

REPORT TITLE: EQUALITY, DIVERSITY & INCLUSION POLICY FRAMEWORK

25 FEBRUARY 2025

REPORT OF CABINET MEMBER: CLLR BECKER – CABINET MEMBER FOR  
COMMUNITY AND ENGAGEMENT

Contact Officer: Simon Howson Tel No: 01962 848 104 Email  
[showson@winchester.gov.uk](mailto:showson@winchester.gov.uk)

WARD(S): ALL

PURPOSE

This report presents the council's updated Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy and Strategy. The council's current Public Sector Equality Duty Policy was adopted in January 2022.

The Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED), at Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010, requires public bodies, including the council to have due regard to the aims of the general duty when making decisions and setting policies.

The council is also required to agree and publish their PSED objectives and regularly review how they meet these aims.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

That the Audit and Governance Committee:

1. Approves the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy, Strategy and Action Plan 2025-28 as set out in the appendices to the report.
2. Approves the Equality objectives as set out in paragraph 2 of the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2025-28 (Appendix 2)

IMPLICATIONS:1 COUNCIL PLAN OUTCOME

Achieving equality, diversity and inclusion for all residents, employees, service users and visitors to the Winchester district is essential for the successful delivery of all priorities.

2 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The council's equality duties will be delivered within existing budgets for each service area, including training. There are no additional financial implications for the council.

3 LEGAL AND PROCUREMENT IMPLICATIONS

The council has a statutory duty under section 149 of the Equalities Act 2010 that requires all public bodies to 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 PSED is a duty on public bodies and others carrying out public functions.

Public bodies, officers and councillors who are subject to the PSED must in the exercise of their functions have due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Act.
- Foster good relations between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not share it; and
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and people who do not share it.

These three aims are sometimes referred to as the three aims of the general equality duty.

Having due regard means consciously thinking about the three aims of the PSED as part of the process of decision-making. This means that consideration of equality issues must influence the decisions reached by public bodies – such as in how they act as employers; how they develop, evaluate and review policy; how policy is implemented, how they design, deliver and evaluate services, and how they commission and procure from others.

Having due regard to the need to advance equality of opportunity involves considering the need to:

- remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by people due to their protected characteristics,

- meet the needs of people with protected characteristics; and
- encourage people with protected characteristics to participate in public life or in other activities where their participation is low.

Fostering good relations involves tackling prejudice and promoting understanding between people who share a protected characteristic and others.

The PSED also explicitly recognises that disabled people's needs may be different from those of non-disabled people. Public bodies should therefore take account of disabled people's impairments when making decisions about policies or services. This might mean making reasonable adjustments or positively discriminating disabled people in order to meet their needs.

The PSED covers the following protected characteristics age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy, maternity/ paternity, race, religion or belief (including non-belief), sex and sexual orientation.

The duty includes a requirement to review, refresh and publish up to date equality objectives and a policy stating how the objectives will be met for the city council to remain legally compliant with the PSED.

There are no procurement implications as a direct result of this report.

#### 4. WORKFORCE IMPLICATIONS

The council's commitment to integrating the principles of equality, diversity and inclusion into everything it does should be foremost in the minds of all officers and councillors conduct. The council's Workplace Policy includes a complaint policy which considers the PSED. The PSED is at the heart of the council's decisions. Embedding the policy and actions in corporate culture will occur through training together with regular updates.

There are no additional resources required arising from this report.

#### 5. PROPERTY AND ASSET IMPLICATIONS

None arising from the content of this report, however when making any decision that relates to property and assets, such as whether or not to dispose and acquire, which mechanism and the property and/or project development, the council must have due regard to the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion objectives. A further consideration will be whether public property and assets are able to comply with the PSED objectives on matters such as design and access.

## 6. CONSULTATION AND COMMUNICATION

Consultation on the content of the report has taken place with Executive Leadership Board (ELB) and the Cabinet Member for Communities and Engagement.

Members who are appointed to the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Forum reviewed and support the Policy, Strategy and Action Plan.

Comments from the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Officer group, which includes officers from across all services of the council have also been taken into consideration.

## 7. ENVIRONMENTAL CONSIDERATIONS

There are no environmental implications directly from the content of this report.

## 8. PUBLIC SECTOR EQUALITY DUTY

This report sets out the refreshed Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy and Strategy to enable the council to fulfil its requirements under the Public Sector Equality Duty.

## 9. DATA PROTECTION IMPACT ASSESSMENT

None required because there is no processing of personal data.

## 10. RISK MANAGEMENT

Risk	Mitigation	Opportunities
<b>Financial Exposure:</b> Failure to comply with the Public Sector Equality Duty could result in additional costs of remedial work or delay of policy implementation; or the cost of legal challenge through Judicial Review	The council, in the exercise of all its functions, has due regard to the Public Sector Equality Duty. All decision reports have a section highlighting the necessary considerations regarding the PSED. Equality impact assessments (EIAs) are used to systematically consider equality opportunities when making a decision and is a key mechanism that allows the council to	None
<b>Exposure to challenge:</b> Failure to comply with the Public Sector Equality Duty could result in legal challenge through Judicial Review by the ECHR or dissatisfied persons / groups.		Non-compliance could lead to challenge and litigation.

<b>Innovation</b>	understand and work with our communities.	Innovative ideas and design required to ensure compliance. Increased innovation leads to a more inclusive community which is at the heart of the PSED
<b>Reputation:</b> Failure to comply with the Public Sector Equality Duty could result in legal challenge through Judicial Review which could cause reputational damage and adverse publicity for the council.		Compliance results in consideration of all sectors of the community and enhances the council's reputation.
<b>Achievement of outcome:</b> Failure to comply with the Public Sector Equality Duty could result in legal challenge resulting in decisions being quashed by the courts. Policy implementation could also be delayed.		None
Property	Consideration of the PSED at the initial stages of project design and again prior to implementation	Early consideration ensures that full community support is provided for by the council.
Community Support	Consideration of the vulnerable groups at each decision-making stage with continual reviews.	Community is better supported through correct implementation of the duty.
Timescales	The duty is a constant requirement upon public sector.	Ensures that all sectors of the community are supported.
Project capacity	Consideration of the PSED at the initial stages of project design and again prior to implementation.	Early consideration ensures that full community support is provided for by the council.
Other	None	None

## 11. SUPPORTING INFORMATION:

### Background

- 11.1 Cabinet in January 2022 adopted the council's updated Public Sector Equality Duty Policy and agreed that a review of the Policy would occur prior to December 2025.
- 11.2 The PSED applies to all public bodies in carrying out their functions. This requires public bodies to "have due regard" to the elimination of discrimination, advancement of equality and fostering good relations in connection with the listed protected characteristics. The duty must be carried out with rigour but is not a duty to achieve results. The PSED need not be explicitly referred to, but there must be some evidence that it has been considered (if relevant).
- 11.3 The PSED is intended to support robust decision making and ensure that public bodies consider and understand how different people will be affected by their activities and decisions so that policies and services are appropriate and accessible to all and meet the needs of different people. By understanding the impact of their activities on different people, and how inclusive public services can support and provide opportunities, public bodies are better placed to deliver policies and services that are efficient and effective.
- 11.4 All decisions, and not just Cabinet decisions are subject to the requirement to, where relevant, consider the PSED. To support this and provide evidence, each committee report includes under the "Public Sector Equality Duty" paragraph heading details of how the "due regard" has been considered.
- 11.5 Further detailed evidence is provided in the form of a completed Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA), where if relevant is appended to the committee report.
- 11.6 In its report, the Local Government Association Corporate Peer Challenge Team acknowledged that the council recognises it is at the beginning of its journey regarding equality, diversity and inclusion and that there is an opportunity to develop a revised EDI strategy that reflects ongoing efforts and prioritises this crucial area.
- 11.7 Since the report was received, an EDI officer group has been established to have strategic oversight of EDI across the council's activities both internally and externally, complementing the work of the existing members forum. The group also takes responsibility for leading on the delivery of the activities included in the Action Plan attached as Appendix 3.
- 11.8 Further progress has seen a new Tenant Partnership Team being formed with the council committing to working more closely with tenants to co-create and improve our housing services. Current projects include facilitating the Social Inclusion Partnership and community-based research training for officers.

### Equality Diversity and Inclusion Policy

- 11.8 The council's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy, sets out our overall approach to equality as both an employer and a provider of services. The Policy was last adopted by Cabinet in January 2022 (Report CAB3331, 25 January 2022).
- 11.9 The refreshed policy at Appendix 1 is applicable to all who represent Winchester City Council in any capacity, including councillors, officers, contractors, volunteers, partner organisations, visitors and customers.
- 11.10 Equality, Diversity and Inclusion training via an online training portal is mandatory for all councillors and officers and ensures that the council's commitment is understood.

### Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2025-28

- 11.11 Attached at Appendix 2 is the new Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy that demonstrates our continued commitment to tackling inequality and promoting diversity to ensure the council meets the equality duty under the Equality Act and Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED).
- 11.12 The Strategy covers the three-year period 2025 to 2028 and outlines our clear vision for an inclusive council including the work of councillors in their communities, the provision of services, collaboration with partners and within our own workforce.
- 11.13 Public authorities are legally required to set out at least one equality objective every four years to help focus attention on priority equality issues. For 2025 to 2028, the council is proposing four equality objectives that align to the LGA Equality Framework and help drive equality and inclusion across all areas of the council's work, as well as demonstrate compliance with the Public Sector Equality Duty.
- 11.14 The proposed equality objectives set out below and our Action Plan attached at Appendix 3 has been developed from these:
  - (1) **Understanding and working with our communities.**  
We will embed diversity in decision making processes, ensuring representation from all sections of our communities and making sure our decisions are based on good quality data. We will improve and develop our consultation and engagement processes and seek to inform and involve all sections of the community, but particularly disadvantaged and excluded groups, in the development of our policies and the services we provide.
  - (2) **Leadership, partnership and organisational commitment.**  
We are committed to delivering effective leadership at every level and developing partnerships which prioritise equality, diversity and inclusion.

(3) **Responsive services and customer care**

We are committed to ensuring everyone can access our services and that any barriers are promptly identified and eliminated. Resources are directed to where residents need them most.

(4) **Diverse and engaged workforce**

We recognise the value and significance of a diverse and inclusive workforce. We will take positive steps to promote equality in employment by developing a flexible, professional and skilled workforce that is representative of the communities that we serve.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan

11.15 The Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan (Appendix 3) is a key document for setting out and recording how the council across all service areas will work to deliver the council's Equality Objectives.

11.16 The action plan comprises activities aligned to the four Equality Objectives set out in the Policy and support the council to evidence compliance with the LGA Equality Framework. Completion of the actions in the Action Plan in Appendix 3 will enable the council to self-certify that it has achieved the Achieving Standard of the Framework.

11.17 To deliver this action plan effectively, it is important for all staff to understand clearly their role in the delivery of equality and diversity related activity and feel confident in embedding equality considerations in all they do. The newly formed Equality, Diversity and Inclusion officer group, which includes representation from across the council, including Policy, Housing, HR and Communities will lead on delivery of the actions in the plan and collectively take responsibility for monitoring and reviewing progress of the actions at their regular meetings, ensuring targets are on track and delivered.

11.18 The Equality Act 2010 requires public authorities to publish information to demonstrate their compliance with the Public Sector Equality Duty and its own equality objectives. An annual Equality Monitoring report will be presented to this committee at its July meeting and evidence progress against the actions in the Action Plan. The previous monitoring report was reported to this Committee in July 2024 (report AG115, 18 July 2024).

11.19 Members of the EDI will also receive regular updates on the progress being made against the activities in the Action Plan.

12. OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED

There are no alternative options to this report as the recommendations support the council's statutory duty to comply with the Equality Act 2010 and Public Sector Equality Duty and to monitor such compliance.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS:-

Previous Committee Reports:-



CAB3331 Public Sector Equality Duty dated 25 January 2022

AG115 Equality, Diversity & Inclusion – Annual Equality Report 23/24, dated 18 July 2024

Other Background Documents:-

Local Government Association Equality Framework for Local Government.

APPENDICES:

Appendix 1 Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy

Appendix 2 Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2025-2028

Appendix 3 Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan

Appendix 4 Equality Impact Assessment