

Gravesham Borough Council

Equality Policy

1. Introduction

Gravesham Borough Council recognises and values the diversity of its communities, workforce and Members.

This policy outlines our commitment to developing opportunities for inclusion and cohesion so that everyone feels they can contribute and participate in the social, cultural and economic life of the Borough.

Under the Equality Act 2010 public authorities have legal duties to:

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

The act sets out a list of protected characteristics:

- age
- disability
- gender reassignment
- marriage and civil partnership
- pregnancy and maternity
- race
- religion or belief
- sex
- sexual orientation.

2. Equality Policy Aims and Vision

The council acknowledges and welcomes its legal duties and is proud to commit its ambitions to not only exceed its statutory duties but to deliver positive outcomes across its services.

This policy provides a clear commitment to achieving equality of opportunity in all of our activities including in the delivery of services to the community, as an employer and as a community leader.

We understand equality to be about fair and equal treatment for all but that this may require responding to individuals or groups differently to meet their needs or address differing levels of disadvantage and discrimination.

3. Council Equality Objectives and commitments

Under the Public Sector Equality Duty, the council is required to publish information each year to demonstrate compliance with the duty and to set at least one equality objective every four years.

The council's equality objectives have been revised and form an integral part of the new equality policy. These are not limited and can be revised and expanded to take account of emerging needs and local priorities.

The objectives for 2021-24 are:

- Understanding our communities and workforce and how people could be disadvantaged or discriminated against because of a protected characteristic
- Building a cohesive and inclusive borough as a service provider, employer and community leader

The Council will:

- Collect and publish information annually in the Community Data Profile which will enable Members, officers and services to be better informed about the make up of the communities they serve
- Develop council systems to capture reliable equality data which will inform decision making, ensuring a clear understanding of service users or, of services which are not being fully accessed by some groups of the community, thereby enabling further work to understand these gaps
- Deliver effective engagement to obtain the views of a wide cross-section of people who live and work in the Borough; ensuring two way dialogue and active involvement in matters that are important or affect the wider community
- Encourage participation in local democracy from under-represented groups to ensure all voices are heard and there is a clear understanding of the needs and views of the whole community
- Appoint a Member Champion to support Political and Executive commitment to reducing inequality, ensuring Equalities is at the heart of services and decisions.
- Set and publish annual equalities objectives for the Council, meeting our duty under the Equality Act and ensuring ongoing commitment and focus of our responsibilities
- Support a robust Equality Impact Assessment for all key decisions and service planning; ensuring due regard has been given to any potential impacts arising as a result of those decisions

- Produce an annual report assessing and evidencing the delivery of equality objectives across the council; ensuring transparency, learning and improvement in line with our commitment
- Integrate equalities objectives into service planning; ensuring equalities is embedded in service delivery at all levels
- Monitor service delivery to ensure all services are accessible and inclusive; identifying barriers and taking steps to address them
- Engaging our service users to identify improvements and ensure services meet the needs of all residents
- Encourage diversity within Elected Members and our workforce, representative of the local community and to collate and publish workforce data
- Ensure our workforce strategies encourage a supportive and inclusive working environment and present a range of accessible learning and development opportunities to support councillors and officers in achieving equality objectives and outcomes
- Build a positive health and wellbeing culture throughout the Council

The Equalities Objectives Action Plan within this policy, sets out how we will deliver and achieve these objectives. This work has been developed to support the Equality Framework for Local Government which helps councils to plan, implement and deliver real equality outcomes for employees and the community.

4. Monitoring and review

This council has implemented a “Golden Thread” to help deliver on its ambitions for the Borough. This is a continuous cycle connecting the corporate aims, policy framework and delivery plans of the council, with the actions of Members, officers and partners at all levels. This Equalities Policy is an integral part of this cycle.

Progress of work to deliver against the action plan will be regularly reviewed through an officer working group and reported annually to the Council’s Management Team Committee and Cabinet.

Equalities Statement and Objectives 2021-24

Overarching objectives

Objective 1 – Understanding our communities and workforce and how people could be disadvantaged or discriminated against because of a protected characteristic

Objective 2 – Building a cohesive and inclusive borough as a service provider, employer and community leader

Action Plan: developed from the Equality Framework for Local Government (EFLG)

	Action	Why are we doing it	Lead Officer	Deadline	EFLG 2020
Understanding and Working with your communities					
1	Collect and publish relevant, proportionate and appropriate information in the Community Data Profile.	Provide information about communities needs to help identify priorities for the local area	Corporate Performance Manager	Apr 2021	1
2	Review the information council systems capture in relation to users to enable better understanding of who is / is not accessing service Identify gaps in service access and understand the reasons for this; with a specific view on whether underrepresentation is as a result of a policy/service condition creating barriers.	To ensure the council provides services fairly across all community groups. Due consideration needs to be given to GDPR and ensure that only appropriate information is collected	Town Centre and Cultural Services Manager to develop with input from WMT	Jun 2021	2
3	Effective engagement to ensure the views of a wide cross-section of people who live and work in the area are obtained. To align work with the Community Engagement Strategy	To build positive community relations by enabling and supporting the community to influence local decisions. Align with the Community Engagement Action Plan	Community Involvement Officer	Ongoing	3

4	Support participation from under-represented groups in public life developing appropriate systems where gaps exist	To build positive community relations, making effective, supported decisions. Align with the Community Engagement Action Plan	Community Involvement Officer	Ongoing	6
Leadership and Organisational Commitment					
5	Political and Executive leadership are committed to reducing inequality: - appointment of a Member Champion; - amendment to Article 13 of Constitution to reflect a commitment within executive decision making.	To ensure a strong vision and commitment to equality. To ensure Member involvement is at the heart of the Equalities agenda	Management Team / Cabinet	May 2021	7
6	Set and publish equality objectives for the council to be reviewed annually	To meet our duty under the Equalities Act To build positive community relations by enabling the council to evidence it has made a positive difference to the community	Community Involvement Officer	Apr 2021	10
7	Ensure a robust Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) process is undertaken to ensure all executive decisions are accompanied by an EIA.	To ensure EIAs are integrated into planning and decision making. To enable the Council to demonstrate that equality outcomes are being delivered as a result of effective equality analysis and impact assessments	Management Team and Wider Management Team	June 2021	9
8	To present an annual report to Management and Committee for performance monitoring and scrutiny purposes	To review, evidence and challenge progress and delivery of equality objectives	Community Involvement Officer	Apr 2022	11
Responsive Services and Customer Care					

9	To ensure equality objectives are integrated into: - service business plans; - corporate project framework; and - corporate partnership framework	The council can demonstrate that improvements and equality outcomes are being considered and delivered across the organisation.	Management Team and WMT	2021/22	13
10	Work with managers to develop and use systems to: - sort data by equality groups - consult service users about service delivery to identify who is not accessing services - categorise any complaints relating to discrimination	To increase satisfaction with services amongst all users including those with protected characteristics	WMT	Initial milestone of June 2021. Align to Action 2	14
Diverse and engaged Council					
11	Collate and analyse workforce data to understand the workforce profile, including Members and reflectiveness of the local community and labour market.	To enable the Council to have a clear understanding of the make-up of the workforce and Elected Councillors and can demonstrate movement to greater diversity	Management Team, Human Resources & Committee Services	Initial milestone of June 2021	15 & 17
12	Ensure strategies and policies are inclusive and progressively address identified equality issues in areas such as training, recruitment and working practices for all staff and Members	To ensure Policies and strategies make a proven difference to the equality agenda for staff and Members	Human Resources	Sep 2021	16
13	The council assesses what equality related training is required, provides a range of accessible learning and development opportunities that support Councillors and officers in achieving equality objectives and outcomes. Link to the liP action plan	Services are provided by knowledgeable and well-trained staff.	Human Resources	Sep 2021	18

14	To work to build a positive health and wellbeing culture throughout the council <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Inclusive mechanisms in place to engage and involve all staff and Members - support for mental health issues in the workplace 	High satisfaction outcomes levels with the working environment across all staff groups included those with protected characteristics	Human Resources	May 2021	19
15	Support the Investors in People work plan ensuring that equalities is embedded throughout the liP Action Plan.	High satisfaction levels from all staff including those with protected characteristics	Human Resources and the liP officer working group	Apr 2021	