

Equality and Diversity Policy

2021

Version Control	
Document Name:	Equality and Diversity Policy
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Responsible Officer:	Business Manager - Corporate Responsibility
Portfolio Holder:	<p>Cabinet Member for Health, Wellbeing and Public Safety</p> <p>All Councillors have overall responsibility for the direction and scrutiny of this policy and will ensure that the principles of fairness and equality guide the decision making process.</p> <p>Each year, the Executive of the Council will identify which Portfolio Holder has responsibility for equality and diversity.</p>
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Our commitment

The Council is committed to ensuring that we, and Publica as the employer of many of our staff, treat everyone who lives, works and visits our District with dignity and respect. We understand and respect that people are unique and have individual differences, we are committed to celebrating this diversity and encourage positive relationships between people with differing needs and will challenge any inequality.

Introduction

The aim of this policy is to actively reduce and challenge any inequality and to ensure equality of opportunity both in providing services and as an employer. It aims to provide clear outcomes that improve our approach to equality and diversity and aid in meeting our legal requirements.

The policy is intended to apply to both the Council and Publica. Where the words “we” or “us” appear, where the context permits, this should be deemed to include both the Council and Publica.

Equality is the responsibility of every Councillor, employee and any other person or organisation employed or engaged by us. To ensure that we all understand our responsibilities, all staff and Councillors are required to complete equality and diversity training.

As part of any procurement or commissioning process we will ensure that anyone who is engaged to provide services on our behalf either has its own legally compliant equality and diversity policy/policies or commits to adhere to the policies that we have in place.

Our Legal Responsibilities - Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED)

We acknowledge and welcome our legal duties as set out within the Equality Act 2010 and will ensure that all legal duties are adhered to by using the legislation and national guidance as a framework to improve standards and be accountable to the people we serve. However, we are not only driven by legislation, our policy and the work we do goes further. We also make sure that no other group or individual is treated unfairly for any other reason, such as their social class, political beliefs, income levels, responsibility for dependants, appearance, geographical area (rural location) or criminal record. We are committed to ensuring that hate crime or domestic violence are not tolerated within our communities.

The Equality Act 2010 states that public authorities must comply with the Public Sector Equality Duty. This requires all public bodies and private bodies that deliver a public function, to consider the needs of protected groups when designing and delivering services. It ensures

that public bodies consider the needs of all individuals in their day to day work, in shaping policy, in delivering services and in relation to their own employees.

The Equality Duty protects people from discrimination on the basis of the following nine protected characteristics:

- Race
- Disability
- Sex
- Gender reassignment
- Sexual orientation
- Marriage and civil partnership
- Age
- Religion and belief
- Pregnancy and maternity

Under the act we must have due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the act;
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not; and
- Foster good relations between different groups including those who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

Having due regard for advancing equality involves:

- Removing or minimising disadvantages suffered by people due to 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
- Tackling prejudice and promoting understanding between different communities

Specific Duties

The Equality Duty is supported by specific duties which came into force in September 2011 and require public bodies to;

- Set and publish specific, measurable equality objectives and review them at least every 4 years;
- Publish relevant, proportionate information demonstrating our compliance with the Equality Duty at least annually;

Public bodies must publish information to show that they consciously thought about the three aims of the Equality Duty as part of the process of decision-making.

Equality objectives and actions

To enable us to record, monitor and track our progress we have developed three equality objectives. Our equality objectives have been developed using evidence and information collected from various national, county and local sources, including Office of National Statistics data; county council data and local knowledge. The objectives as introduced in 2017 and reviewed in June 2020 are:

- Ensuring our employment practices are equal and fair
- Improving access to our services
- Understanding our communities and customers' needs

These objectives form the basis of equality action plans¹. These plans identify specific tasks that will support the achievement of the objectives. We will monitor, review and report on the progress against these plans at least quarterly.

Equality Objectives and our Corporate Priorities

The three equality objectives identified above are aligned to the aims of the Corporate Plan, and the two often interlink and complement each other. Some of the links have been identified below, however it should also be recognised that even when the link is not obvious our equality commitment is part of the foundation in which we build our services and work upon.

Equality Objective - Ensuring employment practices are equal and fair
Corporate Plan Link
<p>For us to be able to achieve our corporate plan and its priorities it is essential that we are not only a great place to visit and live but to also work.</p> <p>In 2019 we adopted three principles that act as the foundation for everything we do.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• rebuilding trust and confidence in the council• providing value for money for our residents and businesses• listening to the needs of our community, and acting on what we hear <p>For staff to be able to actively embed these principles it is essential that they feel they are valued and treated fairly. Not only does this ensure that they deliver the best possible services but ensures their own wellbeing is being looked after. By ensuring our employment practices are equal and fair staff should in turn feel valued and supported.</p> <p>In addition, as a result of Covid-19 the recruitment process, as with many services, has had to look at new ways to continue and adapt. This has provided new opportunities and increased accessibility within recruitment.</p>

¹ Actions plans can be accessed via the Council website

Equality Objective - Improving access to our services
Corporate Plan Link
<p>CP 1 - Deliver the highest standard of services</p> <p>As a council, we exist to provide vital services to our residents, businesses and visitors. We aim to deliver these services to the highest possible standards. Our services must be inclusive and flexible in order to meet the diverse and changeable needs of our residents and communities. We will listen to our residents to identify the areas in which they need support, ensuring we're adaptable but strategic in our approach, and making the best use of the resources available to us.</p> <p>CP 3 - Providing socially rented homes</p> <p>The gap between earnings and house prices is one of the highest in the country, and there is a shortage of good quality, genuinely affordable housing to rent. We are determined to address this by providing good quality affordable housing, with an emphasis on social rented housing and a focus on provision for young people, military veterans and families.</p> <p>CP 2 - Responding to the climate crisis</p> <p>We aim to work with, influence and encourage residents, businesses and partners to reduce their carbon emissions. To do this we will need to ensure that a variety of methods are used in order to engage with the differing community needs.</p> <p>CP 5 - Support health and wellbeing</p> <p>Sustainable behaviour change can only be achieved when residents are involved in the design and implementation of services, and so we're committed to working with our communities, voluntary sector organisations and public sector partners to tackle these challenges and permanently improve our residents' health and wellbeing. To do this the corporate plan has identified a range of actions to improve equal access to quality services across the district.</p>

Equality Objective - Understanding our communities and customers' needs
Corporate Plan Link
<p>CP 1 - Deliver the highest standard of services</p> <p>To be able to fully understand what our communities and customer needs are we must establish excellent working relationships with town and parish councils and other organisations and key stakeholders such as Gloucestershire County Council.</p> <p>CP 2 - Responding to the climate crisis</p> <p>We must influence and encourage residents, businesses and partners to reduce their carbon emissions so we need to understand the communities and customer needs, particularly in terms of sustainable transport options.</p> <p>CP 3 - Providing socially rented homes</p> <p>We have already established that many people struggle to find and afford suitable accommodation in the Cotswolds,</p>

and many young people are forced to leave the area they've grown up in because they can't afford to live here. We are determined to address this by providing good quality affordable housing, with an emphasis on social rented housing and a focus on provision for young people, military veterans and families.

CP 4 - Make our local plan green to the core

Rather than being set in stone, our local plan is a rolling programme of continually evolving policies and proposals – and it's a vital document when it comes to keeping us on track. It provides the tools we need to deliver the actions we've committed to in other documents and strategies, including issues such as health and wellbeing, economy, renewable energy, leisure, housing, and sustainable transport. Because the local plan helps us deliver our aims, plans and government policy while responding to changing economic, environmental and social circumstances, it's vital that it's both relevant and up to date in accordance with legislation and in relation to the needs of the local area.

CP 5 - Support health and wellbeing

The health and wellbeing of our residents is generally good (we rank above England and elsewhere in the county in most measures). We're one of the safest districts, with very low crime levels, and we're lucky enough to be surrounded by beautiful countryside. But we do face some challenges – not least barriers to service access, as well as loneliness and isolation, due to the rural nature of our location. To support this we are going to:

- Promote both mental and physical health equally, to increase awareness of mental health issues and improve the community response to people in crisis
- Encourage resilient, well-connected and active communities that take responsibility for their own health and wellbeing goals
- Promote healthy lifestyles, fun and self-care for all ages
- Ensure our housing and built environments enable residents to live healthy lives

CP 6 - Enable a vibrant economy

As a business-friendly council, we won't just communicate regularly with our local business community – we will work with them to grow the district's economy to provide better opportunities for local people. These relationships will play a vital part in the delivery of our green economic growth strategy.

- Develop strong networks, collaboration and partnerships with businesses and organisations
- Ensure the benefits of the internet and digital technologies are accessible to everyone in the district

Anti Semitism

We have also adopted the non-legally binding working definition of antisemitism demonstrating our clear intention that no one should be treated unfairly:

“Anti Semitism is a certain perception of Jews, which may be expressed as hatred toward Jews. Rhetorical and physical manifestations of antisemitism are directed toward Jewish or non-Jewish individuals and/or their property, toward Jewish community institutions and religious facilities”

Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)

An equality impact assessment involves assessing the likely or actual effects of policies or services on people with protected characteristics. It helps us to make sure the needs of the community are taken into account when we develop and implement a new policy or service, or when we make a change to a current policy or service. We constantly strive to deliver services that are easily accessible by all who need them, and to support people to participate in public life. The below diagram explores why an EIA is important and how to successfully complete an EIA.

Why?	How?
<p>We can make sure that we do not discriminate against people.</p> <p>We can make sure that some people are not disadvantaged more than others.</p> <p>We can make sure that we are supporting people as much as possible.</p> <p>We can explain why we have to do some things.</p>	<p>An EIA should be completed as part of a group to ensure that differing views and opinions are considered.</p> <p>We will look at</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Who is using the service? ● Who is unable to use the service? ● Are people happy or unhappy with the service? <p>We will provide evidence to support our assessment by looking at:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Demographic data and other statistics, including census findings ● recent consultations and surveys ● Anecdotal information from groups and agencies within Gloucestershire ● Results of ethnic monitoring data and any equalities data ● Comparisons between similar functions / policies elsewhere ● Analysis of audit reports and reviews <p>Ask questions and consult with people affected.</p>

Employing, supporting and developing our workforce

We are committed to being a fair and supportive employer, developing the skills and talent within our workforce so that employees are able to deliver high quality services to everyone. To achieve this we will:

- Carry out recruitment fairly
- Provide training to employees so that they can implement this policy
- Treat all employees fairly, with dignity and respect at all times

- Tackle unacceptable behaviour in the workplace
- Provide employees with opportunities to influence the development of our policies and practice
- Reward all employees fairly and provide employment conditions which support them to do a good job
- Promote a good work-life balance and opportunities to work flexibly
- Support disabled employees by making reasonable adjustments

Our employment practice is guided by the principles of equality and fairness. This includes recruitment, terms and conditions, appraisals, learning and development, promotion and when ending employment.

As stated in our specific commitments, all employees and elected members should be treated with respect and dignity in the workplace. The Council will not tolerate unacceptable behaviour in any form.

Equality Information

The Equality Duty requires public bodies with over 150 employees to record information relating to employees who share protected characteristics. As the Council itself has less than 150 employees we are unable to publish this data without the possibility of compromising individuals anonymity. The Council will uphold its duty to protect an individual's right to privacy, and will not publish information that could identify an individual. Nor will the information be used to identify an individual or make a decision about them purely on the grounds of the information that has been provided in relation to their protected characteristics. All personal data will be processed in accordance with GDPR. However, the Council acknowledges the importance of the accessibility of workforce data and will therefore work with Publica to ensure that Publica records and publishes this data.

Gender Pay Gap

The Equality Act 2010 (Gender Pay Gap Information) Regulations 2017 require all organisations with 250 or more employees to publish data on the gender pay gap within each organisation. Like the workforce data the Council itself does not meet this threshold however, this data will be published by Publica.

Conclusion

This policy clearly sets out our legal duties and how we comply with the requirements. However, a policy is a very small part of embedding equality and diversity and we are committed to ensuring that everyone who lives, works or visits our district is treated fairly and with dignity and respect, by our actions as both a service provider and employer.