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1 Introduction

- 1.1 The Equality Act 2010 brought all previous equality legislation into one place. The Corporate Inclusion and Equality Policy has been developed to reflect the requirements of that Act for the period 2018-21.

2 Our Commitment

- 2.1 Rochford District Council has a key role to play in ensuring equal opportunity across the District and in ensuring that there are good relations between the different community groups.
- 2.2 The Council is therefore committed to equality of access and equality of opportunity for all those people living and working in the District. It is committed to understanding the composition of its communities and to understanding the barriers that face them.
- 2.3 Both employees and our customers will be treated with fairness and respect, and without discrimination. Appropriate monitoring of service usage will take place in order to understand our customers and ensure that any barriers to services are removed.
- 2.4 Similarly, the profile of the Council's workforce and its recruitment processes will be monitored in order to understand the issues that affect them and ensure equal treatment for all.
- 2.5 The Council is committed to carrying what is needed to meet its equality aims and will ensure that appropriate actions are put in place to achieve them.

3 Equality Legislation

- 3.1 The Equality Act 2010 came into force in October 2010 and the Public Sector Equality Duty (section 149 of the Act) came into force on 5 April 2011. The Public Sector Equality Duty replaces the previous race, disability and gender equality duties and it sets targets and requirements for those who are governed by it.
- 3.2 The Public Sector Equality Duty covers nine protected characteristics. Follow links for detailed factsheets <https://www.rochford.gov.uk/council-and-democracy/equalities-and-diversity>
- **Age** (where this is referred to, it refers to a person belonging to a particular age (e.g. 32 year olds) or range of ages (e.g. 18-30 year olds)).
 - **Disability** (a person has a disability if s/he has a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on that person's ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities).
 - **Sex** (a man or a woman).
 - **Gender Reassignment** (the process of transitioning from one gender to another).
 - **Marriage and Civil Partnership** (in England and Wales marriage is no longer restricted to a union between a man and a woman but now includes a marriage

between same-sex couple. Same-sex couples can also have their relationships legally recognised as ‘civil partnerships’. Civil partners must not be treated less favourably than married couples – except where permitted by the Equality Act).

- **Pregnancy and Maternity** (pregnancy is the condition of being pregnant or expecting a baby. Maternity refers to the period after the birth, and is linked to maternity leave in the employment context. In the non-work context, protection against maternity discrimination is for the 26 weeks after giving birth, and this includes treating a woman unfavourably because she is breastfeeding.)
- **Race** (refers to the protected characteristic of Race. It refers to a group of people defined by their race, colour and nationality (including citizenship) ethnic or national origins.
- **Religion and Belief** (religion has the meaning usually given to it but belief includes religious and philosophical beliefs including lack of believe (e.g. Atheism). Generally, a belief should affect your life choices or the way you live to it to be included in the definition).
- **Sexual Orientation** (whether a person’s sexual attraction is towards their own sex, the opposite sex or both sexes.)

3.3 Organisations covered by the Duty must have due regard to three equality ‘aims’. These are to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation
- Advance equality of opportunity between different groups
- Foster good relations between different groups

Specific Requirements

3.4 As well as the need to have due regard to these three aims, the regulations also set specific requirements for the public sector to fulfil. It is required that local authorities publish information to show their compliance with the Equality Duty and refresh that information at least annually. Secondly, local authorities have to publish relevant equality objectives from April 2012 and at least every four years after that.

3.5 Briefly, some of the key points of the Duty are as follows:

- Organisations must be aware of the general equality duty
- The duty must be taken into account when policies are drawn up and decisions are made
- It’s good practice to keep records of how equalities were considered during decision making
- To collect and use relevant equality information

- Engage with people to gather equality information and also to understand the barriers that affect them
- Where services are outsourced or delivered by external suppliers the requirement to meet the equality duty applies equally to them too.

4 How will we meet the Requirements of the above Legislation

4.1 The Council is committed to delivering the requirements of the Equality Act 2010 and the Public Sector Equality Duty. All Council services, staff and elected Members will adhere to the Council's Equality Policy and will work to ensure that equalities are embedded in everything that they do.

4.2 The Council therefore adopts the following principles in order to meet those requirements:

- The principles of the Equality Act 2010 and the Public Sector Equality Duty will be embraced. The specific tasks and targets within the Duty will be delivered in a way that is proportionate to the demographic make up of the District.
- Each service area to be aware of the equality issues that impact on its daily business.
- When considering changes to service delivery or the introduction of new charges, the Council must consider Equality issues through completion of an Equality Impact Assessment.
- All Committee and Portfolio Holder Reports include a section on equalities in order that the subject is included within decision making and a record kept.
- Appropriate equalities information is collected in order that equality information can be published at least annually. More importantly, that information will be used to understand our customers and residents, their needs and the barriers that they face.
- Equalities will be included, as appropriate, within procurement arrangements.
- Any other tasks or projects that are considered to be appropriate to achieving the Public Sector Equality Duty will be instigated as and when necessary.

5 Equality objectives

5.1 Equality objectives for 2018-21 are in Appendix 1.

6 Monitoring

6.1 The Council will monitor equality progress on a regular basis and report back to both the Leadership Team and Council Members, as appropriate.

6.2 Equalities impact will be analysed during the decision making processes.

7 Policy Review

- 7.1 This policy will be reviewed when there is a major change to the equality legislation or in 2021, whichever is soonest.

