

Corporate Equality Objectives

Report of the Community, Leisure and Tourism (including Diversity and Inclusion)
Portfolio Holder

Recommended:

That the Corporate Equality Objectives, set out at paragraph 3.1 of the report, be approved.

SUMMARY:

This report presents a set of new Corporate Equality Objectives for consideration.

1 Introduction

- 1.1 This report presents a new set of draft Corporate Equality Objectives for consideration. The Equality Objectives underpin the Council's work, including the Council's Corporate Plan priorities, contributing to the Council's vision to work collaboratively to deliver high quality services that support all communities in Test Valley to thrive.
- 1.2 The Council's current Equality Objectives were adopted in 2019 and were re-adopted in 2023. Following the Council's approval of the new Corporate Plan 2023-27 the opportunity has been taken to draft new Equality Objectives for consideration.

2 Background

- 2.1 The Equality Act 2010 section 149 sets out (amongst other things) the Public Sector Equality Duty ('PSED') this includes the following:

"Public Sector Equality Duty

- (1) A public Authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to –*

- a. eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Act;*
- b. advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;*
- c. foster good relations between persons who share a protected characteristic and persons who do not share it."*

- 2.2 Alongside this, under The Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties and Public Authorities) Regulations 2011, Councils are required to publish at least one equality objective no less than every four years. Section 5 of the Regulations provides as follows:

“Equality objectives

- (1) Each public authority listed in Schedule 2 to these Regulations must prepare and publish one or more objectives it thinks it should achieve to do the things mentioned in paragraphs (a) to (c) of section 149 (1) of the Equality Act.*
- (2) The objectives must be published –*
 - (a) not later than 30 March 2018; and*
 - (b) subsequently at intervals of not greater than four years beginning with the date of last publication.*
- (3) An objective published by a public authority in compliance with paragraph a. must be specific and measurable*

2.3 Originally adopted in 2019, the Council’s current equality objectives are:

- (a) Objective 1- To strengthen the Council’s evidence-led methodology for developing new policy and strategy by developing a suite of engagement tools and clear process that will enable the needs and views of people who share a protected characteristic to be understood.
- (b) Objective 2 – To strengthen the Council’s approach to understanding the experience people have of the services they receive. We will develop ways in which the views of people who share a protected characteristic are sought as part of reviewing how services are provided.

2.4 Following the launch of the 2023-27 Corporate Plan “A place for everyone – Supporting our communities to thrive” consideration has been given to revisiting and renewing those objectives in light of the new priorities of the new Corporate Plan.

2.5 A set of new draft Equality Objectives has been prepared which reflect the Council’s new priorities, as well as supporting delivery of its equality ambitions and duties.

3 Draft Equality Objectives:

3.1 Supported by engagement with staff and drawing upon the learning from the extensive community engagement undertaken to develop the Council’s corporate priorities, four new proposed objectives have been drafted. These are to:

- Understand who uses our services and how, so we can better provide for all.
- Promote opportunities for our communities, by working with partners to tackle wider inequalities.

- Empower our workforce so that they have the skills, behaviours & values to support our communities.
 - Champion different perspectives, experiences, and ideas.
- 3.2 The objectives have been drafted to support delivery of the Council's work, including the Corporate Plan 2023-2027 priority of 'Inclusion', to be inward and outward facing, accessible to the lay person, meaningful and measurable.
- 3.3 A comprehensive evidence base was used, including the Local Government Association's (LGA) Equality Framework for Local Government, and an analysis of the themes that emerged from the deliberative workshops with our communities to develop the Council's Corporate Plan.
- 3.4 The equality objectives have been developed in consultation with colleagues in the staff Equality Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) network to ensure a wide range of perspectives and critical challenge were included throughout the process.
- 3.5 Throughout the development of the draft objectives, it was noted that the opportunity existed to test the objectives more widely and to report delivery against the objectives and/or any other objective related developments under the 'Inclusion' priority of the Corporate Action Plan.

4 Corporate Objectives and Priorities

- 4.1 The Council is required to have at least one Equality Objective under the Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties and Public Authorities) Regulations.
- 4.2 Inclusion emerged as a key theme throughout the extensive consultation and engagement for the Corporate Plan and is now one of the five corporate priorities for 2023-27. The Equality Objectives will help the council in delivering against this priority and underpin the Council's longstanding commitments to empower its communities and ensure all voices are heard as part of our policy and service development.
- 4.3 The Council's Corporate Objectives and Priorities are as follows:
- 4.3.1 Sustainability – delivering lasting benefits for our communities.
 - 4.3.2 Connection – building on the identity, strengths, and ambitions of our communities.
 - 4.3.3 Environment – a greener borough for our communities.
 - 4.3.4 Inclusion - working together to create opportunities for our communities.
 - 4.3.5 Prosperity- economic growth that impacts positively on our communities.
- 4.4 The Equality, Diversity and Inclusion agenda touches on and underpins the effective fulfilment of each of the Council's Corporate Priorities and Objectives.

5 Consultations/Communications

- 5.1 The draft Equality Objectives have been developed using a detailed and thorough evidence base. This includes statistical data, a review of feedback from public consultation and engagement, LGA guidance and consultation with the Council's officer EDI network.
- 5.2 To develop the 2023-2027 Corporate Plan, the Council undertook a significant programme of public consultation and engagement. Over 1600 people were consulted with a variety of engagement methods, including a survey available online, engaging and surveying people attending local events, and the delivery of deliberative engagement workshops.

This engagement provided a detailed insight of what matters to local people to be gained and has informed the development of the Equality Objectives.

6 Options

- 6.1 The options available to Cabinet are:
- a. to approve the Equality Objectives;
 - b. to approve some other iteration of Equality Objectives; or
 - c. not approve the Equality Objectives

7 Option Appraisal

- 7.1 The Council is required to have at least Equality Objective under the Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties and Public Authorities) Regulations. It would be open to Cabinet to approve the draft Objectives contained in this report, to reject them or Cabinet could resolve to adopt some other form of Equality Objective/s. However, as set out in the preceding paragraphs, the draft objectives set out in this report have been drafted by professional officers informed by the findings of the significant community Corporate Plan engagement and after consultation with the Council's officer EDI network. It is for this reason that option a. above is the recommended option.

8 Resource Implications

- 8.1 There are no resource implications – monitoring of progress of the new objectives can be contained within existing budgets.

9 Risk Management

- 9.1 An evaluation of the risks indicate that no significant risks attach to the recommendation.

10 Legal Implications

- 10.1 The Council is required by law to prepare and publish one or more objectives it thinks it should achieve to do the things mentioned in paragraphs (a) to (c) of section 149 (1) of the Equality Act.

11 Equality Issues

- 11.1 The recommendation gives rise to no significant Equality, Diversity, or Inclusion concerns. Approval and publication of a new set of up-to-date, evidence-based objectives will help advance equality in all the Council's activities.

12 Conclusion

- 12.1 It is recommended that the draft Equality Objectives set out in this report are approved. If approved, the Objectives will be published, and they will become the Council's new formally adopted Equality Objectives.

<u>Background Papers (Local Government Act 1972 Section 100D)</u>			
None			
<u>Confidentiality:</u> It is considered that this report does not contain exempt information within the meaning of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended, and can be made public.			
No of Annexes:	None	File Ref:	N/A
(Portfolio: Community, Leisure and Tourism Community, Leisure and Tourism (including Diversity and Inclusion)) Councillor T Swain			
Officer:	Leoni Roberts/ Karen Dunn/ Salena Mulhere	Ext:	8134
Report to:	Cabinet	Date:	28 February 2024