

Revised Equality Objectives and Action Plan 2017-2021

As a Community Leader

Objective

To lead by example, to ensure every individual resident is connected and supported.

Why it Matters

- Connection with our wider community is vital because it allows us to support one another, interact, and learn from each other through shared experiences.
- Working together with partners provides the opportunity to maximise our combined efforts, avoid duplication and make the greatest impact on communities.
- Building on an increased sense of community generated by Covid-19, we will continue to work to link our rural and urban communities, Parish Councils, businesses and resident and community groups and facilitate change using all the tools at our disposal.
- Communication and engagement are key and are central to everything we do, creating the opportunity for residents to have a greater say and control over decisions which affect their lives and their futures.
- We know where engagement and participation are low and recognise that the prospect of rising inequality can cause a disconnect in participation with the democratic process.

Actions

We will work with the Heart of Kent Hospice, Kent County Council, local businesses, community and faith groups to achieve Compassionate Borough Status.

We will take an evidence-based approach to leading recovery in Maidstone including a specific work stream on communities.

We will seek to build on the relationships we have developed with our communities as a result of the recent pandemic. We will communicate, engage with, and disseminate information to support and engage our wider communities including through the local Parish Councils and voluntary groups.

We will undertake a review of consultation and engagement activities to ensure that they maximise resident participation and are representative of Maidstone's demographic.

We will appoint an internal Equalities Group to lead and provide join-up across Council services.

We will support and promote diversity and inclusion in the borough through our communications and events – with a focus on our seldom-heard communities.

We will audit and appraise historical assets within the borough of Maidstone.

We will support our serving and veteran communities through our commitment to the Armed Forces Covenant with training/guidance provided to staff across all services.

Outcomes

- Compassionate Borough Status
- A calendar of diversity as part of the Communications Strategy
- Increased response rates from underrepresented groups
- Increased volunteering participation
- Equalities Group formed and terms of reference set
- Training/guidance to all staff on Armed Forces Covenant
- Stronger relationships with the voluntary and community sector including our Parish Councils
- Review of historical assets completed, and action recommended

Connections to other plans

- **Strategic Plan**
- **Communications Plan**
- **Covid-19 Recovery Plan**

Support delivery of Strategic Plan Priority: All

Cross Cutting Objectives:

Heritage is Respected

Health inequalities are addressed and reduced

Deprivation is reduced and social mobility is improved

As an Employer
Objective
<p>To lead a diverse and inclusive workforce that is reflective of the borough of Maidstone where residents and colleagues feel safe, confident, and empowered to challenge and bring about change.</p>
Why it Matters
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maidstone Borough Council is one of the largest employers in Maidstone and it is important that the Council leads by example to facilitate change. • Diversity is an asset to any community; the Council must be proactive as an employer in ensuring that this is reflected across its own workforce. • Understanding the mental health needs of our staff and residents is essential and more so than ever, with the additional impact of events in our very recent history. • We must take an evidence-based approach to understanding where cumulative impacts of deprivation are felt and respond to this. • It is essential staff are trained to understand and respond to differing needs to ensure an equitable level of access to Council services. • Staff should be enabled to challenge behaviours that are unacceptable.
Actions
<p>We will undertake a regular Staff Survey so that the organisation can identify where it needs to change and adapt.</p> <p>We will undertake a self-assessment as an Inclusive Employer.</p> <p>We will look after the mental health of our staff and recognise when this offer needs to change.</p> <p>We will provide training and support to staff so they can recognise and manage unacceptable behaviours.</p> <p>We will enable staff to understand and respond to the mental health needs of residents, particularly after challenging life events.</p>
Outcomes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Internal Staff Survey • Self-Assessment of Inclusive Employers standard • Training for all staff in collaboration with Heart of Kent Hospice • New equalities training and support tools for all service areas. To include:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Training in unconscious bias ○ Inclusion of Social Exclusion as a characteristic in the Equalities Impact Assessment
Connections to other plans
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategic Plan • Workforce Strategy • Local Plan Consultation
Support delivery of Strategic Plan Priority: All
Cross Cutting Objectives: Health inequalities are addressed and reduced

As a Service Provider
Objective
To deliver inclusive services in accordance with Council’s values.
Why it Matters
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No resident should be disadvantaged. • Whether a resident needs our support or services on an ongoing basis, an occasional basis or at a point of crisis, we want them to know how to access what they need, when they need it. • COVID-19 has challenged service providers to react and respond quickly to customer needs. Our recovery from this global pandemic provides the opportunity to reassess our service delivery from a completely fresh perspective. We must continue to be responsive to factors outside our control that impact and influence our communities. • Our recovery from COVID-19 must be inclusive. We must be in a position to consider and respond appropriately to ensure that the socio-economic impact is mitigated so it does not disadvantage some of our communities more than others. • To be in a position to do this, we must fully understand who our communities are, and it is essential that our staff understand our residents’ expectations in order to meet their needs. • Resident involvement is an essential part of our decision-making process for it to be considered robust and fit for purpose. • Publicising our data and using it to inform and underpin our decision-making process is crucial for transparency. • Smarter use of our data and data analytics will in turn inform our staff of who our communities are. • Through our service delivery we will strive to make positive impacts on residents’ mental health. This will be made possible through our

- commitment as an employer.
- We will improve our service delivery by reviewing access to our services and ensuring this is equitable.

Actions

We will review and identify our policies where we consider Equalities impacts and identify how we can improve outcomes through revisions to policy.

We will appoint an Equalities Group to lead and provide join-up across Council services.

We will work with the community through consultation processes, increasing our offer of focus group and participatory methods to increase engagement with seldom-heard groups.

We will work collaboratively with the museum and its programme of events to promote diversity and inclusion and strengthen ties to seldom-heard communities.

We will undertake a Councillor-led Access to Services Review which will assess:

- Digital Inclusion and website accessibility
- Enabling communications
- Our buildings

We will work in partnership to deliver the Rough Sleeping initiative delivery plan to provide mental health outreach.

We will review Equalities Impact Assessment processes.

We will develop processes to ensure Social Value is a core consideration of our decision making.

Measures

- Outreach – vulnerabilities data.
- Increased completion of Equalities Impact Assessments with clearer and more transparent evidence of Equalities in decision making.
- Clear Equalities evidence base produced to inform social value as part of the Commissioning and Procurement strategy.
- Museum collection with clearer links to the local community and to the communities of the collections' origins.
- Equalities Group formed and terms of reference set.
- Outcomes from the Access to Services review.

Connections to other plans

- **Strategic Plan**
- **Homelessness and Rough Sleepers Strategy**
- **Museum's 25-year plan**

Support delivery of Strategic Plan Priority:

Homes and Communities
A Thriving Place

Cross Cutting Objectives:

Health inequalities are addressed and reduced,
Deprivation is reduced and social mobility is improved