

Report for: Community PDG

Date of Meeting:	26 March 2024
Subject:	Single Equality Scheme
Cabinet Member:	Cllr Jane Lock, Cabinet Member for Working Environment
Responsible Officer:	Matthew Page, Corporate Manager for People, Performance and Waste Stephen Carr, Corporate Performance and Improvement Manager
Exempt:	N/A
Wards Affected:	All
Enclosures:	Appendix 1: Single Equality Scheme 2024 Appendix 2: Equality Action Plan Report 2023/24

Section 1 – Summary and Recommendation(s)

To provide Members with an update on action taken to help meet the Council's statutory duties under the Equality Act (2010).

Recommendation(s):

- 1. That Members recommend to Cabinet that they approve the Single Equality Scheme together with the Equality Objectives for 2024/25.**

Section 2 – Report

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1** The Equality Act (2010) replaced previous anti-discrimination laws with the aim of simplifying the law and removing inconsistencies. The Act places a requirement on public bodies to demonstrate compliance with each part of the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED).

- 1.2 Under the Equality Act 2010 local authorities have a duty to have ‘due regard’ to:
- Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Act;
 - Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it; and
 - Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.
- 1.3 Underpinning the General Duties are Specific Duties which require public authorities to:
- Publish information that demonstrates how the authority is meeting the General Duty (updating this at least annually).
 - Publish one or more specific and measurable objectives to achieve the General Duty (updating these at least every four years).
 - Publish the information and objectives in an accessible way, so that the public can see for themselves how the authority is performing.
- 1.4 ‘Information’ includes that relating to the protected characteristics of employees and other people affected by policies and practices:
- Workforce profiles (this can include data about recruitment, training, promotion, flexible working, maternity returners, grievance/issues, dismissal, leavers, service, pay, satisfaction, Members). Only applies where the organisation has more than 150 employees.
 - Service user/community profiles (this can include information about outcomes such as health, safety and wellbeing, achievement such as skills and education, access to services, satisfaction, complaints, feedback, demographics).
- 1.5 Case law has clarified that considerations of equality should not only be placed at the centre of policy development but that bodies subject to the Public Sector Equality Duty must apply this duty to the carrying out of any functions of a public body not just statutory functions.
- 1.6 Local authorities also have specific duties under the Act to publish Equality Information annually and ‘Equality Objectives’ at least every four years. All such information is either included in this report or signposted to. The council’s [Equality, Diversity and Inclusion webpages](#) were updated in 2023/24 to better promote this information. There is also a new webpage which lists all the [Equality Impact Assessments](#) the Council has completed (since September 2023) that are in the public domain.
- 1.7 The Single Equality Scheme has been reviewed and updated by officers (Appendix 1). This is a detailed policy document which sets out the council’s approach to Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion. This document has been revised and updated for 2024/25.

- 1.8 The Council is a member of the [Devon Joint Declaration for Equality](#). The declaration demonstrates our commitment to the achievement of equality and fairness for all people in the county and our district. Through it, the Council also recognises the importance and benefits of an equal society and that the Council will behave in ways that reflect an equal society.
- 1.9 The Council wants to understand the needs and views of our residents and people working in our district. We have a dedicated [web page](#) to access all our consultations and welcome residents to participate. The public and interested stakeholders are encouraged to respond to consultations via the "[Let's Talk Mid Devon](#)" portal.
- 1.10 Whilst the Council aims to provide high-quality services to all who live or work in the Mid Devon area, we recognise people may wish to complain, or pay a compliment to our officers or give us suggestions on how we could improve a service. Full details for providing feedback are available on our [website](#) using a number of different mediums.

2.0 Equality Objectives

2.1 In 2023/24, the council had five Equality Objectives, these were:

1. Meeting the needs of an aging population
2. Overcoming the problems faced by vulnerable individuals caused by rural isolation
3. Overcoming the effects of multiple disadvantage in families with complex needs
4. To continue to concentrate on mental health issues within Mid Devon District Council and the wider community
5. Secure decent digital connectivity for all of Mid Devon (Corporate Plan aim).

2.2 Progress to meet the Equality Objectives in 2023/24 is detailed in the Equality Action Plan Report at Appendix 2.

2.3 A change to our approach to Equality Objectives from 2024/25 is proposed to make them more specific and measurable whilst retaining the ambitious outcomes we wish to deliver.

2.4 The Equality Objectives for 2024/25 are arranged by six themes, and proposed measurement is provided in parentheses. They have been discussed by the EDI Group.

1. Meeting the needs of an aging population.

- Implement the Meeting Housing Needs Supplementary Planning Document (narrative update)
- Provide housing adaptations in MDH housing stock (Number per year)
- Provide adaptations for adults in private sector housing through grant awards (Number per year)

- Increase our understanding of MDH tenants through the “Getting to Know You” project (% of residents with data captured)

2. Overcoming the problems faced by vulnerable individuals caused by rural isolation.

- The Council, and partners, effectively signpost individuals to relevant information e.g. neighbourhood officers signpost vulnerable individuals to support, MDH surgeries (narrative update).
- Implement the Care Leavers Council Tax Discount Policy (household uptake)
- Carry out MDH Neighbourhood roadshows, “Neighbourhood Matters” based in communities where tenant satisfaction is low (Number of events/ attendees)

3. Overcoming the effects of multiple disadvantage in families and individuals with complex needs.

- As a partner of The Community Safety Partnership (CSP), practitioners within the Council support to transition from being Trauma Aware to Trauma Informed (CSP Annual report)
- Tackling damp and mould in council housing stock (% of all homes have received damp and mould relating inspections or works in the past 5 years)
- Increase the understanding of MDH tenants through the “Getting to Know You” project (% of residents with data captured)
- Deliver on Serious Violence Duty through the Devon Preventing Serious Violence Strategy 2024-29 (narrative update)
- Provide adaptations for children in the private housing sector (Number of grants approved)
- Monitor cases dealt with where hoarding, cluttering or cleanliness in the home is an issue (Number of cases)
- Monitor homeless approaches (Number per year)
- Undertake private rented housing inspections and monitor those that related to damp and mould where action is taken (Number per year)

4. To continue to concentrate on mental health issues within MDDC and the wider community.

- Include regular articles contained within internal communications (Number of articles in “The Link”)
- Provide free at the point of use leisure services for adult carers, parent carers and young carers (provisional, uptake)
- Increase our understanding of MDH tenants through the “Getting to know You” project (% of residents with data captured). Supported by the MDH Vulnerability Policy.
- As a partner of The Community Safety Partnership, practitioners within the Council support to transition from being Trauma Aware to Trauma Informed (CSP Annual report)
- Host financial support drop in sessions supported by Navigate (Number of events/ attendees)

5. Secure decent digital connectivity for all of Mid Devon

- Monitor and lobby for better digital connectivity (narrative update)

6. Continuous improvement at Mid Devon District Council

- Staff and Councillors undertake training to improve their understanding of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (Equality and Diversity course, % completion/ uptake)
- Develop a better understanding of our workforce (% of workforce with equality monitoring data)
- Improve accessibility to council facilities, particularly accessible toilets (projects completed)

2.5 Progress to meet our Equality Objectives will continue to be monitored by the Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) Group and be reported annually to the Community PDG.

3.0 Further Updates on Equalities, Diversity, and Inclusion

3.1 We publish information on our website about our [pay policy](#) and [pay supplement policy](#). Within our pay policy we include reporting on the council's gender pay gap, this is included at Table 1 for ease of reference.

	Mean Average Hourly Rate	Median Average Hourly Rate
Male	£15.52	£13.91
Female	£15.37	£14.17
HMRC % Gap	0.97%	-1.87%

Table 1: Mid Devon District Council gender pay gap, as reported in the Pay Policy 2023.

3.2 The mean gender pay gap for the whole economy (according to the ONS Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings (ASHE) figures) is 7.7%. Mid Devon District Council's mean gender pay gap is 0.97%, therefore, significantly lower than that for the whole economy.

3.3 The Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Group meets four times per year. This group contains both council officers and elected members. It has had a wide ranging focus over the past 12 months, including:

- Monitoring and compiling the Equality Action Plan Report
- The review of the Single Equality Scheme and the Equality Objectives
- A review of accessibility information
- Review of the Equality Impact Assessment template and guidance

3.4 Devon Audit Partnership undertook an internal audit of Equality arrangements at the Council in autumn 2023, with an audit opinion of "Reasonable Assurance".

- 3.5 Following an internal audit recommendation, the Equality Impact Assessment process was reviewed in 2023/24 with a new template and guidance finalised in January 2024.
- 3.6 In February 2023, Mid Devon District Council signed up to the Disability Confident Scheme to be recognised as a Disability Confident Committed employer.
- 3.7 Through the Changing Places grant fund, the council has been awarded more than £150,000 to improve our existing disabled toilet provision at our leisure centres. Work is being undertaken at Exe Valley and Culm Valley.

3.8 Inclusion and Diversity Working Group

An update from the Inclusion and Diversity Group was reported to Scrutiny committee on 19 February 2024. This Member Working Group is taking forward work relating to Motion 564 relating to greater inclusion in council business by under-represented groups including women.

- 3.9 The Working Group are taking forward a number of recommendations including:

- Training for all Councillors in protected characteristics
- Training for chairs and vice chairs in inclusive practices
- In person and online sessions describing the role of being a councillor
- Undertake a survey into councillor's views on increasing inclusion and diversity
- How to build councillor networks (particularly for women or those with caring responsibilities).

Financial Implications

The Single Equality Scheme does not have any financial implications itself beyond those identified in individual service's equality impact assessments.

Legal Implications

The Single Equality Scheme contributes to the Council's complying with the Equality Act (2010). Failure to adopt Equality Objectives or to collect relevant data could lead to the Council being in breach of the Equality Act 2010.

Risk Assessment

Approving the Single Equality Scheme and Equality Objectives helps to ensure the council meets its legal responsibilities in relation to the Equality Act (2010).

Impact on Climate Change

No impacts identified for this report.

Equalities Impact Assessment

The Single Equality Scheme sets out the Council's approach to delivering improved equality outcomes for the district. It details an equality profile for the area and outlines specific objectives the council is undertaking.

The adoption and monitoring of Equality Objectives helps to ensure that the needs of all protected groups are taken into account in service delivery. The reframing of these objectives will ensure that progress being achieved by the Council can be more easily measured and demonstrated.

Relationship to Corporate Plan

The Equality Objectives reflect Corporate Plan aims under the Community and Corporate priorities.

Section 3 – Statutory Officer sign-off/mandatory checks

Statutory Officer:

Agreed by or on behalf of the Section 151

Date:

Statutory Officer:

Agreed on behalf of the Monitoring Officer

Date:

Chief Officer:

Agreed by or on behalf of the Chief Executive/Corporate Director

Date:

Performance and risk: Steve Carr

Agreed on behalf of the Corporate Performance & Improvement Manager

Date: 01 March 2024

Cabinet member notified: (yes/no)

Report: Exclusion of the press and public from this item of business on the published agenda on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information. (No)

Appendix: Exclusion of the press and public from this item of business on the published agenda on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information. (No)

Section 4 - Contact Details and Background Papers

Contact: Dr Steve Carr
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Background papers: