

**HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL**

**Title/Subject Matter:** Annual Equality Progress Report 2015

**Meeting/Date:** Overview & Scrutiny Social Well-Being Panel 5<sup>th</sup> January 2016  
Cabinet 21<sup>st</sup> January 2016

**Executive Portfolio:** Councillor Stephen Cawley Executive Councillor for Organisational Change and Development

**Report by:** Policy, Performance & Transformation Manager

**Ward(s) affected:** All

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**Executive Summary:**

The purpose of this report is to provide an update on progress with the Council's equality objectives and to propose a more proportionate and effective response to Council's Public Sector Equality Duty.

**Recommendation(s):**

It is recommended that the Cabinet adopts equality objectives and actions that are more relevant and Huntingdonshire focused as attached as Appendix 1; for example actions that reflect the changing needs of customers and employees; support the Council in becoming more efficient in how it delivers services as well as ensuring statutory obligations are met.

## **1. WHAT IS THIS REPORT ABOUT/PURPOSE?**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide an update on progress with the Council's equality objectives and to propose a more proportionate and effective response to Council's Public Sector Equality Duty

## **2. WHY IS THIS REPORT NECESSARY/BACKGROUND**

- 2.1 The Equality Act 2010 created a new Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) on public bodies to tackle discrimination, promote equality of opportunity and encourage good community relations. The duty is relevant to the Council (including Members) as both an employer and as a service provider and therefore relates to the way we work, our employment policies and procedures and the way in which we deliver services.

- 2.2 The Equality Duty consists of a general duty and several specific duties, which are intended to help public bodies meet the general duty. The general duty requires public bodies to have due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited under the Act.
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it.
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it.

- 2.3 Specific duties were introduced in June 2011, requiring public bodies to publish information demonstrating their compliance with the general duty and to set specific, measurable equality objectives.

This meant that the Council would need to publish:

- Equality objectives, at least every four years
- Information to demonstrate our compliance with the equality duty, at least annually (setting out how we understand the impact of our policies and practices on service users/customer and employees with these protected characteristics)
- Information relating to our employees.

- 2.4 The Single Equality Scheme (SES) 2010-2013 and annual HR Employee Equality Monitoring Report demonstrated how the Council would meet its statutory responsibilities, in particular how the Council would take account of:

- the Public Sector Equality Duties (PSED) as set out in the Equality Act 2010; and
- achievement against the Equality Framework for Local Government (EFLG). Achieving status was attained in February 2012.

- 2.5 The Council also committed to the continued use of Equality Impact Assessment's (EIAs) to help comply with the PSED, that is, to consciously think about the three aims of the Equality Duty as part of the process of decision making, and to understand the potential effects of decisions on different people and to keep a record of how decisions were reached. The last annual equality progress report to Members and senior officers was in March 2013. A report was not produced in 2014 due to conflicting work priorities arising out of the Corporate Team restructure. However, EIA's continued to be completed where required. Due regard relating to Information about the Council's employees was demonstrated through an annual HR Employee Equality Monitoring Report; however this was last produced in November 2013.

### **3. OPTIONS CONSIDERED/ANALYSIS**

- 3.1 The SES was originally approved in September 2010 and it was agreed that a full review would take place every three years and there would be an annual review of the action plan. The planned full review in 2013 was delayed whilst the government completed its review of the PSED (published September 2013). The majority of actions in the SES have been achieved. The Councils equality steering group met in February 2014 and draft equality objectives were agreed, however since that point, no further work has been carried out.
- 3.2 There is no obligation to have a separate and distinct equality policy as long as the Council has identified equality objectives and can demonstrate compliance with the other specific duties. It is proposed that SES is replaced with more relevant Huntingdonshire focused equality objectives and actions that reflect the changing needs of customers and employees; support the Council in becoming more efficient in how it delivers services as well as ensuring statutory obligations are met.; for example:
- monitoring and reviewing the impact of migrating services online to ensure they remain accessible to customers
  - gain accreditation as a Mindful employer and Dementia Friendly employer
  - ensure decisions to reduce reliance on central government funding are assessed for equality impact
  - Demonstrating compliance with the PSED through an annual report to senior officers and Members

The Council provides a wide variety of services that meet the varied needs of customers however, the HDC equality objectives will not include actions that are contained within any other Council or partnership action plan.

- 3.3 The Corporate Team will be responsible for producing the HR Equality monitoring report.

### **4. COMMENTS OF OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY PANEL**

- 4.1 The comments of the Overview & Scrutiny Panel (Communities and Customers) following its meeting on the 5th January 2016 are attached as Appendix 2.

### **5. KEY IMPACTS/RISKS? HOW WILL THEY BE ADDRESSED?**

- 5.1 The Council has a statutory obligation to demonstrate compliance with the PSED, the adoption of equality objectives and the annual review report to senior officers and members ensures the Council is complying with its statutory duties. Management Team will be responsible for ensuring that the Equality objectives are achieved. Any detailed action plan arising out of the equality objectives can be inserted into the Corporate Team Service Plan.
- 5.3 Six EIAs were carried out during 2012/13, twelve during 2013/14, two during 2014/15. Since April 2015 there have been four EIAs completed.

### **6. WHAT ACTIONS WILL BE TAKEN/TIMETABLE FOR IMPLEMENTATION**

- 6.1 Draft report to SMT, Cabinet, O&S Social Well-Being.

## **7. LINK TO THE CORPORATE PLAN**

- 7.1 Equality and inclusion is an integral part to the delivery of Huntingdonshire District Council's Corporate Plan 2015-2016. Embedding equality and inclusion throughout the Council's business is critical to achieving the overall vision of: "continuing to improve the quality of life for the people of Huntingdonshire and work towards sustainable economic growth whilst providing value for money services" and links to all four Strategic Priorities of: - a strong local economy, enable sustainable growth, working with our communities and, a customer focused and service led Council.
- 7.2 There are strong links with the Customer Service Strategy; particularly the objectives – listen to customers, get it right first time, act and behave in the right way and make it matter to staff.

## **8. CONSULTATION**

- 8.1 The Council's Equality Steering Group, comprising members representing each service met in February 2014 and draft equality objectives were discussed and agreed.

## **9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 9.1 The Equality & Human Rights Commission is responsible for regulating the PSED, if a public authority does not publish equality information as required by the specific duty regulations, they risk being subject to legal challenge (including enforcement action by the Commission), as well as potential damage to reputation.

## **10. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

- 10.1 Achievement of the equality objectives will be largely met through existing business as usual or management processes. There is a small administration fee (£100) for employers signing the Charter for Employers who are Positive About Mental Health. There may a requirement for some staff to attend mental health and dementia awareness raising sessions.

## **11. OTHER IMPLICATIONS**

- 11.1 N/A

## **12. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDED DECISIONS**

- 12.1 The Council should make a proportionate and effective response to statutory and business requirements.

## **13. LIST OF APPENDICES INCLUDED**

- 13.1 Appendix 1 – Equality Objectives
- 13.2 Appendix 2 - Comments of Overview & Scrutiny Panel (Communities and Customers) from its meeting on the 5th January 2016.

## **CONTACT OFFICER**

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**APPENDIX 1**

<b>Corporate Equality Objectives 2015/2019</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Link to Corporate Plan Strategic Priorities and other Strategy or Policy (where relevant)</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>	<b>Resource</b>	<b>Action review date</b>
Demonstrate compliance with the equality duty	Annual report (including HR monitoring) to Senior Officers, and Members	Ensuring we are a customer focused and service-led council Working with our communities	Corporate Team LGSS	Staff time	Annual
Continue to ensure proposed decisions are assessed for equality impact	Equality Impact Assessment of any activities to reduce reliance on central government funding (Facing the Future, ZBB, Shared Services etc.)  Refresh Management Team awareness of the importance of completing EIA's	Ensuring we are a customer focused and service-led council  Customer Service Strategy: Listen to customers Act and behave in the right way	SMT and Corporate Team	Staff time	Annual
To collect and analyse service user information more effectively	Ensure consistency in customer satisfaction survey question(s) so that a summary of customer satisfaction, participation rates or feedback from consultation (disaggregated by equality groups) can be produced	Ensuring we are a customer focused and service-led council  Customer Service Strategy: Listen to customers	Corporate Team  Customer Services	Staff time	Annual
A skilled and committed workforce	Gain accreditation as a Mindful Employer  Gain accreditation as a Dementia Friendly Employer	Ensuring we are a customer focused and service-led council  Customer Service Strategy: Act and behave in the right way Make it matter to staff  Workforce Strategy: Identify organisation development and learning needs	Corporate Team LGSS	tbc no external costs anticipated	Accreditation achieved by 2017
Provide support to customers to ensure online services are accessible	Monitor and review impact of migrating services online	Ensuring we are customer focused and service-led council Customer Service Strategy: Provide value for money services	Customer Services	tbc	tbc
Compliance with the Cambridgeshire Local Safeguarding Children Board Section 11 Audit'	Complete S11 Safeguarding Audit outcome action plan	Ensuring we are a customer focused and service-led council	Leisure & Health Customer Services	Staff time	Achieved by January 2016