

Appendix A – Report to District Executive in June 2016

Equality Objectives Progress Review and Update

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Purpose of the Report

To provide District Executive committee with a progress update on the Equality Objectives action plan 2012-2106 for note and comment and to approve the Equality Objectives 2016-2018 and actions as amended.

Forward Plan

This report appeared on the District Executive Forward Plan with an anticipated Committee date of June 2016.

Public Interest

Equality Objectives are required as a specific duty under the Equality Act 2010. They set out how we will deliver and achieve our equality aims through key tasks in our action plan.

Recommendations

The District Executive committee will be asked to consider the recommendations below. Scrutiny committee are asked to discuss and comment on the recommendations and the wider content of the report and action plan.

District Executive to:

- Note the progress of the current Equality Objectives 2012-2016 (Appendix 1)
- Approve the Equality Objectives 2016 – 2018 as amended
- Approve the amended action plan (Appendix 1)

Background

Equality Objectives are required as a specific duty under the Equality Act 2010.

SSDC's Equality Objectives 2012-2016 set out how we were planning to deliver and achieve our equality aims and compliance with the general equality duty (S149), through key tasks in our action plan.

As well as being a legal requirement, setting objectives delivers an outcome approach to establishing challenging but measurable targets to improve service delivery and the way we employ our staff.

Equality Objectives 2016 -2018

It is proposed to extend the existing actions and introduce some new ones whilst retaining the current overarching Equality Objectives (with some minor word amendments to align with the Council Plan 2016):

1. Equality is at the heart of our decision making process
2. Accessibility – deliver services that meet the needs of the community
3. To build healthy and self-reliant communities

Legislation and statutory duties

Public Sector Equality Duty

The Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED), section 149(1) of the Equality Act 2010, requires SSDC to consider all individuals when carrying out our day- to- day work, in shaping our policies, in delivering services, and in relation to our staff.

Under the **general equality duty**, (GED), when carrying out our activities and functions, we are required to have due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct prohibited by the Act;
- Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not share it;
- Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

We are also required to put in place:

- ‘...steps to take account of disabled persons’ disabilities.’ S(149)(4)

The Equality Act 2010 identifies who is protected under the legislation and refers to them as Protected Characteristics. They are:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender Reassignment
- Marriage and Civil Partnership
- Pregnancy and Maternity
- Race
- Religion or Belief
- Sex
- Sexual Orientation

When the original Equality Objectives were drawn up in 2010, SSDC also recognised the following to be taken into consideration:

- Armed Forces (Assessing the impact in local authority decision making in relation to Armed Forces personnel has also been an action within the Armed Forces Covenant)
- Carers
- Rurality

Specific equality duties

The **specific equality duties** help us to achieve the GED (Regulations 2 and 3). These comprise of preparing and publishing **equality information** and the setting of **equality objectives**. These statutory duties help us to analyse relevant evidence and information, and to ensure that we embed equalities into our normal business planning and decision-making processes.

The specific duties require the council to publish equality information annually and equality objectives at least every four years.

Consultation and engagement

The Equality Objectives 2016 – 2018 have been produced following consultation and engagement with service users, community representatives, partners and staff.

The Equality Objectives are consistent with SSDC's Council Plan 2016-2021

Monitoring and review

The Equality Steering Group (ESG) has representation from a number of protected characteristic groups and is chaired by the Portfolio Holder for Equality and Social Inclusion.

The ESG acts as a 'critical friend' in assessing the likely impact of proposed strategies, policies, services and functions on the promotion of equality of opportunity for staff and service users.

The Equality Steering Group has also overseen and approved the monitoring, review and updates within our Equality Objectives action plan on an annual basis since its implementation in 2012. This has meant that the actions have remained relevant and accurate, particularly in the light of new information and local changes, and has enabled us to make further refinements to our action plan to ensure continuing progress on delivery.

Scrutiny committee have also played an important role in monitoring performance, and considering equalities across all of the council's decisions.

Outcomes

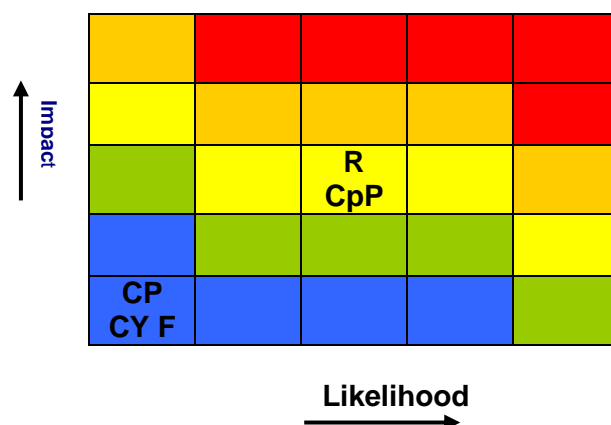
There have been some notable successes since the Equality Objectives were implemented including:

- Access reviews of our community and village hall buildings that have led to significant access improvements to local venues across the district
- Key policies, strategies and decisions are analysed for equality impacts with positive outcomes such as the review of car park charges for Blue Badge holders, the Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Policy with aims to improve availability of wheelchair accessible vehicles, and the production of Easy to Read consultation documents for changes to council tax.
- Our on-going work with our Deaf residents has begun to build up trust between the council and the Deaf community and has also resulted in new customers attending the Octagon Theatre for the British Sign Language (BSL) signed performances.
- SSDC received a commendation from the Government's Accessible Britain Challenge for reducing the barriers that deny people access to services and for our equalities work
- SSDC's Gypsy and Traveller Forum has been identified by a number of authorities as delivering best practice.
- Our engagement with local Carers is helping us to understand and put in place customer support needs

Financial Implications

There are none that cannot be met from existing resources.

Risk Matrix



Key

Categories	Colours (for further detail please refer to Risk management strategy)
R = Reputation	Red = High impact and high probability
CpP = Corporate Plan Priorities	Orange = Major impact and major probability
CP = Community Priorities	Yellow = Moderate impact and moderate probability
CY = Capacity	Green = Minor impact and minor probability
F = Financial	Blue = Insignificant impact and insignificant probability

Corporate Priority Implications

The Equality Objectives are aligned to the Council Plan 2016- 2021

- Putting the customer first when developing plans and services
- Supporting people and communities, enabling them to help themselves
- Being open, transparent and with greater accessibility to those that need to use council services
- Working with partners to improve services, efficiencies, resilience and influence
- Embracing innovation and improved technology to improve customer service and access
- Empowering a confident, flexible workforce

Carbon Emissions & Adapting to Climate Change Implications

Consideration has been given to climate change implications, and there is limited impact. YouTube links via to increase access to information e.g. British Sign Language information videos and ROK Talk text to speech translator on SSDC website.

Equality and Diversity Implications

An Equality Analysis has been completed on the Equality Objectives and has demonstrated no adverse or negative impacts.

There has been wide consultation on the Objectives in relation to the protected characteristics.

Background Papers:

Equality Objectives Action Plan 2016-2018 (attached as Appendix B)

South Somerset Equalities Profile 2015:-

http://www.southsomerset.gov.uk/media/816445/south_somerset_equalities_profile_2015.pdf