

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy

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Author	Sally Norman (Corporate Policy & Research Officer)
Department	Communities & Neighbourhoods
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1. Purpose

- 1.1 Stevenage Borough Council is committed to promoting equality, diversity and inclusion across its services and within its workforce. This policy builds upon the strong foundations laid down in 'Encouraging an Equal & Diverse Town & Workplace to 2021' and sets out the equality objectives that will underpin the council's approach to advancing equality, diversity and inclusion over the next 4 years (2022 to 2026).

2. Scope

- 2.1 This policy applies to all employees of the council, councillors and contractors or suppliers who provide services on behalf of the council. It underpins all policies, strategies and schemes.

3. Legal Framework

- 3.1 Stevenage Borough Council will comply with the requirements of the Equality Act (2010) and carry out functions in a way that gives due regard to:

- Removing discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is unlawful under the Equality Act (2010)
- Promoting equal opportunities between people who have a protected characteristic(s) and those who don't
- Encouraging good relations between people who have a protected characteristic(s) and those who don't

- 3.2 The nine protected characteristics set out in the Equality Act (2010) are:

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

Although the socio-economic duty has been removed from the Equality Act (2010), the council's elected members and officers are encouraged to consider the impact of their decisions on people who are less fortunate because of their social/economic background.

- 3.3 In-line with the Public Sector Equality Duty requirements we will publish:

- equality information relating to people with protected characteristics (employees, services users and residents) every year, including reporting and publishing of gender pay gap information about our workforce
 - a clear set of equality objectives every 4 years setting out what we need to achieve in order to fulfil the requirements of the Equality Act (2010)
- 3.4 To demonstrate that we have sought to identify and mitigate discrimination and inequality in-line with the Public Sector Equality Duty, we will complete and publish Equality Impact Assessments (as assessed against each protected characteristic group) when there is a new or revised policy, procedure, function, service or where there is a withdrawal of a service. These Equality Impact Assessments will be reviewed and updated throughout the development and implementation of proposals to ensure potential negative impacts are anticipated and mitigated where possible.

4. Objectives

- 4.1 Stevenage Borough Council is committed to listening to the voices of the communities it serves. Views upon our objectives have been sought from multiple voluntary and community sector groups, local people, organisations and partners. The following objectives set out what we need to do to advance equality, diversity and inclusion and respond to the requirements of the Public Sector Equality Duty.
- 4.2 Stevenage Borough Council will work, together with our partners, to:
- Understand the diverse needs of our communities and how to meet them effectively
 - Actively engage, encourage and support local people, groups and organisations to participate in local democracy to improve opportunity and inclusion
 - Promote equality, diversity and inclusion through our strategic partnerships, service delivery and supply chain(s)
 - Use local data to shape services so that the needs of our diverse population are met
 - Aim to improve the diversity of our organisation at all levels so that our communities are represented

- Ensure staff have the values, skills and knowledge to maintain a positive and inclusive workplace culture that values all employees equally

5. Valuing our Communities

- 5.1 Delivery against the ambitions of our Future Town Future Council Corporate Plan means that equality, diversity and inclusion must be embedded across all we do. Underpinning these ambitions are the Council Values and the 5 Co-operative Principles:
- The council as a strong community leader
 - Working together with the community and other agencies to provide services based on needs
 - Communities empowered to design and deliver services and play a role in their local community
 - A clear understanding between the council and our communities – this is what we do, this is what we will help you to do
 - Joined-up and accessible services that offer value for money and focus on the customer.
- 5.2 The Co-operative Principles and the Cooperative Neighbourhood ambitions of the Corporate Plan promote and support close working relationships between the council and the town's residents. We will continue to build upon these relationships and undertake regular consultation to ensure that the views of all communities are heard in the implementation of our equality, diversity and inclusion objectives.

6. Valuing our Workforce

- 6.1 The council's expectations of its workforce and our commitment as an employer to combatting harassment, discrimination and victimisation at work are set out in the Council Values, the Staff Code of Conduct and the Dignity at Work Policy. Within this framework the training of our staff will also be reviewed and updated in-line with equality, diversity and inclusion legislative requirements. We will continue to require new starters to complete equality, diversity and inclusion training as part of the induction process.
- 6.2 Building upon this existing framework we have, under the 'Inclusion and Wellbeing' theme of the Workforce Strategy: Future Town Future People (2020-2023) committed to further engagement with staff to nurture a progressive, inclusive safe and healthy working environment. This will include staff workshops aligned with national events that promote the advancement of equality, diversity and inclusion amongst protected characteristic groups.

- 6.3 Staff will be supported to complete Equality Impact Assessments (EqIA) through the introduction of a revised EqIA toolkit and form. The toolkit will be supplemented by additional briefings and communications designed to raise awareness and increase knowledge of best practice.

7. References and Resources

Annual Equality and Diversity Report's (Stevenage Borough Council)

<https://www.stevenage.gov.uk/about-the-council/equality-and-diversity/our-community-and-council>

Dignity at Work Policy

<https://mysbc.invotra.com/manual/dignity-work-policy/2-policy>

Encouraging an Equal & Diverse Town and Workplace to 2021

<https://www.stevenage.gov.uk/documents/equality-and-diversity/equality-and-diversity-policy-to-2021-acc.pdf>

Future Town Future Council Corporate Plan (Stevenage Borough Council 2021)

<https://www.stevenage.gov.uk/about-the-council/plans-and-performance/corporate-plan-future-town-future-council>

Our Cooperative Commitment (Stevenage Borough Council 2020)

<https://www.stevenage.gov.uk/documents/about-the-council/co-operative-commitment.pdf>

Staff Code of Conduct

<https://mysbc.invotra.com/manual/employee-handbook/3-code-conduct>

The Equality Act (2010)

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/contents>

Workforce Strategy: Future Town Future People (2020-2023)

<https://democracy.stevenage.gov.uk/documents/s26597/Item%204%20-%20Workforce%20Strategy.pdf>