

Report of Head of Resources

Equality Objective 2016-2020

1 Purpose of report

This report seeks approval to publish the council's Equality Objective 2016–2020.

2 Executive summary

The council must publish one or more equality objective by 6 April 2016 in order to meet its legal duties under:

- Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 (the public sector equality duty), and
- The Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties) Regulations 2011.

At its meeting on 14 September 2015, the Services Committee agreed to consult on a draft equality objective with key stakeholders and to the associated timetable. In addition, the process for setting the objective is intended to address the motion received at the Council meeting on 21 July 2015.

3 Appendices

Appendix 1 – Consultation feedback
Appendix 2 – Equalities objective action plan

4 Proposed action:

It is proposed that members RECOMMEND to:

- adopt the Equality Objective for 2016-2020 - “Continue to promote equality through the provision of services that are fair and accessible to all” and approve the under-pinning action plan; and**
- delegate to the Head of Resources the task of maintaining and updating the action plan.**

5 Background

- 5.1 The public sector equality duty (PSED) is made up of a general equality duty which is supported by specific duties. The general equality duty requires public authorities, in the exercise of their functions, to have due regard to the

need to:

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

5.2 The protected characteristics covered by the PSED are;

- Age
- Disability
- Gender reassignment
- Marriage and civil partnership
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Race
- Religion or belief
- Sex
- Sexual orientation

5.3 Public authorities must:

- Prepare and publish one or more objective they think they should achieve to do any of the things mentioned in the aims of the general equality duty by 6 April 2016, and at least every four years thereafter
- Ensure that the objective(s) are specific and measurable
- Publish those objective(s) in such a manner that they are accessible to the public.

6 Discussion

6.1 At the Council meeting on 21 July 2015 a motion was received that requested a wide ranging community consultation in relation to the council's equality and diversity responsibilities. This was referred to the Services Committee and was taken in to account when preparing the draft equality objective for consultation with key stakeholders.

6.2 Consultation on the draft objective ran for 12 weeks from 9 November to 29 January. A short questionnaire was made available via the council website and an invitation to comment was emailed to 15 local organisations representative of the protected characteristics. Participation was also invited through Twitter.

6.3 The feedback from the consultation was mostly critical of the objective not being SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, Timebound).

6.4 The action plan attached at Appendix 2 will under-pin the objective and provide for it being SMART. This action plan will be a "living document" across the council and will be used by services to work towards achieving the objective.

6.5 The action plan will be reviewed periodically in cohesion with the publication of our equalities information to ensure that we remain compliant with the public sector equality duty (PSED).

7 Legal powers

7.1 The Council must publish one or more equality objective by 6 April 2016 in order to meet its legal duties under:

- Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 (the public sector equality duty), and
- The Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties) Regulations 2011

7.2 The Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) has statutory powers to enforce the general and specific duties, ranging from issuing a compliance notice to applying for a judicial review.

8 Financial and value for money implications

There are no direct financial implications arising from the proposals, although there could be financial implications relating to potential legal challenges if the objective is not agreed and published by the deadline.

9 Risk analysis

Nature of risk	Consequences if realised	Likelihood of occurrence	Control measures
Non-compliance with statutory duty	Potential legal challenge	Low	By publishing our equality objective by the statutory deadline this risk is anticipated and mitigated.

10 Implications for resources

The council does not have a dedicated Equalities Officer. Service areas integrate equalities into their work and co-ordination of equality activity across the council forms only part of the role of the Organisational Development Officer. Resources are therefore limited. The work, however, is statutory and must be prioritised within available resources.

11 Implications for stronger and safer communities

Equalities activity plays an important role in developing safer and stronger communities. By ensuring that the council knows how communities are made up they are able to develop services and resources in a fairer and more targeted way to improve health, community cohesion and community safety.

12 Implications for equalities

Activity in respect of equalities ensures that the council meets its duty to design its services around the needs of local people, and to evaluate the impact of its services, policies and activities on different groups in society to eliminate discrimination.

An initial Equality Impact Screening was carried out and identified that the implication of the proposed objective for all equality groups would be positive.

13 Author and contact officer

Karen Denton, Principal Corporate Support Manager

14 Consultees

Bridget Gamble, Head of Resources

Liz Elliott, Head of Finance

Julie Thomas, Head of Planning and Local Development
Senior Organisational Development Officer

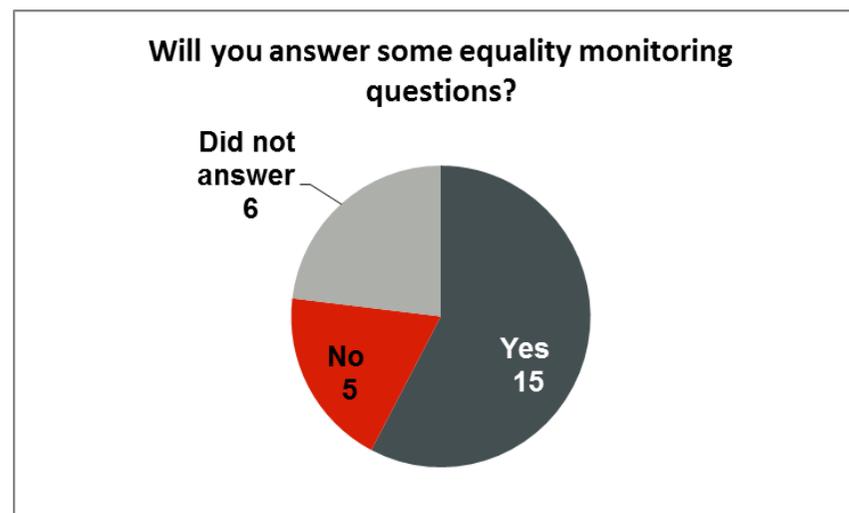
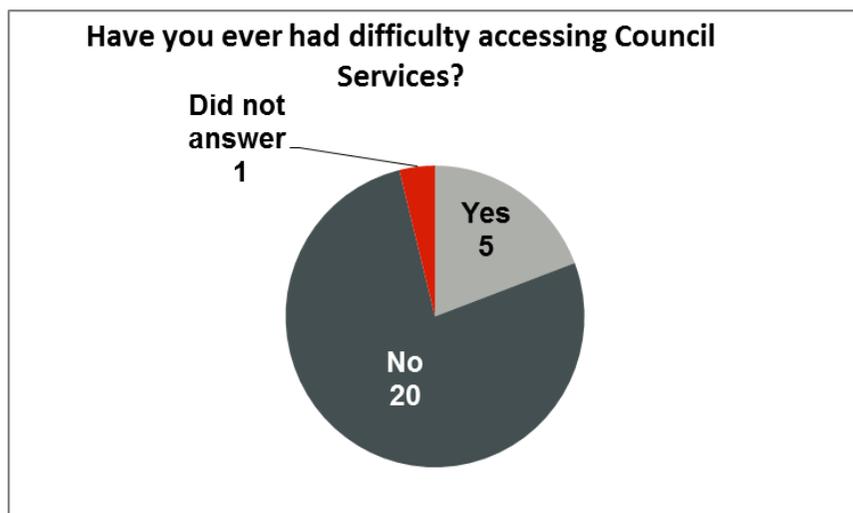
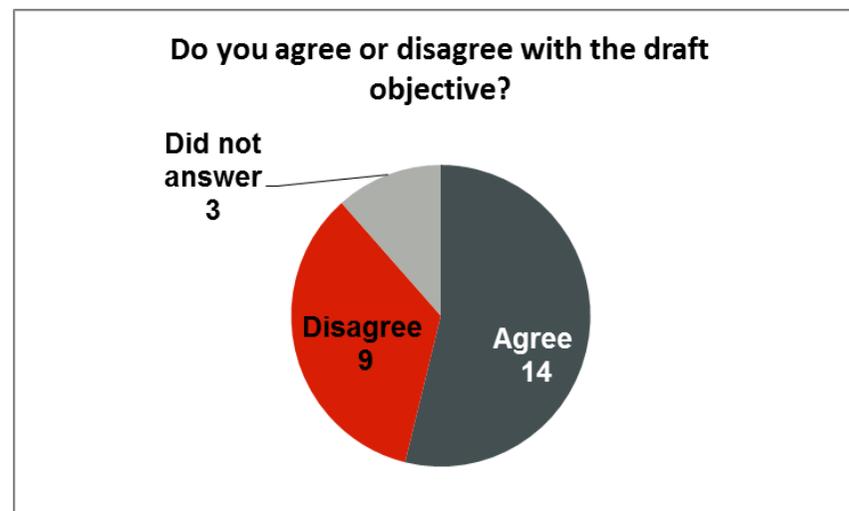
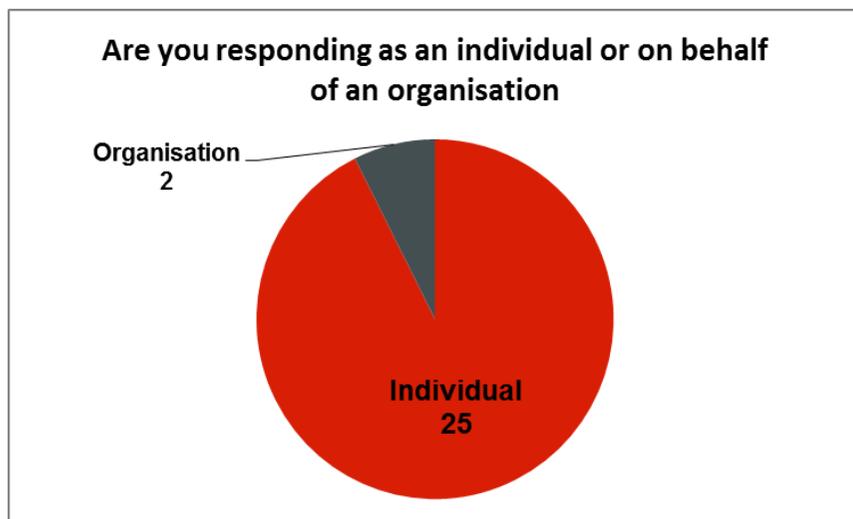
15 Background papers

[Equalities Information 2015](#). (link to website)

Appendix 1 - Draft equality objective 2016/2020 - Consultation analysis

The consultation on the draft equality objective was open for 12 weeks from 9 November 2015 to 29 January 2016.

We received 27 responses, 26 via the online survey and 1 via email. 25 responses were received from individuals and 2 representing organisations.



Please tell us why you disagree with the proposed objective?

Comment	Our response
This objective does not give transparency on what the council will actually do about equality and how success in the action will be measured.	
It does not offer a proactive approach to tackling discrimination, harassment or victimization therefore it does not meet the requirements of the 2010 Equality Act	
It is much too vague. Specific action is or may be needed to avoid any manifestations of prejudice and discrimination against, for instance, immigrants and refugees. This is especially important in the present climate of opinion in some sections of the community.	
Because you do not in the first place both about equalities in the first place. Anything to do with equalities have had budgets slashed.	
There is nothing "specific" or "measurable" in this objective, and it completely fails to mention anything about dealing with prejudice. Poor show BCW.	The draft action plan we have developed is SMART – specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-bound.
The proposed 'objective' is not an objective, it is certainly not SMART - what are you going to measure to indicate success (or otherwise). This falls woefully short of your legal obligations. This is a great opportunity to do something valuable, why waste it? Have you thought about involving local organisations like Wellingborough Black Consortium and NREC to support you in devising meaningful objectives?	It has been produced in consultation with service managers, community groups and residents who asked to be involved.
This objective is meaningless. It is not SMART, it does not comply with the legal requirements and doesn't indicate how the objective will be achieved or the data which has been relied on to come up with the objective. How will WBC promote equality? What is the impact of austerity measures on the protected characteristics? Are there any specific objectives the BC could have around such issues? This is not good enough and not legal!	The action plan is designed to tackle the key issues as identified over a four year period and will be updated and reported on annually.
Providing services does not promote equality. Need to tackle perception of services, to ensure that the council supports events in different communities, to ensure staff are treated equally including equal pay. Finally, there is no point to an objective if it is not measurable. What are your aims / success measures? The equality objective which has been set pays lip service to equality but suggests no genuine commitment to doing anything about it other than providing standard council services.	
Why should all be treated equal when their contributions have not been equal	The public sector duty is not about treating everyone equally but providing equal opportunities for those who share one or more of the protected characteristics.

If you have experienced difficulty using council services please tell us what happened.

Comment	Our response
<p>We support disabled people to have choice about where they live. We have noticed a number of problems disabled people are having in using BCW's housing services, and probably others too. Many of our members have learning disability and it is extremely difficult from them or their families to understand how to apply for housing using the Council's Keyways system. We carried out a study in 2011 of the KEYWAYS housing allocations system and made many recommendations about making the system more accessible as well as fairer for disabled people to use. We know many of those recommendations have not been implemented. The review we undertook was based around key elements of the 2010 Equality Act. And whilst colleagues from Kettering Council, and others, acknowledged the validity of many of the points we raised, little appears to have changed. We even made easy read information guides we produced to support disabled people and families applying for housing more accessible, free for use by the Council. But to my knowledge we have never seen those guides in Council Offices. We would happily return to re-assess the accessibility of the housing system, if you wish and if funds were available, as well as assessing the availability of enough accessible housing for disabled people in our area anyway, which is another major stumbling block for people. One area the Council does do well in, perhaps mainly because of Wellingborough Homes though, is your openness to accept and refer disabled people under 55 to more traditional 'sheltered' or (supported) housing in the area. As this is by fair the largest proportion of 'more' accessible housing it is great that the Council and Wellingborough Homes see the importance of making this housing form as open as possible to most disabled people.</p>	<p>We will contact this organisation to discuss how we can best work together to address some of the issues they have raised.</p>
<p>Bins: Requested green bin repeatedly, council failed to provide it, had to use green bin belonging to empty house next door in the end. Website for leisure centres showing out of date timetables</p>	<p>Bins - the councils complaints procedure is available to rectify complaints about service and is available at www.wellingborough.gov.uk/complaints</p> <p>Leisure centres – comments have been passed to Places for people who can be contacted via their website www.placesforpeopleleisure.org</p>

Please tell us anything extra that you think we can do to make sure we provide our services in a way that is fair and accessible to all?

Comment	Our response
<p>Collect and analyse data to identify issues, then come up with an action plan to address these issues. Your actions should be SMART objectives.</p>	
<p>You need to equality impact decisions regarding decisions relating to the provision of services. Do you have equality data demonstrating who uses your services and who is mostly impacted by decisions to cut services?</p>	
<p>better use of social media, better training for staff</p>	
<p>There is a great deal for you to do but the starting point is to at least assess yourselves against the requirements of the Equalities Act. You could invite people from the various protected groups to help you create assessment tools, like the ones we have created re housing allocation systems, and also work with you too by using these tools to review many of the Council's services and facilities and then create action plans to implement recommendations and support you to make sure they work. The skills people are here in our communities to do this work already and help you to make it happen. Groups could also help the Council to regularly check if things are working and put forward others ways of championing greater equality in the town (borough). This does not have to be very costly, and supporting the very people that could benefit through greater fairness in your systems, may help you to stream line your systems and make them more effective for people. Also as well as reviewing your services a great deal of work is required to assess how accessible the physical community as a whole is in our Borough. This includes the streets and paths of our communities as well as Areas the Council also has responsibility for like town centre's, parks and leisure services. Many disabled people just can't get around, or get to work because of the very poor accessibility of our communities. And having work places which are accessible is absolutely essential now with so many disabled people being forced to find work. Our company had real problems finding an accessible office space in Wellingborough for our disabled workers. It took over two years to find a place and in the end it still had limited access. We even approached the Council directly about office space to rent and there but we're very few places and none at a price we could afford. FYI - As well as being a Director of the Network I am also a coordinator of the Wellingborough LGBT Alliance.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">These comments have been considered and incorporated into the action plan.</p>
<p>Open 24hours</p>	
<p>Make information more available to all</p>	<p>Although the council offices cannot be open 24/7, we are making more services available on-line 24/7 via our website which conforms to international accessibility standards</p>

Comment	Our response
<p data-bbox="147 140 1525 209">Create an approach that does not simply aim to sit back and ignore any problems with regards to equality in the community</p> <p data-bbox="147 215 1541 284">In reality what services do you provide? This council doesn't do enough for minority groups. Public services which are provided are shipped out to contractors. le Norse.</p>	<p data-bbox="1574 140 2136 392">We are committed to ensuring that everyone is treated fairly irrespective of race, disability, gender, sexual orientation, age, religion or belief, pregnancy and maternity, gender reassignment and marital/civil status and we do not tolerate discrimination.</p> <p data-bbox="1574 435 2101 539">We act promptly when a complaint is received about how we provide our services.</p> <p data-bbox="1574 582 2145 834">We will work with those consultees from protected groups who have expressed an interest in being involved in the action planning and will consult with community groups to ensure we stay focussed on the most important issues from an equalities perspective.</p> <p data-bbox="1574 877 2112 981">Details of the services we provide are available on our website by following the link below :-</p> <p data-bbox="1574 1024 2033 1058">Services provided by the council</p>

<div style="text-align: right;">  </div> <p style="text-align: center;">Equalities Action Plan 2016 - 2020</p>						
Objective	How will this be achieved	Protected group(s)	Measure	Target 16/17	Target 17/18	Service area
Ensure no direct or indirect discrimination in the delivery of council services	Monitoring, investigation and analysis of all complaints received	All	Number of complaints that have equalities implications	0	0	
	Equality and diversity training for employees		% of employees who have completed training	100%	100%	
Increase use of the website as preferred method of contact	Ensure website meets accessibility standards	Age Disability Race	Average No. of unique visitors each month	29,000	29,500	All Services
Increase participation in shaping our future by seldom heard groups	Promotion of Residents Panel	All	No. of panel members	100	150	
	Participation in budget consultation		No. of consultees who respond	50	75	
	Participation in local plan consultation			120	170	
	Equalities data collected and analysed to evidence consultations reaching all protected groups		% of consultees who complete equalities monitoring forms	25	30	
Better understanding of the make up of the residents in the borough	Annual refresh and publication of Equalities Information	All	Compliance with the PSED	Compliant	Compliant	
Increase participation in the democratic process	Outreach visits to schools, care homes, sheltered accommodation and BME groups	Age Disability Race	No. of establishments visited	40	50	Democratic Services
Residents' housing needs are met in an accessible way	Outreach visits to prisons, schools and other community groups eg young parents, elderly	Age Disability Gender Race	No. of outreach visits	25	40	Housing
	Applicants assisted with the housing application process through face to face or telephone		No. of housing applicants supported through the application process	60	80	
	Disabled residents are assisted with access to their homes	Disability	No. of Disabled Facilities Grants awarded or alternative accommodation provided	120	120	
Residents on low income helped to pay their rent and council tax	New benefit claims processed quickly	All	No. of days from receipt of new claim	24	24	Revenues and benefits
	Changes of circumstances processed quickly		No. of days from notification of a change	13	13	
	Spend 100% of Discretionary Housing Payment Government Contribution		% spent	100%	100%	
	Equalities data collected and analysed to identify any protected groups that are not being reached		% of claimants who provide equalities data	50%	75%	
Encourage and enable victims of hate crime to report incidents	Improve website reporting pathway	All	% of frontline employees aware of signs and reporting procedures	100%	100%	Community support
	Share information with front line employees about the signs of hate crime and reporting procedures					

