the Safer Communities Partnership, works proactively with other agencies to raise confidence in hate crime reporting systems and to encourage people to come forward. For more information on the Safer Communities Partnership email safercommunities@eppingforestdc.gov.uk

Disability hate crime - For many disabled people harassment is a commonplace experience, and public authorities have an important role to play in recognising harassment and abuse of disabled people, taking action to prevent it and intervening when it does, and transforming the way disabled people are viewed, valued and included in society. We work with local disabled groups to host disability awareness raising events. And hate crime has recently been included in research undertaken by the Disability Equality Involvement Group to identify priorities for our disability equality related work.

Domestic Abuse can include violence and psychological and financial pressure. The Safer Communities Partnership works with the Domestic Violence Group to share information and develop actions around prevention, education and intervention.

Racially aggravated crime - There has been a decline of racially or religiously aggravated offences from 102 in 2009/10 to 86 in 2010/11. The district has some political representation by the British National Party. Violent extremism can be found throughout the political spectrum and in the current threat context some of our Muslim communities could be vulnerable to radicalising influences.



How we meet our equality duties - Combating Hate Crime

Offensive graffiti - we aim to remove offensive graffiti from all property regardless of ownership or responsibility within 3 days. Racist and discriminatory graffiti is photographed and passed to the police.

The Sanctuary Scheme seeks to upgrade security in a victims home by creating a 'safe room'. By creating a 'sanctuary' within the home, victims of domestic violence or hate crime experience less disruption to their family life and routines by being able to remain at home rather than move to a refuge. This and other homeless prevention measures have reduced homelessness as a result of domestic violence by 85% between 2005/6 and 2010/11.

We use the Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) approach to addressing the needs of victims of domestic violence. All organisations involved in supporting the victim of domestic violence get around the table and share information to prevent serious harm, develop a safety plan and put support in place as soon as possible.

Violent extremism - The Local Strategic Partnership provides a cross agency response to the threat of violent extremism and works closely with the Multi-Faith Forum. The Multi-Faith Forum brings communities together and includes representatives from the public, community and voluntary sectors, the faith community and local business.

Awareness raising outreach - We work with partners and local people to raise awareness of hate crime and promote greater understanding of the needs of different communities and to encourage victims to come forward and seek help:

- hate crime awareness formed part of Disability Aware? in May 2011. The event aimed to raise awareness of disability and provide information on services and support available locally for disabled people
- one of the themes of Essex Pride 2011 was same sex domestic violence. The Council worked with partners from the public, private and voluntary sector to celebrate lesbian, gay, bi-sexual and transgender diversity at this annual community event in Chelmsford
- in November 2011, the Council together with the Safer Communities Partnership released 4 white doves from the roof of the Civic Offices to symbolise the 4 people (3 women and 1 child) who died as a result of domestic violence in Essex since April 2011



How we meet our equality duties - Procurement

Procurement is the process of acquiring the goods, works and services we need in order to carry out the work of the Council. The procurement process starts with the identification of a need for a service, right through to the end of a contract or the end of the useful life of an asset. The Council spends around £30 million annually (excluding depreciation and employee costs) in providing services to our communities. This level of expenditure gives the Council a significant economic influence in the area, an influence which we will use to help improve equality for our communities.

In our procurement we aim to:

- *to achieve a robust and consistent approach to equality in the delivery of services*
- *to ensure suppliers are compliant with equality legislation throughout the life of the contract*

We are committed to working with key suppliers to promote positive practices.



Procurement efficiency

The Council is a member of the Essex Procurement Hub which provides expertise around all aspects of procurement to help us to be efficient when buying goods and services. The Hub also provides opportunities to work with other councils to achieve greater savings by increasing the concentration of spending power, and by the use of 'framework contracts' which set out the terms for future purchasing.

- ü When selecting suppliers we include an understanding of local issues, and an awareness of the local community in our list of considerations where appropriate



How we meet our equality duties - Procurement

Local trade

To support the local economy we make sure that local suppliers are considered in procurement activity and as far as possible we will use local traders in the supply of goods, works and services.

We are also working to remove barriers to encourage local suppliers, the voluntary sector and small and medium sized enterprises to bid for Council business.



Doing business with the Council...

We operate a supplier registration system for businesses interested in supplying goods, services and works to the Council.

Registering with the Procurement Agency for Essex provides a contract opportunity-to-business requirement matching service, and opportunities to increase the visibility of your products and services across Essex

See where we spend our income:

- We publish all expenditure over £500 on the Council's website, see www.eppingforestdc.gov.uk
- We publish all historic expenditure over £500 so comparison can be made between our expenditure and that of other public bodies of a similar size, see www.spotlightonspend.org.uk



Suppliers

All suppliers wishing to enter into a contract with the Council are required to provide a copy of their Equal Opportunities Policy and provide information about their compliance with equality related legislation. This information is used in the supplier evaluation process and the award of contracts. As our agents, our contractors are also required to comply with and ensure that its employees and agents comply with the Council's equality duties and policies.

- We spent £11.5 million with small and medium sized businesses in 2010/11
- 11% of our total expenditure in 2010/11 was spent with suppliers who had a registered address within the Epping Forest District
- We use a value threshold system to regulate our approach to purchasing to ensure contracts are awarded without discrimination

We recognise that we can improve our procurement practices in relation to equality by more closely monitoring our contracts with suppliers for effective equality working practices. We are aware that we need to be cautious that our requirements of the voluntary sector and small and medium sized companies should not be too onerous and serve as a disincentive. Guidance for staff involved in procurement activities and contract monitoring could be improved to ensure greater focus on equality.

How we meet our equality duties - Business Planning

The Council plans its business to ensure the overall aims and objectives of the Council are achieved. The Council uses a business planning framework to align its business, budget, and workforce planning and development processes. This helps us to focus on key priorities, manage performance, and ensure communication and consultation are on key priorities. Each of our directorates provide details of how they have contributed towards the achievement of the Council's corporate objectives and priorities in an annual Business Plan which also sets out the work Directorates will be undertaking towards those priorities and objectives.



Business Plans follow a prescribed structure and requirements for essential content which includes equality and diversity and our Equality Objectives. This places equality and diversity at the centre of the Council's business planning and monitoring arrangements and ensures that our equality duties are taken into account in the strategic stage of service planning. Equality objectives will be set every four years and revised at the intervening two year point in line with business planning time scales. Business Plans are developed in consultation with staff and are subject to approval by the Portfolio Holder having responsibility for the work of the directorate, thereby encouraging 'ownership' of the plan and commitment to its objectives at all levels of the Council. The results of equality analysis via the Customer Impact Assessment process is reported in the Business Plans together with progress against actions arising from the process. For more information on the Council's business and performance management contact the Performance Improvement Unit on performance@eppingforestdc.gov.uk

Monitoring and scrutiny of equality work

We monitor the equality related work across the Council to assess the extent to which it is meeting our equality duties and to identify how we can move beyond compliance to achieve excellence and best practice.

The Corporate Equality Working Group (CEWG) monitors equality related work to ensure consistency across services, and progress towards meeting corporate objectives. The CEWG reports progress and performance annually to the Finance and Performance Management Scrutiny Panel which scrutinises and reviews the Council's progress and performance with its equality related work.



How we meet our equality duties -

Monitoring data

Why we gather data on our customers and employees: We gather data about our customers to develop our understanding of the needs of our customers to make sure those services are based on sound information rather than assumptions or stereotypes. Knowing who uses our services and who does not helps us to provide services our customers want and to provide those services in the way customers want them. Providing services more efficiently will also help to reduce costs.

We gather information on our employees and potential employees to ensure our workforce profile reflects our community. Knowing who is working for us and who would like to work for us, helps us to ensure our employment and recruitment practices attract all sectors of our community and the best people to come and work with us.

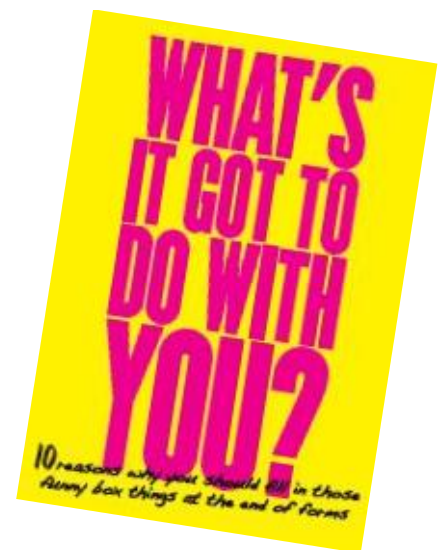
How we gather and manage the data: We ask our customers and staff to provide us with information about themselves so we have statistical data to assess which services are needed, where, and when. We only collect data which is useful to us and it is collected alongside the provision of services. We use a range of different methods to gather data including surveys, customer satisfaction feedback, application forms for services and jobs, and compliments and complaints monitoring data. Names and addresses are not stored with monitoring data and all data is used in ways which prevent individuals from being identified. All information is treated in the strictest confidence, is used only for the purposes for which it is given, and is destroyed once it is no longer required. If you choose not to supply this data it will not adversely affect the services you are entitled to receive from the Council.

We may ask you:

- Age
- If you have a disability
- Your faith or belief
- Gender and if you are transgender
- race
- Sexual orientation

We recognise that this information is personal. There is no obligation to provide equality monitoring data but it will help to plan and assess our services. For more information on why organisations like ours ask for this

data see this leaflet from Stonewall www.stonewall.org.uk or contact us on 01992 564042



We don't have all the information we need to ensure we understand our communities and to plan services. We don't have up to date and reliable data about the faith, the ethnicity, nor the sexual orientation of our residents. To fill these gaps in our information:

- we are working with voluntary sector group Essex Gay to establish a dialogue with lesbian, gay, bi-sexual and transgender people in the district and carry out a survey of their views
- we have made gathering and using equality intelligence in our service planning an Equality Objective (see page 31)

10. Equality Objectives

We have produced equality objectives to help us meet our equality duties and to bring about positive change. All our Equality Objectives can help us to meet one or more of the aims of the general equality duty - to eliminate unlawful discrimination, to advance equality of opportunity, or to foster good relations. The Objectives have been identified from evidence based on our customers or employees and analysis of our services, and will form the focus of our equality related work for the next 4 years. We have consulted on our objectives to make sure our customers agree they are areas where we can make the most difference to equality.

To maintain a co-ordinated, structured approach to our equality work, our Equality Objectives are structured in line with the Equality Framework for Local Government (EFLG) and to help us to achieve our aim to reach the Achieving Level of the Framework. The objectives are also intended to be challenging but achievable.

We have used a range of data and information to arrive at these objectives including statistical data, the results of consultations and surveys, the views of groups and individuals we engage with, the findings from equality analysis, the work being undertaken by our partners, and independent assessment by an external peer. The key messages from the results of the consultation on the equality objectives have been incorporated into the objectives to ensure we focus our efforts appropriately. A detailed Action Plan has been drawn up to make sure the Objectives are achieved. The Actions are specific and measurable and have clearly identified outcomes.



Equality Objective 1

Develop existing customer and employee equality intelligence gathering systems and the use of intelligence in service planning

This objective will help us meet the following aims of the General Equality duty:

- To eliminate unlawful discrimination
- To advance equality of opportunity
- To foster good relations

This objective will help us meet the following requirement of the Equality Framework for Local Government (EFLG):

- Knowing your communities and equality mapping

The evidence base for this objective is:

- It was identified in an external review of the Council's EFLG performance undertaken March 2010, as an area to develop

Engagement undertaken to identify objective:

We have consulted with the following groups to agree this objective:

- All residents and customers via an online survey
- Our employees via an online survey and the Staff Equality Group
- The Disability Equality Involvement Group
- The Corporate Equality Working Group
- The Leisure and Wellbeing Portfolio Holder
- Our Councillors
- The Council's Management Board
- Essex Gay

Next steps for the Equality Objectives:

Once the Equality Objectives are agreed, a set of Actions to meet this Objective will be developed by the Corporate Equality Working Group. These Actions will be specific, measurable and have timescales. We will report progress against these Actions in the annual Equality Report to The Finance and Performance Management Scrutiny Panel, and publish progress annually on the Council's website.

Equality Objective 2

Ensure ownership of equality by those within the Council in a position to shape services, for example Councillors and managers

This objective will help us meet the following aims of the General Equality duty:

- To eliminate unlawful discrimination
- To advance equality of opportunity
- To foster good relations

This objective will help us meet the following requirement of the Equality Framework for Local Government (EFLG):

- Place shaping, leadership, partnership and organisational development

Evidence base for this objective is:

- It was identified in an external review of the Council's EFLG performance undertaken March 2010, as an area to develop
- It was identified by the Disability Equality Involvement Group as an area to develop

Engagement undertaken to identify objective:

We have consulted with the following groups to agree this objective:

- All residents and customers via an online survey
- Our employees via an online survey and the Staff Equality Group
- The Disability Equality Involvement Group
- The Corporate Equality Working Group
- The Leisure and Wellbeing Portfolio Holder
- Our Councillors
- The Council's Management Board
- Essex Gay

Next steps for the Equality Objectives:

Once the Equality Objectives are agreed, a set of Actions to meet this Objective will be developed by the Corporate Equality Working Group. These Actions will be specific, measurable and have timescales. We will report progress against these Actions in the annual Equality Report to The Finance and Performance Management Scrutiny Panel, and publish progress annually on the Council's website.

Equality Objective 3

Develop engagement across all the protected equality groups.

The protected groups are:

Age	Disability	Faith or Belief
Gender	Gender Reassignment	Marriage and Civil Partnership
Pregnancy and Maternity	Race	Sexual Orientation

This objective will help us meet the following aims of the General Equality duty:

- To eliminate unlawful discrimination
- To advance equality of opportunity
- To foster good relations

This objective will help us meet the following requirement of the Equality Framework for Local Government (EFLG):

- Community engagement and satisfaction

Evidence base for this objective is:

- It was identified in an external review of the Council's EFLG performance undertaken March 2010, as an area to develop
-

Engagement undertaken to identify objective:

We have consulted with the following groups to agree this objective:

- All residents and customers via an online survey
- Our employees via an online survey and the Staff Equality Group
- The Disability Equality Involvement Group
- The Corporate Equality Working Group
- The Leisure and Wellbeing Portfolio Holder
- Our Councillors
- The Council's Management Board
- Essex Gay

Next steps for the Equality Objectives:

Once the Equality Objectives are agreed, a set of Actions to meet this Objective will be developed by the Corporate Equality Working Group. These Actions will be specific, measurable and have timescales. We will report progress against these Actions in the annual Equality Report to The Finance and Performance Management Scrutiny Panel, and publish progress annually on the Council's website.

Equality Objective 4

Ensure that the Council's culture, systems and working practices allow for the development of a management profile representative of its workforce as a whole

This objective will help us meet the following aims of the General Equality duty:

- To eliminate unlawful discrimination
- To advance equality of opportunity
- To foster good relations

This objective will help us meet the following requirement of the Equality Framework for Local Government (EFLG):

- To have a modern and diverse workforce

Evidence base for identification of objective:

- Staff profile
- Staff Equality Survey 2009/10
- Employee Survey 2011
- It was identified in an external review of the Council's EFLG performance undertaken March 2010, as an area to develop

Engagement undertaken to identify objective:

We have consulted with the following groups to agree this objective:

- All residents and customers via an online survey
- Our employees via an online survey and the Staff Equality Group
- The Disability Equality Involvement Group
- The Corporate Equality Working Group
- The Leisure and Wellbeing Portfolio Holder
- Our Councillors
- The Council's Management Board
- Essex Gay

Next steps for the Equality Objectives:

Once the Equality Objectives are agreed, a set of Actions to meet this Objective will be developed by the Corporate Equality Working Group. These Actions will be specific, measurable and have timescales. We will report progress against these Actions in the annual Equality Report to The Finance and Performance Management Scrutiny Panel, and publish progress annually on the Council's website.

Equality Objective 5

Procurement

The Council is currently considering whether it should adopt an Equality Objective in respect of its commissioning and procurement (purchasing activities). This section of the Equality Scheme will therefore be updated in due course.

11. Equality Objectives consultation

We carried out a consultation on our equality objectives with our customers and residents to find out whether they agreed that we had identified the objectives which could make the most difference to equality for our communities. The consultation was conducted via a survey where respondents were invited to state whether they agreed, neither agreed nor disagreed, or disagreed with the objective. The survey was conducted via the Council's website in February 2012 and publicised in the Epping Forest Guardian.

Whilst response levels to the consultation were relatively low the majority of respondents agreed with the objectives, with Objective 1 (Use of information) and 4 (The Council's working environment) receiving a higher level of agreement, 88% and 87% respectively.

Comments were invited and included views that more information about equality and the steps to be taken to meet the objectives would have helped respondents to complete the survey more fully. Concern was also expressed that equality objectives could create division within sections of the community. These comments will be considered in actions to deliver Objective 1 (Use of information) and Objective 3 (Engagement) as appropriate.

If you would like a copy of this Equality Scheme or Equality Objectives in any other format, for example in large print or another language, please contact Epping Forest District Council on 01992 564042 or email equality@eppingforestdc.gov.uk

12. Contact us about equality...

For more information about the Equality Scheme and any aspect of the Council's equality work, contact:



The Performance Improvement Unit, Epping Forest District Council, Civic Offices, 323 High Street, Epping, Essex, CM16 4BZ



Telephone: 01992 564042



Email: equality@eppingforestdc.gov.uk



www.eppingforestdc.gov.uk





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