

Agenda Item No: 9.5 **Report No:** 5/16

Report Title: Equalities Annual Report

Report To: Cabinet **Date:** 7 January 2016

Cabinet Member: Cllr Tony Nicholson

Ward(s) Affected: All

Report By: Nazeya Hussain, Director of Business Strategy and Development

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Purpose of Report:

The report sets out progress against the 2014/15 Equalities Action Plan and seeks approval of the current year's planned activities.

Officers Recommendation(s):

- 1 To note progress against LDC equality objectives
- 2 To approve proposed actions for 2016
- 3 To agree the current Equalities Objectives, as set out in paragraph 4.6, be retained for a further year.

1 Reasons for Recommendations

- 1.1 The Equality Act 2010 protects people from discrimination on the basis of the protected characteristics of disability, race, sex, age, sexual orientation, religion or belief, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, and marriage and civil partnership. The Act applies to employment rights, service provision, and the provision of goods and facilities.
- 1.2 The Act includes a public sector equality duty, which requires public authorities to proactively consider equality implications in all they do, taking due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination and harassment, advance equality of opportunity, and foster good relations.

- 1.3** Specifically, the Act also requires that local authorities set one or more 'Equality Objectives' (reviewed at least every 4 years) and publish information annually to show how they have met the provisions of the Act.
- 1.4** This report summarises the Equalities related work undertaken by the Council in 2014/15 and reports progress against LDC's Equality Objectives. This enables Members to scrutinise the Council's work in this area, and ensures that LDC fulfils the Public Sector Equality duty as set out above.

2 Equality Analysis of Council Services

- 2.1** As noted above, Councils are under a duty to assess our services and any new policy developments to ensure they eliminate discrimination and promote equality of opportunity and access.
- 2.2** In LDC, this is done by carrying out an 'Equality Analysis'(EA), which prompts officers to consider whether their service unreasonably discriminates against people who have one or more of the protected characteristics as set out in the Act. It also assesses how the service or policy meets the duties of the Act, and what positive impacts it could have for equalities.
- 2.3** EAs are carried out for any new service or policy, as part of the reporting process, and alongside this a rolling programme of scheduled Analyses of service delivery areas is set on a 3-year basis.
- 2.4** In 2014/15 a thorough review of the EA process was undertaken, and as a result this was restructured in order to make it more robust, focussing on achieving tangible outcomes. Wider staff consultation was brought in, with EAs now being reviewed by members of the staff Equalities Working Group.
- 2.5** The new format ensures that any recommendations identified as a result of EAs are signed off by a senior officer, and are turned into actions which can then be monitored and reported on.
- 2.6** Staff training is underway in using the new approach, which will be used for all EAs going forward.
- 2.7** At the same time, the programme of scheduled EAs and the EAs of new policies and services has continued. During the 2014/15 year, 2 programmed EAs were carried out in existing service delivery areas, and 55 EAs were carried out for new policies and procedures. These EAs resulted in 38 recommendations being made – some examples of the types of actions to come out of the process are listed below:
- Giving consideration to including requirement to promote apprenticeships in the Grounds Maintenance Contract
 - Ensuring Polling Stations are accessible and, where necessary, providing ramps to achieve this

- Carrying out consultation with stakeholder groups on the future vision for the Cemeteries Service
- Improving readability of the LDC website
- Considering needs of deaf customers in development of new telephony system
- Promoting physical activities in rural areas
- Communicating availability of couple/family leisure membership programmes to same-sex couples
- Ensuring fair and transparent processes are followed for allocating working arrangements in staff restructure processes
- Ensuring managers are aware of employees who may fall under the Equalities Act 2010 when applying the Sickness Policy
- Improving managers' knowledge of the Stress Policy and when to invoke the policy with employees
- Promoting and improving awareness of the Employee Assistance Programme throughout the organisation
- Implementing mandatory training for all employees on equalities through E Learning

3 Progress towards meeting LDC Equality Objectives

- 3.1** As well as the monitoring and review of services through the EA process, the Council set a number of high level Equality Objectives for the period 2012-16 to show how it will advance equality of opportunity across the District.
- 3.2** On an annual basis, an action plan sets out specific equalities-related work the Council commits to undertaking to help it meet these objectives. Appendix A details progress against the 2014/15 Equalities Action Plan, which includes issues such as staff training, data collection and promotion of diversity issues.
- 3.3** However, equality is at the heart of all that the Council does, and many wider projects have a significant impact on the achievement of our Equality Objectives. A number of key achievements over the 2014/15 year which promote equality and eliminate discrimination include the following:
- We have continued to support education and personal development of young people in the District, promoting work experience, apprenticeship and graduate trainee schemes. We also continue to work with Plumpton College to provide internships to students with learning difficulties, with

two recent graduates of this scheme having now found permanent roles within the Council.

- This year's intake of supported internship students from the college have helped design, produce and film a series of films produced to promote local nature reserves in the District. This series of films has been entitled 'Hidden Gems' and can be accessed from the Council's website and via YouTube.
- The LDC Website was redesigned, resulting in a much clearer and easier to navigate lay-out. Accessibility software was included in the redesign, using programmes such as BrowseAloud and SiteImprove which allow users with sensory disabilities to access the website. Since the launch of the new website in March, accessibility software has been used nearly 900 times by users accessing the website.
- We are close to completing development of the new shared service hub, Saxon House – providing an accessible 'one-stop shop' in Newhaven in partnership with East Sussex Fire and Rescue Service and Sussex Police. The LDC Access Officer has worked closely with the project to ensure the building is accessible, e.g. installation of hearing loops in reception areas.
- We have continued to restructure Council services to ensure an improved experience for our customers. The new 'Customer Services Hub' provides multi-skilled staff who can deal with a large proportion of enquiries at the first point of call. This means customers are dealt with by specialist staff, trained to deliver high quality customer service which focuses on the needs of the individual and avoids people being passed between departments before receiving a response.
- We have redeveloped the Tenants Resource Centre in Lewes, improving disabled access and modernising the facilities. This centre is used for community events, healthy eating cookery classes, exercise classes, a weekly food bank and education sessions for residents. It can also be used by any LDC tenants involved in community work, and is supported by LDC Tenant Participation staff.
- We carried out a review of our Community Grants programme in 2014/15 and, despite the budget pressures the Council is under, have maintained grants to key organisations such as CAB and SCDA at existing levels. We continue to work with the Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) Advocacy service 'Sompriti' to provide cultural and language support to BME residents. Examples of support provided in 14/15 include provision of bilingual advocacy to 12 clients, language classes for 5 clients, 4 BME women's group events during the year and ongoing support for the BME business forum.
- We have thoroughly updated our training for both Councillors and staff on Equality and Diversity and the induction programme for new Members included a session on equality issues and their relevance to Councillors.

- We supported the 'Rock Enrol' campaign locally to encourage young people to sign up to vote in the 2015 elections and promoted voter registration with local BME groups.
 - We have continued to run our staff volunteering scheme, which allows staff and councillors to donate up to 15 hours of their work time each year to work with schools and colleges in the district on various outreach activities with young people aged 14 to 19+ years. These activities can include working on specific projects with students as well as delivering talks on specific subjects or careers.
 - We have continued to celebrate diversity, promoting a number of themed events each year. In 2014/15 this included celebrating International Women's Day by promoting the work of local women entrepreneurs and raising awareness of the need to eliminate discrimination against people who are lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender.
 - The Council developed a Dignity at Work Policy designed to help provide a safe, healthy and happy working environment for all staff and to ensure that everybody is aware that bullying and harassment will not be tolerated. This included adopting the Stonewall 'No Bystanders' campaign, which encourages staff to 'call out' any bullying behaviour in the workplace.
- 3.4** In light of the good progress made against the Equalities Objectives and the Action Plan, it is pleasing to note that the Council has been awarded the Diversity Champion Public Sector Award in 2015 for the second year running.

4 Equalities Work Programme for 2016

- 4.1** The proposed action plan for 2016 is set out in appendix B. As well as a number of actions which continue to be progressed from previous plans, this also sets out a number of new areas of focus for the Council.
- 4.2** As the Council continues with its change programme, there will be a focus on ensuring no inadvertent adverse impacts are created on any protected groups. This will include providing better demographic information on residents of the District, and improving the way demographic information about those accessing our services is collected and used. This will help departments to ensure they are providing responsive services and identifying any issues of under-access by any sectors of the community.
- 4.3** We have launched a campaign to help make the District more 'Dementia Friendly'. In collaboration with the Alzheimer's Society, we will be running information sessions for staff and Councillors on what actions they can take to help people living with Dementia in the District. We will work with Partner organisations to investigate the possibility of applying for 'Dementia Friendly Community' status by 2017.

- 4.4** We will continue to focus on meeting the needs of all our staff, and will again promote our Dignity at Work policies in the coming year.
- 4.5** We will continue to campaign against violence against women and girls, through the 'White Ribbon' campaign.
- 4.6** Under the Equality Act, the Council is required to review its Equalities Objectives every 4 years. A review is therefore due this year of the current equalities objectives, which are:
- (a)** Theme: inspire exceptional contribution – awareness and understanding
 - Objective: ensure all councillors and staff receive appropriate learning opportunities so that good practice in equality and diversity is embedded in the culture and work practices of the organisation.
 - (b)** Theme: unswerving commitment to customer service – flexibility and responsiveness
 - Objective: ensure effective use of engagement, consultation, monitoring and equality analysis to develop services responsive to the diverse needs of our community
 - (c)** Theme: fairness and accessibility
 - Objective: ensure offices and services are accessible to people with disabilities
- 4.7** It is the view of officers that the current objectives are still relevant and can guide the current year's programme of work. As the Council is in a period of significant change, and will continue to be over the next 12 months, it is proposed that the current objectives are retained for 2016 and reviewed again in 2017, subject to Members agreement.

Financial Appraisal

- 5** There are no direct financial implications as a result of this report.

Legal Implications

The Legal Services Department has made the following comments:

- 6** The general public sector equality duty referred to in paragraph 1.2 above is conferred by section 149(1) of the Equality Act 2010; and the specific duties referred to in paragraph 1.3 are conferred by The Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties) Regulations 2011.

The information which the council is required to publish annually to demonstrate its compliance with the general public sector equality duty must include, in particular, information relating to persons who share a relevant protected characteristic (e.g. disability, race, sex, age) who are—

- (a) its employees;
- (b) other persons affected by its policies and practices.

Information about this and the council's equality objectives must be published in such a manner that ensures the information is accessible to the public.

Risk Management Implications

- 7** A risk management form has been completed and no risks were identified.

Equality Screening

- 8** It is the function of this report to scrutinise the progress of the Council towards meeting its equality objectives in eliminating discrimination, promoting equality of opportunity and fostering good relations. For this reason it is not considered necessary to carry out a separate Equality Analysis of the report itself.

Background Papers

- 9** Equality Act 2010 [Guidance](#)

Appendices

- 10** Appendix A – Equalities Action Plan 2014/15
Appendix B – Draft Equalities Action Plan 2016

Appendix A: Equalities Action Plan 2014-15: Year End Position Statement

External Awareness & Promotion							
Ref	Linked to	Action	Lead Officer	Resources	Target date	Priority	Comments
EAP 1	Equality Objective 1. EFLG 2.18, 2.29	Develop publicity to support equality monitoring	Equalities Officer/ Communications Officer	Officer time, design & print costs	2015/16	Low	Following review by Equality Working Group, equality monitoring work rolled over to 2015/16 plan
EAP 2	Equality Objective 2. EFLG 2.11, 2.13	Evaluate collaborative working with schools project at the end of the academic year	Equalities Officer	Officer time	Feb 2015	High	Completed, offer to schools/colleges continued
EAP 3	Equality Objective 1. EFLG 2.9, 2.29	Promote external awareness & equality through seasonal Celebrating Diversity themes	Equalities Officer/Communications Officer	Officer time, design & print costs	April 2015	High	Completed
Internal Awareness & Skills Development							

Appendix A: Equalities Action Plan 2014-15: Year End Position Statement

Ref	Linked to	Action	Lead Officer	Resources	Target date	Priority	Comments
EAP 4	Equality Objective 1. EFLG 2.18, 2.29	Provide training to managers & lead officers on equality monitoring policy	Equalities Officer	Officer time	2015/16	Low	Following review by Equality Working Group, equality monitoring work rolled over to 2015/16 plan
EAP 5	Equality Objective 1, EFLG 2.6, 2.29	Provide training for managers & lead officers on equality analysis	Equalities Officer	Officer time	April 2015	High	Completed
EAP 6	Equality Objective 1. EFLG 2.29	Develop e-learning courses for staff & councillors on equalities topics	Equalities Officer/Human Resources Manager	Officer time	April 2015	Low	Following review by Equality Working Group, e-learning work rolled over to 2015/16 plan
Ref	Linked to	Action	Lead Officer	Resources	Target date		Comments
EAP 7	Equality Objective 1. EFLG 2.29.	Source an equality podcast for staff & councillors	Equalities Officer/Graduate Intern	Officer time, technology	April 2015	Low	Completed
EAP 8	Equality Objective 1. EFLG 2.9, 2.29	Promote internal informal learning & promotion of equalities	Equalities Officer/Communications Officer	Officer time, design & print costs	April 2015	High	Completed

Appendix A: Equalities Action Plan 2014-15: Year End Position Statement

		through seasonal Celebrating Diversity themes					
EAP 9	Equality Objective 1. EFLG 2.27, 2.29.	Undertake a publicity campaign against harassment & bullying in the workplace	Equalities Officer	Officer time, design & print costs	Sept 2014	High	Completed
Workforce & Compliance							
EAP 10	Equality Objective 2	Develop equality profiles for wards within Lewes district using East Sussex in Figures & Local Futures software	Equalities Officer	Officer time, possible investment in software/technology	March 2015	High	Completed
EAP 11	Equality Objectives 2 & 3. EFLG 2.5	Undertake review of our approach to equalities & develop a strategy	Head of Business Strategy & Performance	Officer time	2015/16	Medium	Completed
Ref	Linked to	Action	Lead Officer	Resources	Target date	Priority	Comments
EAP 12	Equality Objectives 1, 2 & 3.	Undertake a self-assessment against the achieving level of the Equality Framework for Local Government	Equalities Officer	Officer time	April 2015	Low	Equalities Working Group to review what this will involve and decide if appropriate for LDC at this time.

Appendix A: Equalities Action Plan 2014-15: Year End Position Statement

EAP 13	Equality Objective 2. EFLG 2.11, 2.29	Consider options for promoting participation in public life by under-represented groups, including as elected representative.	Scrutiny Officer	Officer time	April 2015	High	Completed
EAP 14	Equality Objective 2. EFLG 2.18	Review equality monitoring policy & procedures	Equalities Officer	Officer time, possible investment in software/technologies	April 2015	Low	Following review by Equality Working Group, equality monitoring work rolled over to 2015/16 plan
EAP 15	Equality Objective 2, EFLG 2.6, 2.19	Review equality analysis procedure & guidance	Equalities Officer	Officer time	April 2015	High	Completed
Ref	Linked to	Action	Lead Officer	Resources	Target date		Comments
EAP 16	Equality Objective 2. EFLG 2.6, 2.15, 2.23	Review existing programme of equality analysis & develop a new programme relevant to the new service structure	Equalities Officer	Officer time	April 2015	High	Completed
EAP 17	Equality Objective 2. EFLG 2.8, 2.15.	Review our strategic approach to the scrutiny of equalities.	Equalities Officer/ Scrutiny Officer	Officer time, Councillor time	April 2015	High	Completed

Appendix A: Equalities Action Plan 2014-15: Year End Position Statement

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Appendix A: Equalities Action Plan 2014-15: Year End Position Statement

EAP 23	Equality Objective 3	Review accessibility features of new website design	Access Officer/Web Services Manager	Officer time, community input	April 2015	High	Completed
EAP 24	Equality Objective 2. EFLG 2.18	Develop equality monitoring of complaints	Head of Customer Services/Equalities Officer/Performance Officer	Officer time, possible investment in software/technology	April 2015	Medium	Postponed until a decision can be taken on new customer relationship management system.
EAP 25	Equality Objective 3	Ensure proposed premises at Newhaven site are accessible	Access Officer	Officer time	April 2015	High	Completed

Appendix B: Equalities Action Plan 2016

Ref	Action	Lead Officer	Resources	Target date
1.	Provide training for managers & lead officers on equality analysis	Equalities Officer	Officer time	Complete for all heads of service and managers by March 2016
2.	Develop e-learning courses for staff & councillors on equalities topics on Learning Pool/Nexus Academy	Equalities Officer/Human Resources Manager	Officer time	March 2016
3.	Promote internal learning & promotion of equalities through seasonal Celebrating Diversity themes	Equalities Officer/Communications Officer	Officer time, design & print costs	3 themes completed by end 15/16
4.	Undertake an Equal Pay Review	Human Resources Manager	Officer time	Dec 2015
5.	Develop equalities data reporting on the workforce profile in line best practice & open data transparency	Equalities Officer/Performance Officer/Human Resources Manager	Officer time.	Dec 2015
6.	Provide Cabinet with Annual Equalities Report for 2015/16	Equalities Officer	Officer time	January 2017
7.	Promote use of equality profiles for wards within Lewes district with staff and Councillors	Equalities Officer	Officer time	March 2016
8.	Review equality monitoring policy & procedures	Equalities Officer	Officer time, possible investment in software/technologies	Dec 2015
9.	Provide training to managers & lead officers on equality monitoring policy	Equalities Officer	Officer time	March 2016

Appendix B: Equalities Action Plan 2016

Ref	Action	Lead Officer	Resources	Target date
10.	Develop publicity to support equality monitoring	Equalities Officer/ Communications Officer	Officer time, design & print costs	January 2016
11.	Offer 'Dementia Friends Information Sessions' to all staff and Councillors	Equalities Officer/Access Officer	Officer time	March 2016
12.	Investigate the resources needed and partners available to assist with seeking accreditation as a 'Dementia Friendly Community'	Equalities Officer	Officer time	March 2016
13.	Promote 'White Ribbon' Activities and seek reaccreditation as White Ribbon authority in partnership with ESCC and the Lewes Domestic Abuse Working Group	Equalities Officer	Officer time	March 2016
14.	Promote external awareness & equality through seasonal Celebrating Diversity themes	Equalities Officer/Communications Officer	Officer time, design & print costs	3 themes completed by end 15/16