

## **OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY**

**DATE OF MEETING:** 16 MARCH 2021

**TITLE OF REPORT:** HART DISTRICT COUNCIL EQUALITY OBJECTIVES

**Report of:** Head of Community

**Cabinet member:** Councillor Stuart Bailey Portfolio Holder for Community

### **1 PURPOSE OF REPORT**

**1.1** To highlight the progress made against the Council's Equality Objectives 2017-2021.

**1.2** To seek Overview and Scrutiny Committee's comments on the proposed Equality Objectives for 2021-23.

### **2 RECOMMENDATIONS**

**2.1** That, subject to any suggested amendments, Overview and Scrutiny recommends to Cabinet the adoption of the Equality Objectives for the period 2021-2023.

### **3 BACKGROUND**

**3.1** Since April 2012, the Public Sector Equality Duty has required local authorities to publish one or more equality objectives at least every four years. Equality objectives help focus attention on the priority equality issues within an organisation in order to deliver improvements in policy making, service delivery and employment.

**3.2** The Council's Equality Objectives for the period 2017-2021 are set out in Appendix 1. Good progress has been made against these objectives including:

3.2.1 Creation of a set of standard equality monitoring questions for use in surveys and consultations and embedding of these in the council's customer feedback survey.

3.2.2 Development and roll-out of a template and guidance to support services to assess the impact on equalities of any relevant new policy or service, or change to a policy or service.

3.2.3 Delivery of Equality Impact Assessment training for staff to support them in assessing the potential equality impacts of policies, projects, and service changes.

3.2.4 Delivery of a range of other training and awareness opportunities including Equality and Diversity Awareness training for staff and Members, and diversity awareness sessions as part of All Staff briefings, including Autism awareness, Deaf awareness, Sight awareness, Armed Forces awareness, and an introductory course in British Sign Language.

3.2.5 Continued engagement with communities and partners through forums such as the Ageing Well and Starting Well Networks, and the Domestic Abuse Forum, to maintain a current understanding of community need and put in place schemes to address this.

3.2.6 Testing of different ways of communicating with younger residents such as Instagram advertising and video as part of the Your Way Forward campaign launched by the Hart Community Recovery Working Group.

- 3.3** The pandemic has affected everyone but it has not affected everyone equally. Covid-19 has brought into sharp focus the inequalities in our society. National evidence and local impact assessment highlights certain groups as experiencing disproportionately negative impacts compared to the general population.
- 3.4** Although the full impacts of the pandemic are not yet known, plans are now underway to move the organisation and the district towards recovery. This will include targeted action to address inequalities, as part of the Community Recovery plan which was formally adopted by Cabinet in October 2020.
- 3.5** The Equality Objectives for 2021-2023 will help to ensure that equality is at the fore as we work towards recovery with our communities and partners, and continue to develop and deliver programmes and services during these challenging times.
- 3.6** Three Equality Objectives have been identified for the period 2021-2023. These have been developed through engagement workshops with Leadership Team, Management Team and the Change Champions. The Change Champions group is made up of staff representatives from across the organisation whose remit is to shape and support change within the organisation.
- 3.7** The Local Government Association's Equality Framework for Local Government was used to guide discussions about possible objectives. The framework helps organisations to review and improve their performance for people with characteristics protected by the Equality Act 2010, through 4 improvement modules including: Understanding and working with your communities; Leadership and organisational commitment; Responsive services and customer care; and, Diverse and engaged workforce.

## **4 CONSIDERATIONS**

- 4.1** The draft Equality Objectives 2021-2023 are set out below and further detail can be found in Appendix 2:

4.3.1 To develop a communication and engagement strategy and guidance for the organisation in order to enhance our approach to engagement across the Council and to ensure we hear from our diverse communities.

4.3.2 To refresh our approach to assessing the equality impact of policies, programmes and services, to ensure this is integrated systematically into planning and decision-making across the organisation.

4.3.3 To refresh the equality information we hold about our staff and use this, alongside equality information from applicants and best practice from other organisations, in order to identify measures that encourage and support a diverse workforce.

**4.2** These objectives are in addition to work which may take place within individual service areas and programmes such as the Community Recovery programme. The Equality Objectives will ensure the Council has a strong foundation on which to carry out this work.

## **5 FINANCIAL AND RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

Is the proposal identified in the Service Plan?	Yes
Is the proposal being funded from current budgets?	Yes
Have staffing resources already been identified and set aside for this proposal?	Yes

The Community Service Plan includes an objective to support the organisation to deliver the 2 year Equality Objectives.

The Equality Objectives will be delivered within existing staff resources including the Council's Health and Policy Project Officer, Communications and Engagement Team, HR colleagues, and Change Champions group.

## **6 ACTION**

**6.1** It is requested that Overview and Scrutiny consider and provide comments on the draft Equality Objectives 2021-2023, and that subject to any amendments, recommends these to Cabinet for adoption.

**6.2** Once adopted, a more detailed action plan will be produced to support delivery of the objectives.

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## **APPENDICES**

Appendix 1 - Corporate Equality Objectives 2017-2021

Appendix 2 - Hart District Council Equality Objectives 2021-2023

## Appendix 1

### Corporate Equality Objectives 2017-2021

**Objective 1: Improve our understanding of Hart's community and its needs, through consultation and engagement, to complement existing data (e.g. Census data)**

Specific actions	RAG
Introduce a set of standard equality monitoring questions to the council's customer feedback survey and to other surveys and consultations as appropriate	
Continue to engage with a range of groups, organisations, and forums*, and establish further links where necessary, so that our understanding of Hart's community and its needs remains current and gaps in our understanding are filled	
Continue to use a range of communication channels to reach a range of groups within Hart's community, and develop new channels where gaps are identified including the use of video to reach younger generations	

\*Such as, the Hart Health & Wellbeing Partnership, Hart Ageing Well Network, Over 55s Forums, Hart Military Covenant Partnership, Hart District Association of Parish & Town Councils, Community Safety Partnership, North East Hampshire Domestic Abuse Forum, Vulnerabilities Operational Group, Hart Local Children's Partnership, Hart Housing Forum, Fleet Nepalese Community Group, Fleet Indian Community, Basingstoke & Deane, Hart & Rushmoor Learning Disability Local Implementation Group (LIG), Autism Friendly Fleet project group, Citizens Advice Hart, Hart Voluntary Action

**Objective 2: Use our improved understanding of Hart's community to continue to ensure our services are accessible and responsive to the needs of different groups, and to work with partners and communities to address needs and inequalities**

Specific actions	RAG
Develop and roll-out guidance and templates to support services to assess the impact on equalities of any relevant new policy or service, or change to a policy or service, using local equality information and evidence of local need as much as possible	
Continue to develop and roll out learning opportunities for staff and councillors, to help mainstream equalities considerations into the council's everyday business	
Continue to work with a range of groups, organisations, and forums, to address inequalities in health, wellbeing and quality of life of residents through partnership programmes such as the Homelessness Prevention Trailblazer	

**Objective 3: To continue to celebrate diversity and promote inclusion within our workforce and community**

Specific actions	RAG
Support local and national diversity awareness and inclusion activities such as Hampshire Pride, UK Older People’s Day, and disability awareness campaigns	
Set up a programme of diversity awareness sessions to help staff get to know different groups within Hart’s community	

**Objective 4: Continue to monitor the impact of our employment policies and practices to ensure all groups have access to employment opportunities**

Specific actions	RAG
Annual review and publication of workforce equality information and any adverse trends identified and addressed	Decision taken not to publish equality profile of staff due to some equality categories showing values of below 10 and therefore risk of individuals being identified. The Council has fewer than 150 employees and is therefore not required to publish this information under the Public Sector Equality Duty.

## Appendix 2

### Hart District Council Equality Objectives 2021-2023

No.	Objective	High level actions
1	To develop a communication and engagement strategy and guidance in order to enhance our approach to engagement across the Council and to ensure we hear from our diverse communities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Produce the strategy</li><li>• Create practical guidance for staff and Councillors around effective and meaningful engagement</li><li>• Deliver learning opportunities for staff around effective and meaningful engagement</li></ul>
2	To refresh our approach to assessing the equality impact of policies, programmes and services, to ensure this is integrated systematically into planning and decision-making across the organisation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Refresh and streamline Equality Impact Assessment template and guidance</li><li>• Embed Equality Impact Assessment in corporate project management and policy/service development process</li><li>• Set up a process whereby the Council's Change Champions group becomes a sounding board/critical friend for all Equality Impact Assessments for major projects or policy development</li><li>• Deliver a refresher workshop for relevant staff on equality impact assessment</li></ul>
3	To refresh the equality information we hold about our staff and use this, alongside equality information from applicants and best practice from other organisations, in order to identify measures that encourage and support a diverse workforce.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Review the equality data we currently hold about our staff and identify gaps in the information</li><li>• Engage with staff to enhance the equality information</li><li>• Analyse the equality information we hold about our applicants and staff to identify opportunities for encouraging and supporting a diverse workforce</li><li>• Review of best practice to identify potential measures for encouraging and supporting a diverse workforce</li></ul>