

Committee: Cabinet
Date: September 2016
Title: **Equality Scheme**
Portfolio Holder: Cllr Lesley Wells

Agenda Item

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Key decision: No

Summary

1. This report considers a new set of objectives and related actions to replace those agreed in 2012.

Recommendations

2. The draft revised Equality Scheme is approved for the purposes of consultation, and use on an interim basis.

Financial Implications

3. The objectives and actions are intended to inform how the council prioritises its budget, and does not necessarily imply a requirement for additional resources.

Background Papers

4. The following papers were referred to by the author in the preparation of this report and are available for inspection from the author of the report.

None

Impact

- 5.

Communication/Consultation	See body of the report
Community Safety	
Equalities	See body of the report
Health and Safety	
Human Rights/Legal Implications	The Council has a legal obligation to prepare and to publish equality objectives at four-yearly intervals. (Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties) Regulations 2011

Sustainability	
Ward-specific impacts	All
Workforce/Workplace	One of the draft revised objectives relates specifically to the council's workforce

Situation

Development of Uttlesford District Council's Equality Scheme

6. As part of the Equality Duty, Uttlesford District Council compiled and published a wide variety of equality related data on the 31 January 2012. This is an annual requirement and the data has subsequently been refreshed annually, most recently on 29 January 2016.
7. The Equality Information and the Equality Duty was updated on 31 January 2014. The Public Sector Equality Duty is made up of a general equality duty which is supported by specific duties. Under the terms of the specific duty, the Council had to:
 - Prepare and publish one or more objectives by the 6 April 2012 that will support the council in meeting the requirements of the general Equality Duty
 - Ensure that those objectives are specific and measurable
 - Publish those objectives in such a manner that they are accessible to the public
8. Having consulted on the Single Equality Duty, and having had regard to the aims of the Corporate Plan and the themes of the Local Strategic Partnership the Council identified two objectives as its Local Equality Scheme 2012 to 2015.

The 2012 Equality Objectives

- a. To develop an improved level of understanding of Uttlesford's community and its needs through data gathering, research and community mapping

Specific Action: Create an Equalities monitoring system that ensures equalities is included in customer service questionnaires and service user surveys, building on the information accessed from the Census and engaging with our community to inform them as to why this information is required.

- b. To continue to work to improve access to and take-up of Council Services by developing engagement across all the protected equality groups.

Specific Action: Continue to support and organise events and projects that promote and celebrate equalities such as the Tenant Forum,

Citizens Panel, Ageing Well Forum, International Day for Older People, LGBT History month, Disability History Month, Community Partnership work around Age, Community Safety, Domestic violence, Hate Crime

9. The council committed to engage with members of the public, voluntary organisations, staff and Trade Unions to demonstrate that their earlier input had informed the objectives, particularly in a community that was recognised to be changing.
10. Under its Equalities Scheme 2012-2015, the council created a monitoring system collecting equalities information from service users, and organised and supported promotional events and projects. The Tenant Forum, Citizen's Panel and community partnership work on the themes of community safety, domestic violence and hate crime continue to be a focus.
11. The Council has acknowledged that it needs to sustain and build on the achievements to date whilst recognising the need to review and refresh its approach having regard to the new assessment framework and the new legislation which came in to existence in 2014, the Equality Standard for Local Government for Local Government. The Council is actively working towards the Achieving level of the Equality Framework for Local Government

Revised draft Scheme

1. We will seek to ensure that we have an awareness of diversity in the community and the particular needs and priorities of minority groups, and take into account the equality impacts in preparing, reviewing and implementing policies and programmes and seek to mitigate any adverse impacts

Specific action

- we will review our local tax support scheme annually;
- we will support tenants to cope with welfare reform by providing advice, information and financial information;
- we will use equalities impact assessments
- we will address needs and gaps indicated by reviewing service user information
- we will use toolbox talks and training.

2. We will ensure that equality is central to our thinking as we deliver our corporate plan

Specific actions

- we will prepare a health and wellbeing strategy with elements that particularly focus on vulnerable groups;
- we will support those in sheltered housing to maintain good health by increasing physical activity sessions;

- we will keep our HRA capital programme and its resourcing under review, including delivery of a £3.5m planned maintenance programme of investment in the council's housing stock;
 - we will seek to obtain more resources for disabled facilities and home repair assistance grants by developing new approach using a revolving fund.
 - we will develop a voluntary sector support strategy
 - we will carry out an equal pay review
3. We will seek to ensure when consulting with our community that we will endeavour to improve participation and representation of all its constituent elements, having regard to the legally protected characteristics under the Equality Act

Specific actions –

- we will launch a new council tenant engagement initiative “Get involved”
 - we will seek to monitor equalities information when people respond to key consultations
4. We will identify, and where possible address, the root causes of disadvantage and discrimination.

Specific actions –

- we will develop a vulnerable persons strategy based on evidence of need;
 - we will ensure that we meet our safeguarding responsibilities.
 - we will deal with relevant casework in accordance with our housing, homelessness and housing options and housing allocations policies and strategies.
 - we will develop an action plan to address issues of poor quality housing, fuel poverty and slips and falls prevention in private sector rented housing.
 - we will complete our programme of licensed caravan site inspections.
 - we will have regard to the needs of the gypsy and traveller community as part of the new local plan making process
5. We will foster good relations between different groups and communities.

Specific actions

- we will develop a strategy for developing sustainable tenancies and neighbourhoods;
- we will monitor new anti-social behaviour policies and report progress to the Housing Board
- we will participate in the Syrian refugees voluntary resettlement programme.

We will need to consult on this revised draft scheme before confirming its objectives and actions. We will need to coordinate this around other consultation plans.

Risk Analysis

Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigating actions
Failure to adopt an up to date scheme could result in challenge to a decision of the council	2 The more likely risk is from failing to take account of an EQulA in making a decision that did have significant equalities impacts	3 A decision could become void	

- 1 = Little or no risk or impact
- 2 = Some risk or impact – action may be necessary.
- 3 = Significant risk or impact – action required
- 4 = Near certainty of risk occurring, catastrophic effect or failure of project.