

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

*Working towards greater equality in
Maidstone*



Public Sector equality duty

Rights and Responsibilities

As a public authority the Council has responsibilities and a duty to fulfil for both its residents and staff. This was introduced in the Equality Act 2010 which replaced previous anti-discrimination laws with a single Act; simplifying the law, removing inconsistencies, making it easier to understand and comply with. It also strengthened the laws to help tackle inequality and discrimination.

The Equality Duty applies to public bodies which includes the Council and other organisations carrying out public functions.

It supports good-decision making by ensuring public bodies consider how different people will be affected, helping them to deliver policies and services that are efficient, effective and accessible to all by meeting different types of people's needs.

The duty applies to nine 'protected characteristics': age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion and belief, sex and sexual orientation.

What the Council must do to fulfil this duty is:

- Publish information to show compliance with the Equality Duty, at least annually.

The information published must show due regard to:

Eliminating unlawful discrimination harassment and victimisation and any other conduct prohibited by the Act

Advancing equality of opportunity between people who share protected characteristics and people who do not share it

Fostering good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it

- Set and publish equality objectives, at least every four years.
These should be specific and measurable.

By publishing relevant equality information to demonstrate transparent decision making processes the Council becomes accountable to its service users. This in turns provides the public with the information they need to hold it to account, should they need to, for its performance on equality.

Policy Statement

Maidstone is the County Town of Kent, a historic market town with a rich and diverse history. It is constantly changing and evolving. What remains important as Maidstone changes and grows is that residents have a sense of belonging and community in order to prosper.

As a council we want to know our residents, we want to ensure that we are meeting their needs by offering opportunity and access to services through a conscious awareness and understanding of equality and diversity issues.

Our commitment to achieving this is outlined in the standards and actions set out in this document. These apply to staff, councillors and to those who deliver services on our behalf.

Maidstone Borough Council's Strategic Plan 2015-2020 sets the Council's strategic vision for the borough of Maidstone. It outlines the council's priorities and informs on its values. Equalities are firmly ingrained in the council's values. This document helps determine not only the decisions made by the officers and elected members but it also advocates our approach to day to day business and conduct, and the way we treat our customers and each other.

Services

Everything we do impacts on our customers, both internal and external. We will listen to and understand their needs, then take action to provide the right service in a positive and professional manner.

Teamwork

Working together to achieve our objectives and goals in a way that utilises the talents and creativity of everyone in our organisation.

Responsibility

We work in an environment that encourages us to take ownership for our actions. Making the right choices and decisions that lead to a satisfactory outcome for all.

Integrity

We have the courage to act on our convictions to build trust and honesty. We work with our partners and customers to create a feeling of openness and transparency in everything we do.

Value

Taking care and weighing up our options, aiming to get the maximum effect for every penny of public money we spend.

Equality

Valuing our differences and understanding how they can contribute to a better working environment and services that are fair and easy to access

We will deliver on our commitment to equalities by setting an organisational standard through clear objectives¹ for each of the three important **roles and responsibilities** we have as a council, as part of our equalities duty:

Role 1: As a Community Leader: We will engage with residents in an open and meaningful way.

Role 2: As a Service Provider: We will ensure our services are inclusive, accessible and support residents and customers.

Role 3: As an employer: To have a workforce that feels valued and respected.

¹ Equalities Objectives at Appendix A

Equalities Objectives (& Action Plan)

Objective	Actions	Responsible officer	How will we know that this done?	To be delivered by:
Role 1: As a Community Leader We will engage with residents in an open and meaningful way.				
Increase understanding of Maidstone's residents through analysis of demographic information.	Provide ward level analysis of demographic information from annual Resident's Survey to Ward Councillors.	Policy and Information team – Data Intelligence Officer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Report to be produced for every ward member following annual Resident's Survey 	November 2017
Provide a consistent approach to providing information to residents in alternative formats across the authority	An audit review to be undertaken on information provided in alternative front facing services	Policy and Information team - Equalities and Corporate Policy Officer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A clear process and procedure used consistently across the authority and monitored. 	October 2017
Embed the principles of good consultation and engagement (as set out in the Communications and Engagement Strategy).	New Consultation toolkit and guidelines to be developed	Policy and Information team - Data Intelligence Officer & Equalities and Corporate Policy Officer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improvement in standard and consistency of consultation. Wider engagement with hard to reach groups demonstrated by responses received. 	December 2017
Demonstrate effective engagement with the community and	Creating a single point of contact for the organisation for all community groups and	Policy and Information team - Equalities and Corporate Policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased number of consultation responses from seldom heard groups per public 	September 2017

voluntary sector, providing evidence of involvement in the Council's decision-making process.	forums to ensure forward planning and coordination.	Officer & Data Intelligence Officer	consultation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure consistent engagement with changes in Council policy • Consistent message being directed across the authority 	
Role 2: As a Service Provider				
We will ensure our services are inclusive, accessible and support residents and customers.				
Review Equalities data collected to ensure personal information is handled correctly, in line with General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR).	To complete an annual equality data audit with Service Managers.	Policy and Information team - Equalities and Corporate Policy Officer & Data Intelligence Officer Unit Managers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide an Equalities data audit record, reported to Committee in the Annual Equalities Update Report. • Improved use of Equalities data as an evidence base, where held appropriately. 	Review by March 2018
Raise standard of Equalities Impact Assessments (EqIAs)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review of EqIAs paperwork • Undertake training with Managers and Key 	Policy and Information team - Equalities and Corporate Policy Officer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engagement with Policy and Information Team at earliest opportunity. • Well thought out and 	September 2018

	<p>officers that complete EqIAs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitor Committees work programmes to identify where EqIAs should be included. • Provide challenge and support to officers where gaps are identified. 		<p>prepared documents</p> <p>All reports to have clearly considered equalities implications.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All EqIAs to be published on the website. 	
Provide a consistent approach to contract management across the services.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review Commissioning and Procurement Strategy • Evaluate commission and procurement processes and procedures • Review existing contracts 	Procurement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensuring all contracts managed are compliant with the Council's values, in line with the Public Sector Equality Duty. 	Review by March 2018
<p>Role 3: As an Employer To have a workforce that feels valued and respected.</p>				
Integrate Equalities into Service Planning process.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Equalities to form part of Service Planning Requirements • EqIA requirements 	<p>Policy and Information team</p> <p>All staff</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase in the number and quality of EqIA's completed. 	September 2018

	<p>submitted to Policy and Information team and timetabled for the year ahead.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presentation to staff forum/unit managers on annual basis in line with service planning timetable • NETconsent to deliver Equality Policy to All Staff. Mandatory to read and accept. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased understanding of equalities impact on decision making. • NETconsent reporting and testing functionality used to ensure all staff have read and understood the policy. 	
To deliver annual Equalities training to all elected members as part of ongoing professional development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Equalities Training to be included in the Member Development Programme 	Democratic Services & Policy and Information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Members demonstrating an understanding of the implications and importance of providing a sound evidence base as part of Equalities Impact Assessments in determining changes to or reviews of Policy decisions. 	May 2018
To ensure newly elected members are offered appropriate support to be effective in	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At new member induction session (and on a rolling annual basis) provide a form to request reports, 	Democratic Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Completed forms returned to Democratic Services. • Take-up of support. 	May 2018

their role	minutes and communications in alternative formats such as large print.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved understanding of elected members and their needs and requirements within Democratic Services team. 	
To develop and support member engagement with hard to reach groups in the community.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Signpost members to appropriate bodies, forums and groups within the community 	Democratic Services & Policy and Information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved engagement and understanding of seldom heard groups in Maidstone. 	May 2018