

DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION ANNUAL REPORT 2023-2024

Head of Service:	Andrew Bircher, Acting Director of Corporate Services
Wards affected:	All Wards
Urgent Decision?(yes/no)	No
If yes, reason urgent decision required:	N/A
Appendices (attached):	Appendix 1 – Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Annual Report 2023-2024

Summary

The report summarises the activities undertaken in 2023-2024 by the Council to progress our Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Framework. The Framework includes three thematic objectives that demonstrate how we are meeting our responsibilities under the public sector equality duty.

Recommendation (s)

The Committee is asked to:

- (1) Note and comment on the activities undertaken in 2023-2024 by the Council to progress our Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Framework (Appendix 1).**

1 Reason for Recommendation

- 1.1 To provide members of the Audit and Scrutiny Committee details of the actions undertaken in respect of the public sector equality duty.

2 Background

- 2.1 As a public body, we have a specific duty under the public sector equality duty to publish equality objectives that demonstrate how we are meeting our responsibilities.
- 2.2 Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 places a general equality duty on the Council to “have due regard to the need to-
 - a) “eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;
 - b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;

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c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.”¹

2.3 The characteristics protected under the Act are:²

- Age
- Race
- Gender reassignment
- Religion or belief
- Sex
- Marriage and Civil Partnership
- Disability
- Sexual orientation
- Pregnancy and maternity

2.4 Guidance on the public sector equality duty puts forward that compliance with the duty “should result in:

- better-informed decision making and policy development
- a clearer understanding of the needs of service users, resulting in better quality services which meet varied needs
- more effective targeting of policy, resources and the use of regulatory powers
- better results and greater confidence in, and satisfaction with, public services
- a more effective use of talent in the workforce
- a reduction in instances of discrimination and resulting claims.”³

3 Our objectives and activities in respect of the public sector equality duty

3.1 The Council is committed to equality, diversity and inclusion as an employer, as a provider of services and as a leading agency in building resilient communities in the Borough. Following a consultation, the Council developed a [Diversity, Equity and Inclusion \(DEI\) Framework 2021-2024](#) in 2021 alongside its [equality and diversity ambitions](#). As defined in the DEI Framework, ‘Diversity’ refers to the traits and characteristics that make people unique. ‘Equity’ refers to fairness and equality in outcomes, not just in support and opportunity. ‘Inclusion’ refers to the behaviours and social norms that ensure people feel welcome.

3.2 Approved by the Strategy and Resources Committee in March 2021, the DEI Framework includes these three thematic objectives that demonstrate how we are meeting our responsibilities under the public sector equality duty:

- Developing inclusive communities and creating community cohesion.
- Ensuring engagement and accessible services.
- Building workforce inclusivity.

3.3 Appendix 1 summarises the activities undertaken by the Council in 2023-2024 to support and progress the above three objectives of the DEI Framework. These activities are incorporated in service delivery plans and some are included in the Annual Plan for 2023-2024.

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4 Risk Assessment

Legal or other duties

A [recent letter](#) from the Minister for Women and Equalities has reminded all local authorities about the importance of complying with the public sector equality duty.

4.1 Equality Impact Assessment

4.1.1 None for the purposes of this report.

4.2 Crime & Disorder

4.2.1 None for the purposes of this report.

4.3 Safeguarding

4.3.1 None for the purposes of this report.

4.4 Dependencies

4.4.1 The production of this report is dependent on the contribution by the service areas in supporting our diversity, equality and inclusion activities.

4.5 Other

4.5.1 None for the purposes of this report.

5 Financial Implications

5.1 There are no financial implications in this report.

5.2 **Section 151 Officer's comments:** None arising from the contents of this report.

6 Legal Implications

6.1 There are no legal implications arising from this report.

6.2 **Legal Officer's comments:** None arising from the contents of this report.

7 Policies, Plans & Partnerships

7.1 **Council's Key Priorities:** The following key priorities are engaged: Effective Council; Cultural and Creative; Safe and Well; Opportunity and Prosperity; and Smart and Connected.

7.2 Service Plans:

7.2.1 This matter is included within the current Service Delivery Plan.

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7.3 **Climate & Environmental Impact of recommendations:**

7.3.1 No implications for the purposes of this report.

7.4 **Sustainability Policy & Community Safety Implications:**

7.4.1 No implications for the purposes of this report.

7.5 **Partnerships:**

7.5.1 Some activities rely on the ongoing partnership working with agencies/partners.

8 **Background papers**

8.1 The documents referred to in compiling this report are as follows:

Previous reports:

- Strategy and Resources Committee, 30th March 2021, 7.00 pm, Epsom & Ewell Borough Council's Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Framework 2021- 2024, no. 79. Online available: <https://www.epsom-ewell.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/council/DEI%20Framework%202020-2024.pdf>
- Audit and Scrutiny Committee, 17th November 2022, 7.30pm, Epsom & Ewell Borough Council's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Report, no. 18. Online available: <https://democracy.epsom-ewell.gov.uk/documents/s24969/Equality%20Diversity%20Inclusion%20Report.pdf>

¹ HM Government (2023) *Equality Act 2010*. Online available: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15> [last accessed 10/01/2024]. For further guidance on the Act, see HM Government (2023) *Public Sector Equality Duty: guidance for public authorities*. Online available: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/public-sector-equality-duty-guidance-for-public-authorities/public-sector-equality-duty-guidance-for-public-authorities#introduction> [last accessed 10/01/2024].

² Ibid. endnote no. 1.

³ Equality and Human Rights Commission (2023) *Technical guidance on the Public Sector Equality Duty: England*. Online available: <https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/guidance/public-sector-equality-duty/technical-guidance-public-sector-equality-duty-england-0?return-url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.equalityhumanrights.com%2Fsearch%3Fkeys%3Dtechnical%2Bguidance> [last accessed 10/01/2024].