

DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION ANNUAL REPORT 2024-2025

Head of Service:	Andrew Bircher, Acting Director of Corporate Services
Report Writer	Senior Performance & Risk Officer
Wards affected:	All Wards
Appendices (attached):	Appendix 1 – Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Annual Report 2024-2025

Summary

The report summarises the activities undertaken in 2024-2025 by the Council to progress its Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Framework. The Framework includes three thematic objectives that demonstrate how the Council is meeting its responsibilities under the public sector equality duty.

Recommendation (s)

The Committee is asked to:

- (1) **Note and comment on the activities undertaken in 2024-2025 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, the Council has a specific duty under the public sector equality duty to publish equality objectives that demonstrate how its meeting its equality 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:
 - “Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and any other conduct prohibited under the Act
 - Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it

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- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it.”

2.3 The characteristics protected under the Act are:

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

2.4 Guidance on the public sector equality duty puts forward that compliance with the duty will 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 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 for 2021- 2024 which was approved by the Strategy and Resources Committee in 2021. In the 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 The [DEI Framework](#) was refreshed in 2024 with the same thematic objectives:

- 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 2024-2025 to support and progress the above three objectives of the DEI Framework, and therefore demonstrates how it’s meeting its responsibilities under the public sector equality duty.

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4 Risk Assessment

Legal or other duties

A letter from the Minister for Women and Equalities in December 2023 reminded all local authorities about the importance of complying with the public sector equality duty. Failure to comply could lead to judicial challenge.

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:

- Epsom & Ewell Borough Council (2021) *Epsom & Ewell Borough Council's Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Framework 2021-2024*, Strategy and Resources Committee, 30th March 2021, no. 79. Online available: <https://democracy.epsom-ewell.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=132&MId=970> [last accessed 20/12/2024].
- Epsom & Ewell Borough Council (2024) *Epsom & Ewell Borough Council's Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Framework [2024 version]*. Online available: <https://epsom-ewell.gov.uk/residents/communities-wellbeing/equality-diversity> [last accessed 20/12/2024].
- Epsom & Ewell Borough Council (2024) *Equality and Diversity Annual Report 2023-2024*, Audit and Scrutiny Committee, 1st February 2024, no. 78. Online available: [Epsom and Ewell Democracy](#) [last accessed 20/12/2024].