

Huntingdonshire District Council

Single Equality Scheme

2010 to 2013

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We welcome and encourage any comments you may have about our Single Equality Scheme, this will help us to review and improve what we do.

Please contact us on the number above or email CRM_Policy@huntingdonshire.gov.uk

**More equality and diversity information is available on the District Council's web site:
<http://www.huntsdc.gov.uk/Community+and+People/Equality>**

Foreword

Welcome to Huntingdonshire District Council's Single Equality Scheme

Huntingdonshire District Council is committed to equality of opportunity in our approach to service delivery, employment and policy-making. We are committed to identifying, understanding and eliminating anything that prevents access to services, information and employment.

This Scheme shows how the Council will translate its legal duties into objectives and actions. It takes account of current equalities legislation relating to race, disability, gender, religion, sexuality and age and the Equality Framework for Local Government.



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ken Churchill'.

Councillor Ken James Churchill JP
Executive Councillor for Resources and Policy

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Section 1

1.1 Introduction

Huntingdonshire District Council is committed to equality of opportunity in our approach to policy-making, service delivery and employment. We are committed to identifying, understanding and eliminating anything that prevents access to services, information and employment. The Council believes that no person should be treated unfairly and is committed to eliminate all forms of discrimination (unfair treatment). Our Single Equality Scheme sets out the Council's aims and objectives for equality, and accompanying action plan sets out how the Council's commitment will be translated into action along with clear targets and timetable.

Equality is a key target for the Council. Growing Success, our Corporate Plan, stresses our commitment to achieve equality, diversity and inclusion. In July 2009 the Council was awarded Level 3 of the Equality Standard for Local Government, which recognised that we have put in place systems that support continuing improvement in the development of equality. We are now an 'Achieving Council'.

Equality Act 2010

The Equality Act was passed by Parliament in April 2010 and the majority of the new legislation is expected to come in to force in 2011. It creates a new 'Single Equality Duty' on public bodies to tackle discrimination, promote equality of opportunity and encourage good community relations. The new duty covers race, disability, gender, age, sexual orientation, gender reassignment and religion or belief, replacing the three existing, separate duties with a single, more effective framework. This will bring together the existing public sector equality duties of tackling discrimination and promoting equality for race, gender and disability so that the requirements do not vary between groups.

Why did we develop this scheme?

This Scheme has been prepared in response to the Equality Act 2010, which has two main purposes – to harmonise discrimination law, and to strengthen the law to support progress on equality. It combines our existing Corporate Equality Policy our Race Equality, Disability Equality and Gender Equality Schemes; and brings together our objectives across six equality strands of age, disability (which includes learning disability and mental health), gender, sexual orientation, religious belief and race.

There are many more elements to this new Act which will have an impact on communities and employers in Huntingdonshire, particular elements will impact Huntingdonshire District Council directly. A full analysis of the Act will be carried out to identify what actions are required, particularly the new Socio Economic Duty, which will consider how the Council can reduce inequalities relating to health, housing, employment, education, skills and income. Further information can be found in Appendix E

Race, Disability & Gender Equality Schemes

We have recently reviewed our Disability, Gender and Race Equality Schemes. Consultation was carried out as part of these reviews – internally within the Council, with our partner organisations and with local residents. This shaped our priorities in the action plan. The Disability, Gender and Race Equality duties and respective actions have been included within this new Single Equality Scheme; along with the consideration of the needs of people in terms of different religious beliefs; people of all ages; lesbian, gay and

bi-sexual people; transsexual people and those with gender identity issues when designing and delivering services.

How this Scheme is structured

This Scheme contains our objectives for delivering our vision for equality and diversity.

Section 2 provides a summary of diversity of the population in Huntingdonshire

Section 3 describes our approach to equality and diversity, and how we will work to embed equality and diversity issues across our services.

Section 4 outlines our commitments for equality and diversity – our individual objectives and the actions we will take to achieve them.

Section 5 shows how we will continue to monitor and review our success in meeting our aims, and how this Scheme will be reviewed.

Appendices

Appendix A – details our Action Plan 2010 to 2013

Appendix B – provides further details about Huntingdonshire in terms of population and different characteristics.

Appendix C – details the responsibility, monitoring and review of this Scheme

Appendix D - outlines the links with other policies and strategies that have shaped the Single Equality Scheme

Appendix E - describes the legislation that has shaped this Scheme

Appendix F – details the progress made with equality and diversity over the last three years

Appendix G – sets out the results from Equality Impact Assessments 2009 and 2010

Appendix H – details how we involved people in developing this Scheme

Section 2 – Huntingdonshire in Context

Huntingdonshire is a large district in North West Cambridgeshire, which covers an area of approximately 910 square kilometres (approximately 350 square miles). Huntingdonshire shares borders with Peterborough, Bedfordshire, Northamptonshire, and the Districts of Fenland, East Cambridgeshire and South Cambridgeshire. Around 165,200 people live in the district, with almost half of the population living in the four market towns of Huntingdon, Ramsey, St Ives and St Neots. A large proportion of Huntingdonshire is rural in character, with village settlements providing the main focus for community facilities outside the market towns. The 2001 Census showed that the district's population was 156,950 and this is estimated to have risen by more than 8,000 (around 5%) to mid-2008.

Cambridgeshire is one of the fastest growing areas of the country. This creates its own challenges of ensuring that new communities can integrate and develop effectively with existing residents. Recent years have seen an increase in people migrating into Cambridgeshire, both from within the UK and from abroad. The 2001 Census showed that 9 per cent of people living in the county were born outside the UK. Latest figures from the County Council's Research Group suggest that the figure was 11 per cent by 2006.

Overall we have a relatively low proportion of people from Black or Minority Ethnic background (BME) however estimates from the Mid-2007 Population on Ethnic Groups (experimental) suggests that White Other has increased to 4.9% from 3% (2001 Census) and Non White has increased to 6% from 2.85% (2001 Census).

Levels of deprivation or social exclusion are generally low. We know that generally:

- The local economy is strong
- Unemployment is low
- Educational attainment for pupils in Huntingdonshire is above the national average (based on pupils obtaining five or more GCSE's grades A*-C), although performance varies between schools
- Income of Huntingdonshire residents is above the national average however workplace earnings for jobs in the district are slightly below the national average
- Our houses are in a good condition
- There are relatively low levels of crime

More detailed information from the 2001 Census and other research about the population in the district in terms of age, disability, ethnicity, gender, religious belief and sexual identity can be found in Appendix B.

Section 3 – Our approach

We define equality and diversity as:

Equality – a fair society in which everyone can participate and is given the opportunity to achieve. Equality is backed by legislation addressing discrimination.

Diversity – is about improving how people can work together by valuing people’s differences and similarities.

The Council is subject to legislation relating to equality; both as an employer and as a service provider. This legislation governs the way we work, our employment policies and procedures and the way in which we deliver services. The legislation that has shaped this Scheme is set out in Appendix E.

The Council’s Vision

Growing Success, the Council’s Corporate Plan, includes a long term vision based on what local people have told us is important for them now and in the future, which is:

“Huntingdonshire is a place where current and future generations have a good quality of life and can:

- make the most of opportunities that come from living in a growing and developing district
- enjoy the benefits of continued economic success
- access suitable homes, jobs, services, shops, culture and leisure opportunities
- realise their full potential
- maintain the special character of our market towns, villages and countryside
- live in an environment that is safe and protected from the effects of climate change and where valuable natural resources are used wisely”.

The Council has identified a series of corporate aims, which, by working with partners, will support this vision. These are set out in Appendix D, along with details of links between the Single Equality Scheme and the Council’s other plans and strategies. We have divided the Single Equality Scheme objectives into five categories, these are:

- **Knowing your community and equality mapping**
- **Place shaping, leadership, partnership and organisational commitment**
- **Community engagement and satisfaction**
- **Responsive services and customer care**
- **A modern and diverse workforce**

These categories relate to the five performance areas within the Equality Framework for Local Government (a national tool for measuring progress) and reflect how we work internally, with our own workforce; and how we deliver our services to Huntingdonshire residents.

How we involved people in developing this scheme

We have asked a range of public and voluntary organisations, residents, and our employees for their views. We wanted to ensure that we involved individuals and organisations who were able to provide advice on the grounds of race, gender, disability,

religion and belief, sexuality and age equality issues. A summary of these views are available in Appendix H.

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Section 4 – Our objectives

Knowing our community and equality mapping

Understanding who our residents are and what their needs may be is vital if we are to identify, understand and eliminate all barriers that prevent access to services, information and employment.

We will:

- Use national and local data and work with community or voluntary organisations to increase our understanding of local need
- Where appropriate, services will monitor and evaluate available evidence about their customers
- Identify and address unmet needs and gaps in services where appropriate and where financial resources allow
- Identify and seek to address the stigma and discrimination experienced by excluded groups

Working with communities

The Council has organised drop-in sessions for migrant workers and people new to Huntingdonshire. The aim of these sessions is to support people to settle in the area, help them to integrate and make information available on opportunities and services that are available to them.

The Council has also supported the setting up of St Neots International Society. The aim of this group is to promote the increasing diversity of the community in St Neots, to provide information for residents and opportunities to meet other people through local events. For further details please contact the Priory Centre 01480 388922

Place shaping, leadership, partnership and organisational commitment,

Equality and diversity is central to everything that the Council does, we need to promote it, identify clear responsibilities and ensure we give thought to addressing issues across all 6 strands

We will:

- Work to achieve national standards through the Equality Framework for Local Government;
- Conduct an equality impact assessment each time the Council makes changes to an existing or develops a new policy, service or function and promote good practice throughout the Council;
- Use the Council's performance management framework to monitor performance against this Scheme and actions and targets that arise out of equality impact assessments; and
- Encourage our partners to adopt the same approach to equality via our Partnership Framework.

Working towards making Huntingdonshire District Council more of an 'employer of choice' for disabled people

As part of the Papworth Trusts' 'Try Something New' week, we organised for two of their service users to spend half a day shadowing our Director of Central Services in May 2010.

We have also organised work experience for Papworth Trust students on the Office Skills Programme to spend half a day with our Customer Services Team.

It is hoped that these are just the start of a longer term programme of activities which will enhance understanding within the council and provide opportunities for disabled people in Huntingdonshire to gain skills and get to know the Council better.

Community engagement and satisfaction

If we are to achieve our ambition to engage and involve our communities we must be open to change and improvement. We need to use different methods of communication and consultation to engage with different communities, individuals, employees and staff associations, in line with our Consultation & Engagement Strategy.

We will:

- Encourage equality and diversity to be considered as part of any consultation and engagement exercise to ensure that people can talk to us in different ways
- Use information from our Suggestions, Compliments and Complaints Policy
- Endeavour to engage with and support voluntary, community and charitable organisations and social enterprises where appropriate
- Take consultation into account when carrying out equality impact assessments
- Continue to support Neighbourhood Management

Have Your Say Event

Working with the Papworth Trust, a disability charity, we organised two 'Market Stall' events, the aim of which was to give the council an opportunity to engage with disabled people, their family or carers to find out how people accessed our buildings, our services or information about our services. We were able to establish how effective our services are, and helped us identify areas that needed improvement.

Gypsy/Traveller consultation

The Council is now consulting on a "long list" of potential sites which have come forward through its Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment. This involves a lot of consultation with local people and also with local Gypsies and Travellers. The new Coalition Government has indicated that it intends to end the targets for new pitches which were set out in the Regional Spatial Strategy, and that the number of pitches needed will be determined locally. The Council will use the results of the current consultation to inform the next stages of this project, which will also be informed by new guidance from the Government.

Responsive services and customer care

Services cannot be provided on a one-size-fits-all basis: it may be necessary to target particular groups, or to deliver services in a different way that is more appropriate to those groups. We need to ensure that our communities have access to and information about our services, and ensure that accessibility of services is considered at planning, design and delivery stages.

We will:

- Ensure that information about services is published widely and in ways that will help local people to use them
- Use the information from listening, consulting and engaging with our communities to plan and deliver services
- Use equality impact assessments to ensure that Council policies do not discriminate directly or indirectly against any groups in our community
- Make welfare rights information readily available (information about obtaining benefits)

Benefits advice

The Council has cross checked addresses where Housing Benefit was not being claimed but information indicated that the occupiers might qualify and has been able to contact residents to let them know that they may be eligible for benefit. Two benefit take up campaigns have taken place so far and new benefit claims have resulted.

A Housing and Benefit Officer is available at the St Ives and St Neots Customer Service Centre every Monday

Supporting Citizens Advice Bureau

The Council has provided an additional £34,000 over two years to the Huntingdonshire Citizens' Advice Bureaux. This is in addition to the £172,000 per year we already provide. The purpose of this additional funding was to support residents with debt, housing and benefits advice during the economic downturn.

A modern and diverse workforce

A diverse workforce can help make sure that all sections of the community see real improvements in the standard of the service they receive. A Council that reflects its customers will be in touch with those customers and make us more likely to deliver the right services.

We will:

- Recognise and promote the benefits of a diverse workforce
- Achieve the aims of the HR Equality of Opportunity Policy
- Develop our employees and Councillors to recognise and prevent discrimination and help them promote equality and diversity in our communities

Equality Training

The Council now provides a variety of equality & diversity training. We offer:

- A half day general equality & diversity awareness session
- Equality E-Learning
- Equality case study session
- Disability awareness

We have also worked with One Leisure to get a specific equality & diversity module included in a leisure customer care training course. One Leisure has carried out an employee survey to establish levels of knowledge and understanding of equality and diversity issues. This will help to target training.

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Section 5 – Responsibility, monitoring and review of this Scheme

Resources and responsibilities

All Councillors, employees and others who work on behalf of the Council have a duty or responsibility to implement the outcomes of this Scheme through the action plan.

Particular responsibilities are allocated to:

- Councillors
- Chief Executive
- Directors
- Services
- Employees
- Head of People, Performance & Partnerships
- Procurement (buying goods and services)
- Corporate Equality Steering Group

Monitoring and review of Single Equality Scheme

This Scheme will be reviewed fully every three years. The action plan is a 'live' document and can be updated with new actions at any point; however a formal review will take place on an annual basis. These reviews will be carried out by the corporate equality steering group. New legislative requirements will be incorporated and best practice recommendations considered at appropriate times.

Promotion of the Single Equality Scheme and action plan

- The full Scheme and a summary of it will be published and made available to all staff
- Upon request a summary document will be made available in appropriate formats
- External applicants for Council posts will be made aware of the Scheme and it will form part of their induction programme

Appendix A

Action Plan 2010/2013

| Action * actions included as a result of consultation | Responsibility | Target |
|--|-------------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Knowing your community and equality mapping | | |
| Continue to research the needs of people with a disability in terms of access to services and information about our services through consultation, engagement with service users (and non users) and analysis of local, regional and national reports* | Policy | On-going |
| Explore the possibility of creating a profile of LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender) population and Religion, Belief and non-Belief in Huntingdonshire | Policy | April 2011 |
| Continue to encourage corporate approach to monitoring and analysis of equality monitoring | Policy | 2011 |
| Analyse results of 2011 Census (available from 2013) and take appropriate action | Policy | 2013/14 |
| Explore the possibility of Cambridgeshire wide interpretation and translation contract | Policy | April 2011 |
| Continue to monitor take up of information requested in other languages or formats | Policy | On-going |
| Continue equality impact assessment of new or amended policies/ strategies/ services. Update performance management and service plans accordingly | All Heads of Service, COMT & Policy | April 2011 |
| Continue to engage in relevant partnerships to share good practice in addressing equality related issues across Cambridgeshire e.g. Cambridgeshire Equality & Diversity Officer Network, Huntingdonshire Diversity Forum | Policy | Report progress in 2011 |
| Positive activities to raise awareness in the district of equality & diversity issues (events, publicity etc) | Community Initiatives and Policy | April 2011 |
| Place shaping, leadership and organisational commitment | | |
| Consideration of becoming a Mindful Employer* | HR & Policy | April 2012 |
| Assessment and publication of results of equality impact assessments | Policy | September 2010 & April 2011 |
| Report on progress with race, disability, gender, sexual orientation, religious belief and age and actions within the Single Equality Scheme to Chief Officers, Overview & Scrutiny & Cabinet | Policy | September 2011 |
| Publication of reviewed gender and disability and race equality schemes (as part of the Single Equality Scheme in 2010) | Policy | September 2010 |
| Produce equality & diversity employee e-newsletters* | Policy | Four per year |
| Produce a case study/example template that can be completed by employees to help them | Policy | April 2011 |

| Action * actions included as a result of consultation | Responsibility | Target |
|---|--|----------------|
| understand how the service they provide contributes to equality & diversity and to help the Council to highlight its commitment* | | |
| Work towards confirmation of Achieving Council status (Equality Framework for Local Government) via a Peer Assessment in 2012. | Policy | September 2012 |
| Develop new actions within this Single Equality Scheme to meet the requirements of the new Equality Act 2010. | Policy | April 2011 |
| Publish guidelines for employees and partner organisations regarding the impact of the Equality Act 2010. In addition to this, produce summary advice sheet for local employers on equality & diversity/employee related information* | Policy & Economic Development | April 2011 |
| Community engagement and satisfaction | | |
| Continue to engage with Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) and other hard to engage groups (including older people) * | Community Initiatives & Policy | April 2011 |
| Support the development of community groups | Community Initiatives | April 2011 |
| Continue to support the development of Huntingdonshire Faith Forum | Community Initiatives | April 2011 |
| Research existing disability forums (including learning disability and mental ill health) within the area which can be approached for consultation & engagement on disability issues. | Policy | April 2011 |
| Monitor outcomes from Disability Equality Scheme review and Have Your Say event outcomes | Policy | April 2011 |
| Ensure evidence of change for the consultation and engagement with children and young people | Policy | April 2011 |
| Support the development of a children and young people 'friendly service' award | Policy | April 2011 |
| Continue with the Gypsy/Traveller consultation and engagement work to identify pitches locally | Planning | |
| Responsive services and customer care | | |
| Consider better signage and facilities within Council buildings with public access* | Headquarters Accommodation Group Customer Services Leisure Services | 2012 |
| Establish public access PC's at St Ives and St Neots | Customer Services Team | 2011 |
| Produce a simple easy to read guide to Council services | Policy | September 2010 |
| Publicity to improve access by getting wheelie bins off pavements* | Operations Division | April 2011 |

| Action * actions included as a result of consultation | Responsibility | Target |
|---|--|-------------------------------|
| Ensure clarity over role of district Council with regards to rural and accessible transport and conditions of pavements * | Policy | April 2011 |
| Ensure Huntingdon Shop Mobility is closely linked with Huntingdon town centre redevelopment.* | Planning & Community Initiatives | 2012 |
| Continue to support Papworth Trust work experience and shadowing placements* | Policy & Customer Services Team | April 2011 |
| Continue to support St Neots International Community Group | Community Initiatives (dependant on retaining present level of Government Grant) | April 2011 |
| Organise permanent volunteers for the Ramsey drop in sessions | Community Initiatives (dependant on retaining present level of Government Grant) | April 2011 |
| Promote and distribute the Moving Stories DVD | Community Initiatives (dependant on retaining present level of Government Grant) | April 2011 |
| Support the Junior PCSO scheme with diversity awareness sessions | Community Initiatives (dependant on retaining present level of Government Grant) | April 2011 |
| Support the development of the ESOL action plan for Huntingdonshire and be part of the delivery group | Community Initiatives (dependant on retaining present level of Government Grant) | April 2011 |
| Support anti social behaviour case workers with diversity advice and support | Community Initiatives | April 2011 |
| Continued promotion and support of Stop Hate UK | Community Initiatives | Report progress in April 2011 |
| Analysis of hate crime figures to determine if any actions are required | Community Initiatives & Policy | April 2011 |
| A modern and diverse workforce | | |
| Explore how the Council can support transsexual and transgender employees | HR & Policy | 2011 |
| Work with the county and other districts to | Policy | April 2011 |

| Action * actions included as a result of consultation | Responsibility | Target |
|--|-----------------------|---------------|
| explore feasibility of joint approach to LGBT employee network and LGBT countywide survey. | | |
| Analyse Equal Pay audit for equality issues. Set equality objectives where required | HR | April 2011 |
| Explore how best to include sexual orientation, religion and belief in HR employment monitoring | HR | 2011 |
| Continue to collect and analyse previous year's employment (equality monitoring) data to produce monitoring and analysis of workforce profiles by equality categories. Set equality objectives where required | HR | |
| Continue to build capacity amongst Council employees and Members through awareness training, information sharing sessions or newsletters. Identify employees who could receive specific disability awareness training. | HR and Policy | Annual review |
| Analyse equality training database to identify % of staff received training and create target % for next 3 years | HR & Policy | April 2011 |
| Promote all of the work life balance options | HR | 2011 |
| Improve disability disclosure amongst employees and Members. Consider 'hidden disabilities' training for managers or basic mental health awareness training for employees* | HR & Policy | 2011 |
| Work with the Richmond Fellowship to ensure that support for employees is available | Customer Services | 2011 |
| Carry out a Local Labour Market Assessment | HR & Policy | 2012 |
| Analysis of One Leisure employee survey on awareness of equality & diversity. Use findings to tailor equality & diversity training for One Leisure employees. | One Leisure | 2011 |