



Epping Forest
District Council

July 2011

Equality Policy



Making our district a great place to live, work, study & do business

Contents



2



1. Introduction	3
2. Why is Equality Important?	4
3. To Whom and What does this Policy Apply?	5
4. District Profile	6
5. Equality Duties	8
6. Statement of Commitment to Equality	10
7. How we are organised	11
8. Approach to Achieving Equality	12
9. Monitoring and Scrutiny	14
10. Review of Equality Policy	15
11. How this Equality Policy will be Published	15

1. Introduction



- 1.1 This Equality Policy sets out Epping Forest District Council's commitment to equality, and describes how it will embed equality into its roles and responsibilities. It outlines the approach the Council will take to ensure that its services are provided equally to all customers and staff.
- 1.2 Epping Forest District Council is committed to equality for all people in the community. This means that the Council will think about the needs of everyone who uses its services or whom it employs and strive to eliminate discrimination and improve equality of opportunity. The Council recognises it has a role in the district as a large provider of services and employment, and also a particular role as a community leader with a responsibility to seek improved understanding between communities.
- 1.3 Although the Epping Forest District may not appear to be as obviously diverse in its demographic makeup as some other areas, there are nevertheless a number of diversity issues in the district. These include rural locations and the associated risk of isolation, an increasing elderly population, and the high price of housing, all of which indicate that the Council's approach to equality should be robust and proactive.

3



2. Why Is Equality Important?

4



- 2.1 Equality is about fairness, recognising that people are different and that all individuals have the right to have those differences respected. Equality is also about recognising that inequality exists and that it can mean that some individuals are unable to reach their full potential or access services because of their individual characteristics.
- 2.2 Whilst equality is morally right it also brings benefits to the Council and the whole community. Equality of opportunity helps to create an environment whereby everyone can contribute thereby maximising the value of the talent and skills available. It also helps the Council to attract, motivate and retain the best staff. Embedding equality into service provision allows for resources to be targeted where they are needed and for services to be provided in ways which allow all customers to access them.
- 2.3 As community leader and employer the Council has an important role to play in eliminating discrimination, creating equality of opportunity, and developing understanding between communities. These responsibilities are embedded in legislation.

3. To Whom And What Does This Policy Apply?

3.1 This Equality Policy applies to all of the Council's staff (including all grades and levels) whether permanently employed or temporary agency staff, contractors, agents, Members (including independent Members), volunteers and consultants . It applies across the Council's activities in its dual roles of service provider and employer whether those activities are formally documented or informal through custom and practice. These activities include:

- the provision of services
- the commissioning and purchasing of goods and services
- the recruitment, employment, training and development of staff
- grants to voluntary and community organisations
- landlord functions in respect of housing and other property
- the exercise of statutory powers and responsibilities
- partnerships with other organisations
- community involvement
- consultation with local people
- promotion and publicity

5



4. District Profile

- 6
- 4.1 The Epping Forest District is culturally and socially diverse, and covers 131 square miles made up of a contrasting mixture of urban and rural life. The district has six main centres of population (Buckhurst Hill, Chigwell, Epping, Loughton, Chipping Ongar and Waltham Abbey) and numerous villages but no natural centre. Approximately half of the population live in 5% of the area of the district, close to the boundary with London whilst the remainder live in a mixture of market towns such as Epping and Chipping Ongar, large villages or in small rural hamlets.
 - 4.2 Based on 2008 figures, 51.25% of the population of the district are female and 48.75% are male. The population is ageing, with the 2015 age projections showing an increase in the higher age bands and a relatively significant decrease in the age range of 35-44.
 - 4.3 The district has the second highest number of Black and Multi Ethnic (BME) (which is defined as anything other than white British) residents in Essex, and it is estimated that over 10% of the residents of the district belong to BME groups. The wards with the highest BME populations are Chigwell Row, Chigwell Village, Grange Hill, Buckhurst Hill West and Loughton Forest, where the two largest BME groups are White Irish and other White, and Asian and Asian British. The district has one of the largest traveller populations in Essex, (almost 15% of the total for the county), with around 90% of caravans being stationed on authorised sites with planning permission.
 - 4.4 In the 2001 census, 30% of households in the district reported having at least one person with a limiting long-term illness, health problem or disability which limited their daily activities or the work they can do, including problems due to old age, which was slightly less than the Essex average of 32%. The Lambourne, Loughton Alderton, Loughton Broadway and Paternoster wards reported higher levels than the district average (Source ONS 2001).
 - 4.5 Official data relating to disability benefits is another indicator of the number of people with a disability. In August 2008 Waltham Abbey and Loughton had the highest numbers of residents claiming Disability Living Allowance (DLA) within the district overall, with Waltham Abbey having 23% of the total number of residents claiming DLA in the district and Loughton having just over 25% (Source ONS neighbourhood statistics).
 - 4.6 In 2007 the district had the third highest level of migrant workers (plus dependents registered to work through the Worker Registration Scheme) in Essex, comprising 0.71% of the population of the district between May 2004 and June 2007. The significant majority of migrant workers come from Poland, followed by Lithuania and Slovakia.

5. Statutory Equality Duties

- 8
- 5.1 This Equality Policy is based upon the requirements for local authorities set out in the Equality Act 2010 which came into force in October 2010. Currently the government is still considering the implementation of a number of potential provisions of the Equality Act, and this Equality Policy will be updated when the position of these other provisions is known.
- 5.2 The Equality Act 2010 provides a new legislative framework to protect the rights of Individuals and advance equality of opportunity for all, and simplifies and strengthens previous legislation. Other equality related legislation and statutory codes of practice include the following:
- Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974
 - Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994
 - Employment Protection (Part-time Workers) Regulations 1995
 - Asylum and Immigration Act 1996
 - Human Rights Act 1998
 - The Sex Discrimination (Gender Reassignment) Regulations 1999
 - Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000
 - Employment Act 2002
 - Fixed Term Employees (Prevention of Less Favourable Treatment) Regulations 2002
 - Employment Equality (Religion and Belief) Regulations 2003
 - Employment Equality (Sexual Orientation) Regulations 2003
 - Employment Relations Act 2004
 - Statutory Codes of Practice
- 5.3 The Council is committed to meeting its duties under the above legislation and codes of practice (as amended) where appropriate.



- 5.4 The Equality Act 2010 imposes equality responsibilities on local authorities in the form of a Public Sector Equality Duty. The purpose of the equality duty is to integrate consideration of equality and good relations in the day to day business of public authorities, and it requires organisations to consider how they can positively contribute to the advancement of equality and good relations. It also requires equality considerations to be reflected in the design of policies and the delivery of services, including internal policies, and for these issues to be kept under review. The Public Sector Equality Duty consists of a general equality duty, and specific equality duties which support the general equality duty by improving the focus and transparency of equality activities.
- 5.5 The general equality duty is designed to integrate consideration of the advancement of equality into the day-to-day business of public authorities. The general equality duty has three aims and the Council must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to:
- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation;
 - Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who don't;
 - Foster good relation between people who share a protected characteristic and those who don't.
- 5.6 Specific equality duties include requirements to:
- Publish information sufficient to demonstrate compliance with the general equality duty across Council functions. This includes evidence of equality analysis undertaken, together with details of the information considered when carrying out the analysis and details of engagement with people with an interest in furthering the aims of the general equality duty;
 - Prepare and publish equality objectives that the Council reasonably thinks it should achieve to meet one or more of the aims of the general equality duty. This includes details of the engagement undertaken when developing objectives and with people with an interest in furthering the aims of the general equality duty
- 5.7 Further information on the equality duties together with details of how the Council will address its equality responsibilities will be contained in the Single Equality Scheme that is currently under development

6. Statement Of Commitment To Equality

Short Statement:

'Epping Forest District Council is committed to treating everyone equally and fairly according to their needs'

Full Statement

Epping Forest District Council is committed to ensuring that all individuals and groups are treated with respect and are valued equally;

We will endeavour to make our services accessible to everyone, irrespective of the protected characteristics of age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation;

We will endeavour to eliminate discrimination against people who are perceived to have, or are associated with someone who has a protected characteristic;

10 We will consult and involve relevant people and groups from our community where appropriate in the design and monitoring of our services;

We will collect information about our customers to ensure our services are accessible and provided equally to all in our community;

Where necessary we will take positive action through our service provision to meet the particular needs of disadvantaged groups in our community;

We will endeavour to promote understanding and good relations between communities;

We will consider taking positive action to address under-representation and promote diversity in our workforce profile;

We will publish sufficient information to demonstrate how we have complied with the general equality duty;

We will use our procurement opportunities to drive equality, for example, by working proactively with key suppliers to promote equality and positive practices in their operations and in the provision of services;

We will ensure appropriate resources are available to meet our statutory equality responsibilities;

We will make sure that appropriate equality and diversity training is provided for all Members and staff of the Council.

7. How We Are Organised

- 7.1 The Council has a clear structure to help deliver equality and diversity in the organisation. Executive responsibility for equality lies with the Leisure and Wellbeing Portfolio Holder. The Deputy Chief Executive has operational responsibility for equality, and day to day responsibility for equality lies with the individual Service Directors.
- 7.2 The Leisure and Wellbeing Portfolio Holder and the Deputy Chief Executive will ensure that:
- the Council complies with all aspects of equality legislation
 - equality and fairness are embedded into all of the Council's service delivery and employment practices
- 7.3 The Corporate Equality Working Group (CEWG) is an officer group of 'Equality Champions' with responsibility for the direction and progress of all work to deliver equality within the Council. The CEWG has responsibility for making proposals to the Finance and Performance Management scrutiny panel in order to implement this Policy and promote equality across the organisation. The CEWG is supported in its work by a Staff Equality Group (SEG) which is open to all staff employed by the Council.
- 7.4 The Performance Improvement Unit carries out appropriate activities to meet the Council's equality duties.
- 7.5 Service Directors are responsible for ensuring that all services comply with this Policy, with relevant equality related legislation, and standards set by the Council. All managers have responsibility for implementing this Policy and ensuring that equality is mainstreamed into service provision.
- 7.6 All of the Council's employees have a duty to ensure they act not only within the terms of equality legislation and codes of practice, but also within the spirit of them.

8. Approach to Achieving Equality

8.1 This Equality Policy builds on the Council's previous equality strategies including the Race Equality Strategy, the Gender Equality Strategy, and the Disability Equality Strategy, and associated action plans. The requirement to produce equality strategies has been revoked by the new Public Sector Equality Duty and they are due to be replaced with a new Single Equality Scheme. The Council's Single Equality Scheme is currently under development and will set out in greater detail how the Council will meet its equality duties.

8.2 This Equality Policy is linked to The Equality in Employment Policy for employees.

Equality Analysis

8.3 In accordance with legislation the Council carries out equality analysis of all its activities to assess their equality impact for its customers, via a comprehensive Customer Impact Assessment process.

12

Equality Framework for Local Government

8.4 The Equality Framework is a national framework offering a comprehensive and systematic approach to measuring performance on equality issues. The Council aligns its equality work against the Framework.

Outreach work and Community Development

8.5 The Council responds to the duty to promote good relations between different communities through outreach events, which have included an annual disability awareness raising event in partnership with local groups, and a presence at Essex Pride 2010. The Council's Community Development Team strengthen, resource and engage minority and marginalised communities.





Consultation and involvement

- 8.6 The Council undertakes regular consultation with service users via surveys and service user groups, to ensure that the views of all communities are heard. Targeted work is undertaken where necessary, and consultation is used to inform the Council's priorities and improve services.

Training

- 8.6 Mandatory equality and diversity training is provided for all staff with additional focussed training for managers, new staff, and those staff engaged with Customer Impact Assessment. Equality and diversity training is also provided for the Council's members.

9. Monitoring And Scrutiny

- 9.1 Monitoring is an essential component of the Council's work to develop equality and achieve improvement. The Council's processes for monitoring, self assessment, and scrutiny focus on:
- The extent to which it is meeting its equality duties under the relevant legislation and codes of practice; and
 - How it can move beyond compliance towards best practice and excellence
- 9.2 The Finance and Performance Management Scrutiny Panel scrutinises and reviews the Council's equality progress and performance.
- 9.3 The Corporate Equality Working Group monitors the work of directorates via the Customer Impact Assessment process and accompanying action plans, to ensure consistency of equality in service provision across the Council, and to inform corporate equality activity.
- 14 9.4 The Council gathers data about its customers to monitor the provision of services and to develop an understanding of the service needs of its customers. The Council collects data according to the protected equality characteristics identified in the Equality Act 2010, and in order to meet the requirements of the Equality Framework for Local Government. In addition service specific customer data is gathered on customers to facilitate the provision of individual services.
- 9.5 The Council collects, stores, uses, and shares customer data in accordance with its following policies:
- Data Protection Policy
 - Data Retention Policies (currently under review)
 - Data Quality Strategy
 - Data Sharing Policies and Protocols



10. Review Of The Equality Policy

- 10.1 The Corporate Equality Working Group will review this Equality Policy annually to ensure that it is consistent with current legislation, reflects best practice, and is challenging.

11. How this Equality Policy will be published

- 11.1 This Equality Policy forms part of the Council's overall approach to achieving equality for its customers and staff. It will be published on the Council's website together with other documentation relating to the Council's equality work against which its performance in relation to equality and diversity can be assessed.

15

For further information concerning this policy, please contact the Performance Improvement Unit.

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If you would like a copy of this Equality Policy in any other format, for example in large print or another language, please contact Epping Forest District Council on 01992 564042 or email equality@eppingforestdc.gov.uk



16



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