

## Appendix 1 – Updates on actions from 2022-23.

<b>As a Community Leader</b>		
Objective: <b>To lead by example, to ensure every individual resident is connected and supported</b>		
<b>Commitments</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Update</b>
<p><b>We will</b> work closely with our partners (Voluntary and Community Sector, Anchor Institutions, Parishes and Church and Faith groups) to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify opportunities for joined up working and improving our ability to share information to support and engage our wider communities.</li> <li>Increase volunteering opportunities and participation, funding and support.</li> </ul> <p><b>We will</b> undertake a review of consultation and engagement activities to ensure that they maximise resident participation and are representative of Maidstone's demographic.</p> <p><b>We will</b> support and promote diversity and inclusion in the borough through our communications and events – with a focus on our seldom-heard communities.</p> <p><b>We will</b> support our serving and veteran communities through our commitment to the Armed Forces Covenant and responsibilities under the Armed Forces Act 2021 with guidance provided to staff across all services.</p>	Ongoing delivery of One View project.	<p>The Housing team continue to work on developing the OneView system A second advisor was recruited to support the project. Join up has been created with Housing Associations to deliver hardship payments. The project has won an award and has been identified was also recently reviewed by The Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) have reviewed this project and highlighted it as an example of a project using innovative technology is advancing equality of opportunity and are currently working with Maidstone to develop it as a case study. Further project areas were identified, Violence Reduction, Health Inequalities, Food Insecurity and Damp and Mould.</p> <p>This action remains ongoing in the new plan.</p>
	Implement no wrong door (local campaign to signpost to services) – increasing access to services.	<p>There is join up between several frontline services and other local service providers. For example, Housing and the CAB have undertaken a Debt advice Pilot at Trinity.</p> <p>The Welfare Officer role which supports delivery of the Council's Hardship Fund works closely with community groups, community wardens and is the point of contact for those experiencing immediate financial need and support. The role also works closely with internal services including Housing and Revenues and Benefits to maximise support and support the prevention of homelessness.</p> <p>The role is supported by Policy in Practice's Low Income Family Tracker (LIFT dashboard) which enables the Council to identify families and individuals who are impacted by Welfare Reforms, struggling financially, and could be missing out on benefits.</p> <p>This action remains ongoing in the new plan.</p>
	Provide access to digital training and support at Trinity House.	<p>The Training suite up at Trinity House is now up and running. Training and Support has been offered and a pilot with Digital Kent Volunteer Programme to support residents at Trinity House has been undertaken.</p> <p>This action is now closed</p>
	Increase response rates from underrepresented groups through us of Let's Talk Maidstone (the Council's new public engagement platform)	<p>The Let's Talk Maidstone site was launched in 2022 and provides a variety of engagement tools for Public consultation and engagement activities.</p> <p>It is recognised that there are some groups that remain difficult to reach. Analysis has been undertaken of all consultation demographics to identify those seldom heard groups. Support has been sought from the consultation institute to best approach engagement and new action has been identified for year 2023-24.</p> <p>This action has now developed in the new plan.</p>
	Expand internal Equality Diversity and Inclusion Group to provide internal direction and challenge.	<p>The group continues to meet and has informed the development of the new action plan. It has been expanded to include wider group of front-line service areas providing expertise and insight on community and seldom heard groups.</p> <p>This action has now developed in the new plan.</p>
	Annual calendar of events to celebrate diversity and promote inclusion in Maidstone.	<p>Google calendar developed for Intranet and website. Further work is required on this to embed the calendar of events both internally and externally.</p> <p>This action remains ongoing in the new plan.</p>

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	Provide guidance to enable all staff to support Armed Forces Community	Armed Forces pages have been updated on the Website. It has been identified that Forces Connect App not sufficient in terms of information for Veterans in local community so more work needs to be done.  This action remains ongoing in the new plan.
<b>As an Employer</b>		
Objective: <b>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.</b>		
<b>Commitments</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Update</b>
<p><b>We will</b> train our staff so that they are skilled in inclusive practice, to work with communities who are less able, or willing, to participate in life in their local neighbourhoods.</p> <p><b>We will</b> provide training and support to staff so they can recognise and manage unacceptable behaviours.</p> <p><b>We will</b> look after the mental health of our staff and recognise when this offer needs to change</p>	Introduce Equalities Champions (including elected member and senior leadership)	A Senior Leader Champion and a Member Champion agreed.  This action is now closed
	Deliver the Culture change project.	The culture change project has been delivered and new actions are identified in the refreshed Workforce Strategy to support Inclusion and Belonging for staff.  This action is now closed
	Introduce Bi-Annual staff EDI survey to identify need and benchmark progress	Carried out first EDI Staff Survey (the detailed questions considered best practice are not included in the biannual staff survey). The survey is intended to provide a baseline understand of the organisations diversity and provide the basis for exploring and responding to staff need.  This action is now closed
	Provide training and support for Mental Health Champions	The Staff EDI Survey suggests that employee Mental Health is better than national picture (1 in 6) however there has been an increase in Mental Health sick days and an increase in counselling referrals. There has been continued provision of Mental Health Champions (including training and development of mental health first aiders). The use of Mental Health Champions has been low and it has been identified that support is required for managers in terms of training and resilience. So further work is required here.  This action remains ongoing in the new plan.
<b>As a Service Provider</b>		
Objective: <b>To deliver inclusive services in accordance with the Council's values</b>		
<b>Commitments</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Updates</b>
<p><b>We will</b> use specific and meaningful language when referring to diverse communities.</p> <p><b>We will</b> support access to services and support through ICT process, communication and join up with partners.</p>	Adopt of LGA Inclusive Language Guide	The inclusive language guide has not yet been released for adoption. This has been retained as an action with alternative options to be explored in place of the LGA guide.  This action remains ongoing in the new plan.
	Proactively use 'neutral spaces' to increase access to support and services for residents	Face to face support has been provided at Trinity House and other sites for debt advice, and digital services. Cost-of-living events, Community Larders, Council tax, Welfare support and Housing. This action will be retained/  This action remains ongoing in the new plan.

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<p><b>We will</b> take an evidence-based approach to leading recovery supporting financial inclusion and social well-being in Maidstone, including a specific work stream on communities.</p> <p><b>We will</b> review the Equalities Impact Assessment processes.</p> <p><b>We will</b> review and identify our policies where we consider equalities impacts and identify how we can improve outcomes through revisions to policy.</p>	Identify emerging needs from Census data.	<p>Analysis of the Census data has been undertaken. Results have been published of all high-level data on dashboards on the Council's website. Significant engagement with Unit Managers, Wider Leadership Team, Inclusion Board and EDI staff group on how to use census to understand resident need.</p> <p>This action is now closed</p>
	Include 'Poverty' as a local protected characteristic with the EqIA process	<p>9 protected characteristics were expanded to include Poverty (and Armed Forces) to ensure we continue to look beyond existing perceptions of vulnerable groups.</p> <p>EqIA template document and guidance updated to support data led decision making. Training was rolled out to Unit managers.</p> <p>This action is now closed</p>
	Include Armed Forces Act 2021 in Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy	<p>Armed Forces included in revised Policy and guidance and template documents for EqIAs alongside Poverty as 'local protected characteristics.</p> <p>This action is now closed</p>
	Prioritise existing policies by review date and implement process of review for equalities	<p>The process has been reactive to date rather than priority. It has been identified that further work is required to support unit managers to implement EDI into policy and service development so this action has been broadened to include working with services to increase knowledge.</p> <p>This action remains ongoing in the new plan.</p>