

## DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION ANNUAL REPORT 2025-2026

<b>Head of Service:</b>	Andrew Bircher, Assistant Director of Corporate Services
<b>Wards affected:</b>	All Wards
<b>Urgent Decision?(yes/no)</b>	No
<b>If yes, reason urgent decision required:</b>	N/A
<b>Appendices (attached):</b>	<b>Appendix 1</b> – Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Annual Report 2025-2026

### Summary

The report summarises the activities undertaken in 2025-2026 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 2025-2026 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 prohibited by or under [the] Act;

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- b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
- c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.”

2.3 The characteristics protected under the [Act](#) are: age; disability; gender reassignment; marriage and civil partnership;<sup>1</sup> pregnancy and maternity; race; religion or belief; sex; sexual orientation.

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.”<sup>2</sup>

## **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 service and as a leading agency in building resilient communities in the Borough. Following a consultation, the Council developed a Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Framework (DEI Framework) for 2021- 2024 which was approved by the Strategy and Resources Committee in 2021. 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 The [DEI Framework](#) was refreshed in 2024 with the same thematic objectives:

- developing inclusive communities and creating community cohesion

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<sup>1</sup> Please note that under the Public Sector Equality Duty, marriage and civil partnership is not a “relevant protected characteristic” for aim b) and c) (see para. 2.2), as the Act only covers this characteristic in employment contexts.

<sup>2</sup> Equality and Human Rights Commission (2023) Technical guidance on the Public Sector Equality Duty: England, p. 20. Online available: <https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/guidance/public-sector/public-sector-equality-duty/technical-guidance-public-sector-equality-duty-0?return-url=https%3A//www.equalityhumanrights.com/search%3Fkeys%3Dtechnical%2Bguidance> [last accessed 08/01/2026].

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- ensuring engagement and accessible services
- building workforce inclusivity

3.3 Appendix 1 summarises the activities undertaken by the Council in 2025-2026 to support and progress the above three objectives of the DEI Framework. These demonstrate how we are meeting our responsibilities under the public sector equality duty.

3.4 The 2024 Modern Slavery Statement has been reviewed and the 2025 Statement is available on the Council's website: [Modern Slavery Statement 2025 web.pdf](#).

## 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 None for the purposes of this report.

#### 4.5 Other

4.5.1 If committee members have a detailed question(s) on particular aspects of this report (including Appendix 1), it is requested that these be submitted in advance of the meeting where possible, to enable officers to discuss with the relevant service manager.

## 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.

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### 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 The production of this report has been based on the contribution by service areas in supporting our diversity, equality and inclusion activities.

#### 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>
- The refreshed Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Framework of the Council since 2024. Online available: [Epsom Ewell Borough Council's Diversity Equity and Inclusion Framework.pdf](https://www.epsom-ewell.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/council/DEI%20Framework%202020-2024.pdf)

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- Audit and Scrutiny Committee, 6th February 2025, Epsom & Ewell Borough Council's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Report 2024-2025. Online available <https://democracy.epsom-ewell.gov.uk/documents/s34575/Equality%20and%20Diversity%20inc.%20modern%20slavery%20Annual%20Report%202024-25.pdf>