



Our Equality & Diversity Policy

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September 2018

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1. Introduction: About the Equality Policy

1. We can only achieve a flourishing future for our whole community if everyone in Redcar & Cleveland is given the chance to participate fully in our economic, social and cultural life.
2. Promoting equality means treating people fairly, valuing differences and removing the barriers that prevent people from fully participating in public life and realising their full potential. In recent years, we have worked extremely hard to reduce inequality. Yet we know that people still experience disadvantage and unfair treatment simply because of who they are or the background from which they come.
3. The Council is committed to taking positive action that opens up services and opportunities to people that need them, ensure that difference and diversity is embraced, and that people are always treated fairly and with respect. Equally, the Council is committed to eliminating discrimination and will therefore take action to challenge and correct behaviour where the high standards expected are not upheld.
4. This Policy sets out the key principles of equality that guide the way in which we make decisions, provide services; recruit and support our employees; work with other organisations; and involve local people. It is supported by other policies (e.g. HR), strategies and action plans that set out the Council's priorities and activities that will ensure we meet our Equality Duty.

2. Our Flourishing Future: Vision, Values and Action

- 5 Borough Council agreed overwhelmingly to support the new Corporate Plan, "Our Flourishing Future" in October 2017, and a Delivery Plan was agreed in May 2018. Since then, we have been reviewing the Equality & Diversity Policy.
- 6 Our Flourishing Future sets out our new vision: A Flourishing Future Forged From a Proud Past.
- 7 It also sets our four new core values that guide how we should work individually and as a Council. These are:
 - Keeping Communities at our Heart

- Bold and Ambitious
 - Caring and Respectful, and
 - Delivering our Best
- 8 The plan sets out nine clear priorities and a full range of actions underpinning all the priorities that have equality & diversity at their heart. Some commitments are explicit, for example, “we will tackle poverty and inequalities, focusing on some of today’s big challenges including welfare reform and personal debt”. A very many others, clearly have equality & diversity drivers behind them, including increasing the numbers of properties that provide supported, independent living; providing tailored training and support to help people not yet equipped for work to get jobs; and supporting vulnerable and at-risk young people and adults to be protected and safe from harm.

3. Our Legal and other Responsibilities

- 9 The Council will always set out to meet all of its legal duties in respect of equality & diversity. The key piece of legislation is the **Equality Act 2010**, which came into effect in October 2010. It replaced and consolidated the raft of anti-discrimination laws with a single Act, and has implications for us as an employer and a service provider.
- 10 The Act contains a Public Sector Equality Duty, which requires all public bodies and private bodies that deliver a public function, to consider the needs of diverse groups when designing and delivering services. Under the Act, the Council must have due regard to the need to:
- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act;
 - Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not; and
 - Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- 11 Having due regard for advancing equality involves
- Removing or minimising disadvantages suffered by people due to protected characteristics;
 - Taking steps to meet the needs of people from protected groups where these are different from the needs of other people

- Encouraging people from protected groups to participate in public life or in other activities where their participation is disproportionately low.
 - Tackling prejudice and promoting understanding between different communities
- 12 The Council must also comply with the Conventions contained within the **Human Rights Act 1998**, which sets out the fundamental rights and freedoms to which individuals in the UK have access.
- 13 Sometimes, it is important to recognise that we want to go further than the legal minimum. In this respect, the Council adopts the Holocaust Memorial Remembrance Alliance definition of antisemitism as set out on the Alliance’s web-site (below).
- 14 The following websites provide a wealth of useful information about Equality and Human Rights:
- www.equalityhumanrights.com www.homeoffice.gov.uk/equalities www.acas.co.uk
www.holocaustremembrance.com

4. Who Are we Protecting?

15 The Equality Act 2010 and Public Sector Equality Duty protects people on the grounds of specified “protected characteristics.

- Age
- Sex
- Disability
- Gender reassignment
- Pregnancy and maternity leave
- Race, religion or belief
- Sexual orientation
- Marital status or civil partnership (in relation to employment issues)

16 We also recognise that one of the main factors that contributes to inequality is poverty. Indeed, poverty can often have a disproportionate impact on protected groups. Because of this, our equality analysis (see below) was widened to include analysis in relation to:

- Looked after children
- People and families on lower incomes
- People and families who are homeless
- People who have served in the armed forces

5. Who is Responsible for Equalities?

- 17 Equality is the responsibility of every Councillor and every employee of the Council, as well as organisations who provide services on behalf of the Council.
- 18 Our customers also have a responsibility to treat our staff with dignity and respect, and to tell us if they require assistance or adjustments to enable them to access our services. We will do what we can to remove barriers to access.
- 19 Overall responsibility for ensuring that our decisions are compliant with equality legislation lies with the Council's Chief Executive, who is supported by the Executive Management Team and their Departmental Management Teams. We follow a robust process to ensure we consciously think about the three aims of the equality duty as part of our decision-making process and that information and analysis is captured and shared with Members when making decisions.

6. Making Fair Decisions

- 20 Every day, decisions are made within the Council that affect the lives and relationships of local people, service users and its employees.
- 21 The Equality Analysis is used to help us make fair, sound and transparent decisions that are based on a robust understanding of the needs and rights of the groups and individuals who may be affected. The Council's Equality Analysis process helps to ensure that appropriate equality information is provided, with a summary in the Member report, so that Members can take this into account when making decisions. It is also used to identify positive actions that would mitigate any negative effects of our decision (e.g. budget reductions), or enhance any benefits for protected groups and others at risk of disadvantage. It does not mean that there will never be any negative impact on protected characteristics and groups, but that we should be fully aware of them, and are taking appropriate mitigating actions to minimise the impact.
- 22 Equality analyses are published on-line with agendas and reports for Member decisions. These can be made available on request for anyone without access to the internet.

7. Collating, Analysing and Reporting on Equality Information

- 23 We will collate, analyse and publish information about equality and diversity in the workforce, service delivery and our communities. This will be used to help us develop and monitor equality objectives, inform our service planning and decision making, identify ways of improving performance and demonstrate compliance with the Equality Duty.
- 24 We will routinely ask staff and service-users to provide information about their personal characteristics. This will only be done where the information is relevant to the aims of the equality duty – for example if there are known or perceived inequalities in relation to a particular outcome or service. The Council will always make it clear that disclosure of personal information is optional. However, without gathering some form of evidence, it may be difficult to monitor the impact of policies and procedures on certain protected groups. The Council endeavours to overcome this by creating a culture of trust whereby individuals are comfortable disclosing such information. Whenever we ask for equality information, we will explain why the information is needed, how it will be used, and how we will ensure that privacy will be protected.
- 25 The Council will uphold its duty to protect an individual's right to privacy, and will not publish information that could identify an individual. Nor will the information be used to identify an individual or make a decision about them purely on the grounds of the information that has been provided in relation to their protected characteristics. All personal data will be processed in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) principles and in compliance with our Data Protection Registration with the Information Commissioner.

8. Making our services accessible and easy to use

- 26 We constantly strive to deliver services that are easily accessible by all who need them, and to support people to participate in public life. This in turn will help us achieve our duty to foster good relations between different groups and individuals. We are committed to having conversations with residents, service users and customers to develop an understanding of how we can break down barriers and better meet their needs. This may involve making adjustments to the way we deliver services where it is reasonable to do so.

- 27 Our Top 10 Customer Care Commitments have been designed with input from our customers and staff. These commitments are based around core principles of fairness, equality, respect and inclusivity.
- 28 We will make sure that everyone has the information they need about our services. We will provide all information in plain English, and in alternative formats on request.
- 29 We are committed to engaging effectively with local people, community groups and other stakeholders. We will actively seek their views about the Council and the services they receive, as well as involving them in shaping services and local decision making.
- 30 We actively support those who find it difficult to vote in elections (for example, people who are elderly, infirm or have physical or learning disabilities). This is done through an annual outreach programme of events and a public awareness strategy which is produced for each specific election.

9. Agreeing what we will do to advance equality and making sure we do it

- 31 We will continue to advance equality through the delivery of our vision, values, priorities and actions in our Corporate Plan, Our Flourishing Future. This is performance managed to ensure that we do what we set out to do, and progress can be seen in regular reports to Cabinet, Scrutiny, and annually to Council, as well as in communications including BBB (internally) and This is Redcar & Cleveland residents' magazine. This will ensure that equality is an integral part of our day-to-day business planning and activities.

10. Valuing our People

- 32 We will treat all of our staff, and anyone who applies to work for us fairly and equally. Our employment practice is guided by the principles of equality and fairness. This includes recruitment, terms and conditions, appraisals, learning and development, promotion and when ending employment. Our activities and approach to achieving this are set out in Valuing our People, as well as our suite of HR policies. If you would like copies of any of the policies, please contact Resources Business Support on 01642 444619.
- 33 We want our staff to reflect the diversity of the communities that we serve, and

will take steps to encourage applications from groups who we know are under-represented in our workforce. We are a 'Disability Confident' employer (a scheme that replaced the two ticks 'Positive about Disabled People' scheme in recognition of our commitment to employ, retain and develop the skills of disabled people.

- 34 All new starters are required to undertake equality & diversity awareness training in the first few weeks of employment. Our appraisal process identifies specific training and development needs, including equality & diversity, which are then met by sourcing appropriate courses or on-the-job training and development. Further information is contained in our HR policies.
- 35 All employees and elected members should be treated with respect and dignity in the workplace. The Council will not tolerate bullying and harassment in any form, and the Staff Concerns Policy sets out how individual members of staff might raise concerns they have about actions taking place within the workplace. It covers issues around bullying and harassment; grievances and whistleblowing, and any areas of concern that staff might have.
- 36 Employees from protected groups will be supported and encouraged to organise their own interest groups where they can meet to share information, raise concerns and raise awareness. It is recognised that an individual's identification with one or more of the protected characteristics is a matter of self-definition. The Council will support individuals and groups of its staff to achieve their full potential as employees, and therefore supports self-organisation. This can be done in a number of ways, including:
- Talking to the trades unions
 - Raising the idea with line managers
 - Suggesting an article in the staff newsletter, BBB
- 37 in order to gauge wider interest and support for self-organised groups within paid work time, whilst recognising the needs of our service users.

11. Working with Other Organisations

- 38 The Council will use its role as community leader to promote equality in partnership working with public, private, voluntary and community sector organisations.
- 39 The Council procures a wide range of goods, services and works from third party suppliers. As part of the Council's procurement process, suppliers are required to sign a Declaration of Undertaking in relation to Equality and Diversity which confirms their compliance and commitment to all legal obligations in relation to Equality and Diversity. It is the responsibility of all Officers connected with procurement activities to ensure that, where appropriate, equality is embedded into all aspects of the process from writing specifications to contract management. The Council's Contract Procedure Rules are available in the Council's constitution.
- 40 We have a range of Teeswide joint commissioning mechanisms where we also work to ensure equality & diversity is promoted through our collective commissioning power.
- 41 It is important to note here that the Council will use more of our spending power in the local community. Local traders will benefit from our contracts, and local people will gain from employment opportunities. The term 'social value' is often used to describe this, but put simply, the more we spend locally, recycling our money in the local economy, and the more we encourage partner organisations to do the same, the more we will reduce poverty and the impacts this has on inequalities.

12. Protecting People

- 42 Safeguarding children, young people and adults who may be at risk of abuse and / or mistreatment is everybody's business, wherever they work and whatever they do for the Council. This includes staff, elected members and people who work for organisations that provide services on behalf of the Council. We strive to ensure that all staff and elected members are trained in Safeguarding Awareness.
- 43 The Council has an absolute commitment to the well-being of children and young people. Our anti-bullying policy aims to reduce incidents of bullying that involve children and young people, and to encourage children, young people and adults to show respect and consideration for others. The Redcar & Cleveland Local Safeguarding Children Board is responsible for agreeing how organisations in

Redcar & Cleveland co-operate to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and young people and ensure the effectiveness of what they do. More information is on the LSCB website:

<http://www.peoplesinfolnet.org.uk/kb5/redcar/directory/service.page?id=bUOiX8laKfl>

- 44 We will continue to work with our partners to tackle domestic and sexual violence, and will implement actions in our Corporate Plan Delivery Plan and sister plans to ensure that all residents in the Borough have a fundamental right to live their lives in an environment which will not tolerate domestic violence, will support victims/survivors and will hold perpetrators accountable for their actions.
- 45 The Council is also committed to working in partnership to ensure that hate crime is not tolerated within our communities and neighbourhoods. The term 'hate crime' can be used to describe a range of criminal behaviour where the perpetrator is motivated by hostility, or demonstrates hostility towards, the victim's disability, race, religion, sexual orientation, or transgender identity. It can include verbal abuse, intimidation, threats, harassment, assault and bullying, as well as damage to property. The perpetrator can also be a friend, carer, or acquaintance who exploits their relationship with the victim for financial gain or some other criminal purpose. Nobody should suffer because of who they are, and nobody should put up with it. We will raise awareness of hate crime, encourage victims to report incidents, support known victims and take actions against offenders as necessary.