

WELWYN HATFIELD BOROUGH COUNCIL
SOCIAL OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 6 APRIL 2016
REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR (FINANCE AND OPERATIONS)

EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY UPDATE

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report provides a summary of the activities delivered as part of the council's Equality and Diversity Action Plan (2015/16) (Action Plan at Appendix A) and highlights some key actions that are planned for 2016/17.
- 1.3 The Action Plan is monitored by an officer and member group - the Equality and Diversity Steering Group, which meets quarterly.

2.0 Financial Implication(s)

- 2.1 This report is for information only and there are no direct financial implications arising from this report.

3.0 Recommendation(s)

- 3.1 That the Committee note the content of the report.
- 3.2 That members endorse the Delivery Plan 2016/17 attached at Appendix A.

4.0 Background

- 4.1 The council is required to publish equality information to demonstrate our compliance with the Public Sector Equality Duty.
- 4.2 The council is required to have one or more equality objectives in place which have to be specific and measurable and help the council to further the three aims of the general duty which are:
- Eliminating unlawful discrimination, including harassment and victimisation;
 - Promoting equality of opportunity between groups with different protected Characteristics;
 - Promoting good relations of groups with different protected characteristics.
- 4.3 In the context of the Public Sector Equality Duty, protected characteristics are defined as:
- Age
 - Disability
 - Gender reassignment
 - Marriage and civil partnership
 - Pregnancy and maternity
 - Race - this includes ethnic or national origins, colour or nationality

- Religion or belief - this includes lack of belief
- Sex (male & female)
- Sexual orientation

4.4 The council has four broad objectives:

- **To be a fair and accessible employer**
We will take steps to ensure that our workforce is reflective of the diverse community that we serve and that that workforce experiences dignity at work.
- **To demonstrate the importance of equality and diversity issues when we procure and manage services**
Contractors and potential contractors understand that the council takes seriously issues around equality and diversity. They are able to robustly demonstrate how they deal with equality and diversity in their organisation and maintain their commitment throughout their partnership with the council.
- **To actively engage and work in partnership with our communities**
We will actively engage with a diverse range of communities in order to ensure that our services are meeting their needs and requirements and that we work effectively in partnership with them.
- **To deliver excellent customer service to everyone we serve**
We will strive to deliver excellent customer services to improve the experience of dealing with the council.

4.5 An annual Action Plan, setting out detailed actions under each of the four broad objectives, is monitored by the Equality and Diversity Steering Group. The member and officer Steering Group is made up of representatives from across all the council's service areas.

4.6 Some of the key actions completed this year (2015/16) are:

- ✓ Online training package developed
- ✓ Special issue of Internal newsletter 'Teamtalk' focused on Equality and Diversity
- ✓ A review of the council's Burial and Memorial policy, to ensure it reflects cultural needs
- ✓ A review of the borough's play equipment
- ✓ A review of the council's Equality Impact Assessment policy
- ✓ Initiatives aimed at engaging with different sections of the community were delivered to promote local democracy, including members visiting local secondary schools, a Youth Council visit to Parliament and a 'take over day' where two members of the youth council worked with the NHS commissioning team.
- ✓ Cultural Engagement events took place within the Town Centres and at the museum
- ✓ Support was provided to vulnerable residents via 'Safer Together' events, which help raise awareness of the risk to and help and support available for vulnerable groups.
- ✓ 'Two Ticks' Positive about Disability annual review completed and accreditation maintained

4.7 The Action Plan (2016/17) is attached at Appendix B, but some of the key actions planned are:

- ✓ To assess the council's workforce profile and identify issues and agree steps to address or justify imbalances within the composition of the workforce
- ✓ To work with Herts County Council to produce a Supported Housing Strategy
- ✓ To develop a protocol for the carriage of assistance dogs in taxis
- ✓ To deliver and support specialist focus groups regarding wellbeing for members of the community, particularly for under represented groups
- ✓ Manage the delivery of Welwyn Hatfield Young Carers Group
- ✓ To continue to develop services and activities via the Disability Sports Hub
- ✓ To run two 'Safer Together' events, to promote safety awareness and sign post services and support for older and vulnerable adults

5.0 Legal Implications

5.1 The Equality Act 2010 came into effect in October 2010 to improve, simplify and consolidate the many separate pieces of equality legislation that existed, and make it more effective. Out of this came the Public Sector Equality Duty, requiring the council to demonstrate, as a local authority, its commitment to the aims of the general duty

6.0 Policy Implication(s)

6.1 There are no policy implications arising from this report.

7.0 Risk Assessment

7.1 A strategic risk assessment is in place with reference to Equality and Diversity.

8.0 Equality and Diversity

8.1 This report is for information only and therefore an Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) is not required.

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Date	23 March 2016

Appendices:

- A Equality and Diversity Action Plan 2015/16
- B Equality and Diversity Delivery Plan 2016/17