

EQUALITY PLAN: How are we meeting our five equality objectives? Annual update as at April 2022

Objective one: Leading by Example within the Community

Reference	Activities to achieve objective	Our Approach	Progress
1.1	Publish our approach to equalities widely.	To have a published Equality Policy and Equalities Scheme	We have a published Equality Policy and Equalities Scheme. We also have information on our website about our approach to equalities.
1.2	Engage with groups representing people with protected characteristics.	We have a published Community Engagement Strategy which sets out five principles of community engagement to which we are committed: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Be clear about who our stakeholders are, and help them to understand us ▪ Encourage people from all our communities to get involved ▪ Connect with our communities so they can help shape our services ▪ Make it easy for people to have a say, keeping up with technology to enable access ▪ Ensure we are equipped with the tools we need to engage effectively 	An action plan is in place to support the delivery against these principles. This is overseen by the Community and Stakeholder Engagement Group.

1.3	Ensure that partners and contractors delivering services on our behalf adopt our principles and approach to equalities.	For all tenders that include a requirement to deliver front line service on behalf of the council, the council will include an equalities assessment as part of the approval process	We have been continuing to work with contractors and in particular to ensure that appropriate safeguarding measures are put in place in light of vulnerable households during Covid.
1.4	Community Information Champion Vaccine Uptake Campaign	We have a vaccination uptake plan which highlights a number of groups, including those with protected characteristics, who are less likely to have been vaccinated. The intention is for this work to develop a network through which ongoing health inequalities can be better addressed.	We were successful in obtaining additional government funding to deliver a number of enhancements to encourage vaccine uptake and to remove any barriers. There are several delivery strands, including recruitment of more than 100 community information champions locally.

Objective Two: Value and understand our communities

Reference	Activities to achieve objective	Our Approach	Progress
2.1	Collect relevant information about our customers so that we can understand more about their needs and preferences for service delivery and to help us identify barriers or potential barriers to accessing our services.	We collect information about customers who receive council services where this will help us understand more about their needs. This helps us plan our services around our customers.	As we roll-out digital services across the council, relevant information about the customer will be collected to ensure the right service in response can

		Different teams in the council collect different types of information, depending on the services we provide and only where the information is needed to deliver these services in the right way. We don't collect information just to keep, where this does not have any purpose.	be provided. The customer is asked to provide consent for the data usage. If the customer chooses to create an online account, 'MyAccount', any information collected will be accessible for the customer.
2.2	Act on customer feedback when shaping our services, including information received through our complaints process and other customer contacts and engagement.	A new Complaints Policy has been implemented within the council. The policy aims to make it clear to customers how they can contact us if they wish to complain about a service, and what to expect once they have made a complaint. This includes the council's approach to recording complaint outcomes and lessons learned to identify future service improvements.	Complaint data is presented quarterly at the Corporate Performance Management Clinics, including information about trends and lessons learned.
2.3	Deliver and support local events to ensure we raise awareness of diversity and encourage community participation.	The Community and Stakeholder Engagement Group is responsible for coordinating the delivery of events in the borough. One of its stated aims is to ensure all our communities are involved in the planning, delivery and participation in local events. Each year we develop a programme of events to celebrate	This year we will be delivering the This Girl Can campaign during June; launching Big Summer with a community fair in Hatfield; sponsoring the delivery of the Food Festival in Welwyn Garden City – which is organised by the

		diversity and encourage community participation.	Business Improvement District (BID); empowering residents to get involved in the Queen's Platinum Jubilee celebrations; recognising diversity during Black History Month and marking Holocaust Memorial Day in line with the National event.
2.4	Work with employees, local communities and Members to ensure that our valuing of diversity is reflected in our local democracy.	Regular employee and Member communications are provided by the council on all areas of its work, including corporate objectives and values. This is supported by all- staff briefings and the weekly staff newsletter. The corporate principle of #oneteam and #workingbettertogether, promote the principle of equality, fairness and inclusivity. We train all our staff, including equalities induction training for new starters. New Members briefings and equality training is also provided, for all Members.	
2.5	Review, update and publish the demographic profile for the borough on an annual basis.	The council's Annual Monitoring Report provides updates on the local demographics, including ethnicity, age and disability. This is reported to Members through the council's governance arrangements	Information about the borough's population is also now published on a new intranet page supporting the work of the community

		and is published on the council's website.	engagement group.
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Objective Three: Deliver Fully accessible, fair and inclusive Services

Reference	Activities to achieve objective	Our Approach	Progress
3.1	Make the most of technology to provide 24/7 access to services and to help enable easy access to online services for people with different needs.	<p>The council works towards the international WCGA 2.1AA standards for web content accessibility. This helps ensure that our web content, coding and design means people can access our services online, regardless of a disability. Where we are unable to do that, we publish an Accessibility Statement setting out the reasons for that, and how we propose to take action to remedy it.</p> <p>The council's new customer management system, JADU, enables residents to contact us in a consistent way across the council and will also promote 'self-serve', where possible. This system will also allow residents to tell us how they want to be contacted and preferences for service delivery. The system meets accessibility standards and will compliment traditional contact methods. JADU continues to be rolled out for</p>	<p>The circumstances during the last two years has accelerated this work and different services continue to look at greater ways to engage with customers digitally. An update on the digital strategy was presented earlier this year as we enter the final year of the strategy, with many of the targets delivered. A new strategy will be drafted as we continue our journey of modernising and transforming our services.</p>

		different customer contacts and will fully replace the previous system, LAGAN, this year.	
3.2	Monitor the council's website to ensure it remains up to date and relevant.	A web content group has been set up to ensure that each service has sufficiently skilled resources available to maintain their web content in an accessible format. This will enable the council to move towards a devolved web content management model whereby each service will be fully responsible for managing their own content.	
3.3	Review and refresh the Customer Service Strategy to ensure we are continually reviewing the ways our customers contact us and ensuring access to people with limited mobility and different sensory abilities.	<p>In 2019 the council launched the 'sign video' service, following feedback from the Welwyn Hatfield Deaf Club. The service enables people who are deaf or hard of hearing to communicate using sign language through an online translator, whether over the phone, or in person at our reception. The council developed this service through consultation with the Welwyn Hatfield Deaf Club.</p> <p>Since June 2020, the Council's main reception has been open on an appointment basis; ensuring customer needs are captured when an appointment is made.</p>	This is ongoing, with messages regularly reinforced through a range of staff communications, including briefings and newsletters. The aims of the Customers Service Strategy have been a key consideration in the council's evolving corporate Modernisation Agenda, including the new Delivery working group.

3.4	Assess the impact of our services and policies on our customers, taking into account the diversity of everyone we work with and for.	Equality Impact Assessments (EQIA) are carried out where a new policy is being developed, which impacts on either internal or external customers. This also applies where an existing policy is being amended. EQIAs must be completed as a desk-top exercise initially and must identify whether stakeholder consultation is required as part of the process. Where consultation takes places, the EQIA must be updated to reflect the outcome of the consultation.	We have published a clear and easy to understand guide on Equality Impact Assessments for staff and Members. All committee reports contain a section which must be completed by officers, and which specifies whether an EQIA has been carried out (and if not, why this is the case), along with the findings from the EQIAs.
3.5	Initial access audits of the council's public access sites	The council engaged with AccessAble to undertake a review of key sites within the Welwyn Garden City town centre, in order to ensure accessibility information is available for those who need it. Following this piece of work, it has been agreed to further extend this work for Hatfield Town Centre and other important council buildings in the area.	Residents and visitors can access this information on the Accessible website

Objective four - Provide equal opportunities to our employees

Reference	Activities to achieve objective	Our Approach	Progress
4.1	To have in place arrangements for	This has been promoted through the staff newsletter,	

	managers to request workplace adaptations for new staff who need them.	in a special edition. We will continue to promote this. This is also discussed with new employees, prior to starting work with us.	
4.2	We will promote our positive approach to diversity in the workplace, including providing assurance that we will make reasonable adjustments for employees so that they can participate fully in life as an employee of Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council.	As part of the council's approach to ensuring an accessible workplace, adaptations are provided to council sites to accommodate employees, where possible. Reasonable adjustments are made for employees where we are aware of any specific requirement.	The council works closely with our occupational health service to help assist employees, we can also offer support via the Access to Work scheme. All employees also have access to an employee assistance programme.
4.3	Monitor the demographics of our workforce population and work towards redressing any disparity between the diversity of our community and our employees.	We ensure our recruitment processes are fair and accessible and job opportunities are widely advertised. We ensure that officers involved in the recruitment process are trained and understand the council's approach to equality and diversity.	The council's Human Resources team collects data on employees during the recruitment process and workforce data is regularly monitored and reported. Where there are any concerns coming out of the reporting process, these will be reported to the Equalities Steering Group and investigated. We are recognised as a disability confident and Mindful employer.
4.4	Produce an analysis of the 'life cycling' profile of employees. This will apply to all protected	The council's quarterly monitoring reports provides an up to date analysis of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Total number of 	The latest quarter's statistics can be found here: https://www.welhat.gov.uk/equality-diversity/quarterly-report

	<p>groups where self-reported by employees or where information on their protected characteristics comes to light through the course of their employment with the council.</p>	<p>employees</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employees by gender • Employees by disability • Employees by ethnicity • Employees by age • Leavers by service area • Reason for leaving • Length of service by gender 	
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Objective Five: Consult with residents and the community

Reference	Activities to achieve objective	Our Approach	Progress
5.1	<p>Consider reasonable adjustments to remove barriers preventing people participating in a way in which they feel comfortable.</p>	<p>We are able to deliver services in different ways, based on the needs of our customers.</p> <p>This includes customers who need face to face contact with our officers. Through our access audits of all public council sites, we have made sure that our buildings are accessible to people with disabilities, based on Disability Discrimination Act</p>	

		<p>1995 standards.</p> <p>For customers choosing to access services online we are developing an inclusive approach, through our Customer Service and Digital Transformation work programme.</p>	
<p>5.2</p>	<p>Encourage people to have their say through a framework of resident and stakeholder consultation methods including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Borough Panel Resident's Panel Youth Council Focus Groups <p>Specialist Groups facilitated by the council, including the Disability Access Group.</p>	<p>Our Community Engagement Strategy sets out our commitment to ensuring all our communities have an opportunity to engage with the council.</p> <p>In addition to our wider consultations, we engage in a targeted way with different groups of customers, including council tenants (the Tenants Panel) and our Borough Panel. We work with the Youth Council and hold special interest focus groups from time to time. One of the actions in the supporting plan is to ensure that our Borough and Tenants Panels are representative of the borough's demographic profile.</p>	

		The engagement for housing tenant and lease holders is being reviewed in light of the housing white paper to be implemented in April 2022	
5.3	Engage with other organisations through a range of forums including Welwyn Hatfield Alliance and other strategic partnerships.		
5.4	Hate crime reporting scheme Developed in partnership with the police and community safety partners.	The Hate Crime scheme has been successful in encouraging victims of Hate Crime to come forward and report issues in a location of their choice. The council has been a key partner in the scheme and has trained a number of staff to be on hand where a victim attends on a 'walk in' basis.	

