



## Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Strategy

---

<b>Scope:</b>	This strategy sets out the Council's Equality, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI) strategy and applies to all employees, Councillors, contractors, consultants and partners of the Council.
<b>Effective Date:</b>	December 2023
<b>Review Date:</b>	December 2026
<b>Author:</b>	Human Resources & Organisational Development Manager
<b>Policy Owned by:</b>	Executive Director (Finance and Transformation)
<b>Statute:</b>	Equality Act 2010
<b>National Standards and Guidance</b>	Local Government: Framework (2016) Government Equalities Office Guidance (2015)
<b>Related Policies and procedures</b>	Employee Handbook Employee Code of Conduct Councillor Code of Conduct Community Engagement Strategy

---

## 1 Scope

- 1.1 This strategy provides a framework for the Council in relation to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion. Inclusion is relevant to everyone; allowing everyone to access services and feel part of the Borough. Inclusion gives diversity impact, where all residents and council employees are empowered to thrive.
- 1.2 We are committed to providing equality of opportunity for everyone we provide services to, to the people we employ and whom we do business with.
- 1.3 We value the wide diversity of our communities and the benefits this brings. We will always consider this when providing services to the public, working with partners and in our role as an employer.
- 1.4 This strategy provides a framework for ensuring that we live this commitment in everything we do, whilst complying with our statutory duties under relevant Equalities Legislation and Codes of Practice.

## 2 Policy Statement

- 2.1 Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council (WHBC) is committed to championing equality and embracing diversity and inclusion, both as a service provider and employer.
- 2.2 The Equality Act 2010 places a Public Sector Equality Duty on the Council to work to:
  - Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation, and any other conduct prohibited under the Act
  - Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a protected characteristic and persons who don't share it
  - Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who don't share it
- 2.3 We also recognise we have a role in working with other organisations to influence and champion the advancement of equalities, by breaking down barriers and the elimination of inequalities to make sure everyone in the borough has the opportunity to reach their full potential. Cultural diversity helps dispel negative stereotypes and bias and builds trust, respect and understanding across cultures.

## 3 Aim of the Strategy

- 3.1 The aim of this strategy is to:
  - make a positive difference to our communities and to the people we employ, provide services to, and do business with
  - comply with all legislation and codes of practice, including the Equality Act 2010 and in particular section 149, the Public Sector Equality Duty.
  - set out clear objectives for our equality agenda and monitor our performance against them

- 
- lead by example in the community by promoting good practice and awareness of equality, diversity and inclusion
  - provide excellent services which meet the needs of customers, communities, employees and other people and groups, including people with protected characteristics, as defined by the Equality Act 2010.

### 3.2 Our four equality objectives are:

- Accessible excellent services
- Understanding & working with our communities
- Inclusive engaged workforce
- Leadership

### 3.3 Accessible excellent services

Key themes:

- providing easily accessible services
- strengthen our policies and training in procurement so we work with suppliers who share our commitment to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion and support us to tackle inequalities
- continue to carry out Equality Impact Assessments during the development of services and policies to identify how impacts can be avoided, reduced or mitigated.

### 3.4 Understanding & working with our communities

Key themes:

- collecting, analysing and using data and information to understand where action is needed to improve inclusivity and to inform decision making
- engaging with local residents and other stakeholders in service delivery, decision making and place making
- fostering good community relations

### 3.5 Inclusive engaged workforce

Key themes:

- collecting, analysing and publishing workforce data
- maintaining an inclusive, diverse workforce
- ensuring equal opportunities in learning, development and progression
- enabling health and wellbeing opportunity for all

---

### **3.6 Leadership**

Key themes:

- supporting, guiding, enabling and inspiring our communities to work together
- performance monitoring of equalities data and the EDI action plan
- working in partnership with community groups to promote and encourage EDI
- Undertaking the self-assessment against the equalities framework for Local Government.

## **4 Equalities Framework for Local Government**

- 4.1 The framework sets out four modules for improvement, underpinned by a range of criteria and practical guidance that can help a council plan, implement and deliver real equality outcomes for employees and the community. Details of the framework can be found here.

<https://www.local.gov.uk/publications/equality-framework-local-government-eflg-2021#:~:text=The%20framework%20supports%20the%20LGA%E2%80%99s%20Equality%20peer%20challenge,real%20equality%20outcomes%20for%20employees%20and%20the%20community.>

- 4.2 The findings from the self-assessment criteria will contribute to the objectives set out in the action plan.

## **5 Strategy, Delivery & Governance**

- 5.1 The implementation of this policy will be driven by the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion steering group. The group will make recommendations to and provide progress reports against the EDI action plan, along with reporting any governance matters, to the Corporate Governance Group.

- 5.2 Updates will also be provided to Members on an annual basis.

- 5.3 All employees and Members will be provided with regular training and updates to ensure they are aware of their legal responsibilities and understand the EDI impacts in their decision making.

## **6 Action Plan**

- 6.1 Equality, diversity and inclusion has to be embedded in the organisation; it is not a separate add-on. This strategy is brought to life through the supporting action plan priorities.

- 6.2 The EDI Steering Group will develop an action plan setting out the key tasks to meet the objectives and commitments set out in this strategy.