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1. Introduction

The Councils are committed to providing a service and culture where equality, fairness and inclusion are integral to all we do. As a core principle sealed within our corporate plans, it threads through our decision making and practice. Additionally, we will uphold an open, reflective and responsive environment in which we learn and adapt to the needs and inequalities experienced by those accessing or working within our services.

Residents, visitors, staff and Councillors should feel safe, valued and treated fairly. Diversity within our communities and workforce can generate fresh ideas and invigorate our approach, supporting us to recognise where we can dismantle barriers and build an equitable service.

2. The Public Sector Equality Duty

The Councils are bound by the obligations set out in the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED), within the Equality Act 2010. The Act identifies 9 traits under which it is unlawful to discriminate or treat unfavourably. These are known as Protected Characteristics (or protected groups) and consist of:

- Religion or Belief
- Age
- Sexual Orientation
- Sex
- Disability
- Race
- Pregnancy and Maternity
- Gender Reassignment
- Marriage and Civil Partnership

Often referred to as the three aims or arms of the general equality duty, the PSED also requires the Councils to have 'due regard' (i.e. consideration for) the need to:

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

The Act explains that having 'due regard' for advancing equality involves:

- Removing or minimising disadvantages suffered by people due to their protected characteristics.
- Taking steps to meet the needs of people from protected groups where these are different from the needs of other people.

- Encouraging people from protected groups to participate in public life or in other activities where their participation is disproportionately low.

In the spirit of addressing broader inequalities and developing good practice, the Councils will recognise socio-economic deprivation (particularly the Councils' commitments to supporting residents through the cost-of-living crisis), digital exclusion, carer status and rurality as factors by which people can experience a lack of equity.

3. Ownership and delivery

The ethos and contents of this policy will be adhered to by all:

- Councillors
- Staff at all levels (permanent and temporary, including agency staff, apprentices and volunteers)

We will also seek assurance that the below apply values and practices in line with this policy

- Contractors and partners working on the Council's behalf; and
- Voluntary sector organisations funded by the Councils.

Corporate Responsibility: The respective Cabinets will each include a Member with portfolio to include Equality, Fairness and Inclusion (or suchlike title). In addition, the Head of Business, Planning and Performance will share responsibility for the Councils' obligations and aims, with specific tasks delegated to other elected members or staff.

Strategic and operational delivery: The Community Services Lead (CSL) is responsible for reviewing and implementing this policy, maintaining processes that support the Councils' compliance with the PSED and the wider implications as set out in the Equality Act 2010. This includes setting objectives every four years and publishing an annual progress report to this [webpage](#) which the CSL will maintain.

Human Resources: The Head of HR will ensure the Council complies with the Public Sector Equality Duty in relation to the recruitment, training, development and support of Council staff. This includes submitting gender pay gap information and producing staff equality monitoring figures annually.

This policy is supplemented by the Staff Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy.

Training

All staff complete mandatory OLLE training on Equality, Fairness and Inclusion as part of their induction, which is monitored by HR.

The Community Services Lead will deliver refresher training to teams in consultation with managers, and complete Equality, Fairness and Inclusion training sessions as part of Councillor induction.

Equality and Fairness Analyses

Teams are required to undertake an Equality and Fairness Analysis (EaFA) for all new projects and policies, as with Cabinet reports consisting of proposals that impact residents or staff.

For policy updates and Cabinet reports where there are no anticipated impacts linked to equality and fairness, staff should complete an Equality Screening.

Analyses and screening documents must be signed off by the Community Services Lead who will record centrally and ensure advice and support is available both on a case-by-case basis, with general guidance available on the Councils' intranet.

Engagement Groups

The Community Services Lead will support and facilitate the Equality and Fairness Stakeholder Group to be made up of external partners representing different communities and characteristics. Meetings will be held quarterly with alternate chairing by the Cabinet members with portfolio.

The purpose of the meetings is to consider proposals or policies which may have implication to equality and fairness, monitor the progress of the Councils' objectives and uphold a 'critical friend' role to the Councils' on issues of accessibility, equitable services, engagement and decision making.

The Councils' will continue to build and support relationships with different groups in order to engage authentically with residents on points of equity and inclusion.

Grant funding

In the design of any new Community Grants Programmes, the Councils will include criteria under which charities or initiatives with a focus on addressing inequality and boosting inclusion can apply.

Grant recipients will provide anonymised characteristic breakdowns as part of their monitoring reports; this will be built into the conditions of grant.

Equality Monitoring

The Councils will publish an anonymised staff equality profile annually, and fulfil its obligations to gender pay gap reporting.

An equality survey of Councillors will be undertaken every 4 years following local elections.

Current census data will be drawn upon and built into the EFI Analysis process.

Reporting from grant recipients will be analysed to understand where there is over/under representation in services.

Translation and interpretation

The Councils have a duty to make reasonable adjustments to enable residents to access and understand our services and functions. Information on how to arrange translations or book interpreters will be available on the staff intranet and will be maintained by the Community Services Lead.

Community Safety and Safeguarding

There is some natural cross over with areas of work focussed on Community Safety and Safeguarding, particularly around hate crimes and harassment, gender-based violence, youth perpetrated ASB and Prevent (extremism). The Strategy and Partnership Lead – Housing and Communities and the Community Services Lead have responsibility for Community Safety and Safeguarding respectively and will liaise to support a cohesive response to hate crime and discrimination on the basis of any protected characteristic. Through the lens of intersectionality and vulnerability not included in the Equality Act, we will seek flexible and targeted remedies in response to current or emerging issues.

Although misogyny is not recognised in law as a hate crime, the Councils will respond in line with those in place for defined hate crimes including racism and homophobia.

The councils' Safeguarding Policy and Domestic Abuse policy should be read in supplement of this policy.