



WOKINGHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL

An Extraordinary Meeting of the **EXECUTIVE** will be held in virtually on **THURSDAY 18 MARCH 2021 AT 5.30 PM**

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Susan Parsonage', written in a cursive style.

Susan Parsonage
Chief Executive
Published on 10 March 2021

Note: The Council has made arrangements under the Coronavirus Act 2020 to hold this meeting virtually via Microsoft Teams. The meeting can be watched live using the following link: <https://youtu.be/WxMpHb3PQxE>

This meeting will be filmed for inclusion on the Council's website.

Please note that other people may film, record, tweet or blog from this meeting. The use of these images or recordings is not under the Council's control.



WOKINGHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL

Our Vision

A great place to live, learn, work and grow and a great place to do business

Enriching Lives

- Champion outstanding education and enable our children and young people to achieve their full potential, regardless of their background.
- Support our residents to lead happy, healthy lives and provide access to good leisure facilities to complement an active lifestyle.
- Engage and involve our communities through arts and culture and create a sense of identity which people feel part of.
- Support growth in our local economy and help to build business.

Safe, Strong, Communities

- Protect and safeguard our children, young and vulnerable people.
- Offer quality care and support, at the right time, to prevent the need for long term care.
- Nurture communities and help them to thrive.
- Ensure our borough and communities remain safe for all.

A Clean and Green Borough

- Do all we can to become carbon neutral and sustainable for the future.
- Protect our borough, keep it clean and enhance our green areas.
- Reduce our waste, improve biodiversity and increase recycling.
- Connect our parks and open spaces with green cycleways.

Right Homes, Right Places

- Offer quality, affordable, sustainable homes fit for the future.
- Build our fair share of housing with the right infrastructure to support and enable our borough to grow.
- Protect our unique places and preserve our natural environment.
- Help with your housing needs and support people to live independently in their own homes.

Keeping the Borough Moving

- Maintain and improve our roads, footpaths and cycleways.
- Tackle traffic congestion, minimise delays and disruptions.
- Enable safe and sustainable travel around the borough with good transport infrastructure.
- Promote healthy alternative travel options and support our partners to offer affordable, accessible public transport with good network links.

Changing the Way We Work for You

- Be relentlessly customer focussed.
- Work with our partners to provide efficient, effective, joined up services which are focussed around you.
- Communicate better with you, owning issues, updating on progress and responding appropriately as well as promoting what is happening in our Borough.
- Drive innovative digital ways of working that will connect our communities, businesses and customers to our services in a way that suits their needs.

MEMBERSHIP OF THE EXECUTIVE

John Halsall	Leader of the Council
John Kaiser	Deputy Leader and Executive Member for Finance and Housing
Parry Bath	Environment and Leisure
UllaKarin Clark	Children's Services
Charlotte Haitham Taylor	Regeneration
Pauline Jorgensen	Highways and Transport
Charles Margetts	Health, Wellbeing and Adult Services
Stuart Munro	Business and Economic Development
Gregor Murray	Resident Services, Communications and Emissions
Wayne Smith	Planning and Enforcement

ITEM NO.	WARD	SUBJECT	PAGE NO.
93.		<p>APOLOGIES To receive any apologies for absence</p>	
94.		<p>DECLARATION OF INTEREST To receive any declarations of interest</p>	
95.		<p>PUBLIC QUESTION TIME To answer any public questions</p> <p>A period of 30 minutes will be allowed for members of the public to ask questions submitted under notice.</p> <p>The Council welcomes questions from members of the public about the items included on this agenda only.</p> <p>Subject to meeting certain timescales, questions can only relate to the items which are on the Agenda for this meeting. For full details of the procedure for submitting questions please contact the Democratic Services Section on the numbers given below or go to www.wokingham.gov.uk/publicquestions</p>	
96.		<p>MEMBER QUESTION TIME To answer any Member questions.</p> <p>A period of 20 minutes will be allowed for Members to ask questions submitted on the items included on this agenda.</p> <p>Any questions not dealt with within the allotted time will be dealt with in a written reply.</p>	

Matters for Consideration

97.	None Specific	TRADING STANDARDS, ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH AND LICENSING	5 - 14
98.	None Specific	EQUALITY PLAN	15 - 48

A decision sheet will be available for inspection at the Council's offices (in Democratic Services and the General Office) and on the web site no later than two working days after the meeting.

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TITLE	Trading Standards, Environmental Health and Licensing
FOR CONSIDERATION BY	The Executive on Thursday, 18 March 2021
WARD	None Specific
LEAD OFFICER	Director, Place and Growth - Chris Traill
LEAD MEMBER	Executive Member for Environment - Parry Batth

PURPOSE OF REPORT (INC STRATEGIC OUTCOMES)

The purpose of this report is to authorise the services delivered by the Public Protection Partnership (PPP) to be brought back in-house to Wokingham Borough Council as from 1st April 2022 and establish the project to achieve this.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that:

- 1) the Council serves formal notice on the Public Protection Partnership before 31st March 2021, which if effected would take place on 31st March 2022;
- 2) the delegation to PPP in respect to the Executive and Council functions and duties (including environmental health, licensing and trading standards) will end and will be exercised by the Council directly from 1st April 2022;
- 3) The Director of Place and Growth and Deputy Chief Executive (and Section 151 Officer), in consultation with the Lead Member for Environment and Lead Member for Finance & Housing, are authorised to commence design of the new services structure and any resulting negotiations on an Exit Plan and to address timeframe (including earlier dates than stated in recommendation 1 and 2 if agreed by the Councils), mitigation of risks and costs, key milestones, ongoing resources and staffing implications for a successful departure from the partnership;
- 4) The Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Place and Growth create and work with a task force of Officers and Members to create the new in-house service;
- 5) it be noted that a special item of £500k, spread over financial years 2021/22 and 2022/23, was included in the Medium Term Financial Plan to fund a safe and effective transition.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of this report is to authorise the services delivered by the Public Protection Partnership (PPP) to be brought back in-house to Wokingham Borough Council as from 1st April 2022 and establish the project to achieve this.

BACKGROUND

The quality of life of residents in the Borough is heavily impacted by the work of Environmental Health, Licensing and Trading Standards. There are a wide range of statutory regulatory services (see appendix 1). The most visible are services relating to residential nuisance including noise, bonfires, pests, and licensing. Other important services include food chain safety, water safety, pollution, health and safety in workplaces, disease control, trading standards, animal and farm welfare, crime, and fraud (many of these functions were delivered at the County levels before the Berkshire Council's became unitary).

Prior to 2010, these services were in house as part of Wokingham, after which they were delegated to West Berkshire.

In 2017 Wokingham, West Berkshire and Bracknell established a shared service partnership (the Public Protection Partnership (PPP)). It has three basic principles, prevention, intelligence and enforcement.

The Vision of the PPP is: To protect and support residents and legitimate business through the successful use of information and intelligence, delivering safe and healthy neighbourhoods. With a fundamental motivation for each partner authority entering the shared service was to protect and, where possible, increase professional and technical resilience.

1.1 The stated priorities of the PPP are to tackle the following issues and practices:

- E-Crime
- Organised Crime Groups
- Vulnerable Adults and Children
- Modern Day Slavery
- Doorstep Crime and Mass Marketing
- Poor Housing Standards in the Private Rented Sector
- Air Pollution
- Unsafe Food
- Childhood Obesity
- Alcohol and Tobacco Consumption
- Poor Animal Welfare
- Risk to the Reputation of UK Export of Food
- Accidents in the Catering and Hospitality Industries
- Impact of Noise on Communities
- Unsafe Consumer Goods

The PPP is Governed by The Joint Public Protection Committee (JPPC) which is made up of six Members (2 from each of the 3 partner authorities) and is responsible for the key strategy and direction of the service including agreeing the business plan, strategic priorities and work plan. The JPPC recommends the budget and fees and charges to partner Councils to be set through their normal budget setting process.

1.2. Activity data with regards to Wokingham

In 2019/20 the headline activity that relates to Wokingham was as follows:

- Licensing: There are 430 alcohol licensed premises; 110 premises needing a licence for e.g. animal boarding, scrap metal etc; 349 drivers of taxis and private hire vehicles.
- Trading Standards: 750 weights and measures taken; 50 investigations on fair trading e.g. age-related sales of tobacco and alcohol, knives, fireworks etc. Food standards: quality and labelling (on demand).
- Environmental Health: 450 planning applications considered; 250 commercial pollution investigations; 672 air quality samples; 600 domestic nuisance complaints; 617 pest complaints; over 1,000 food premises to inspect; 290 infectious disease notifications.

1.3. Operating Model

The PPP is financed primarily through partner authority contributions from cooperate budgets, however, it also generates income through grants, fees and charges and through work supplied to other bodies such as Oxfordshire Fire Service. The cost to each partner is calculated based on the level of activity attributed to each authority and this is monitored annually.

The cost to Wokingham is projected to be £1,326,470 in 21/22, this contribution is 34% of the total PPP budget and an increase of £63k to Wokingham from 20/21.

It is a cornerstone of the Council's strategy to materially improve the delivery of customer services. The services falling under the auspices of the PPP are considered to be of significant importance to the residents of Wokingham Borough; it is considered that these services can be more effectively and responsibly discharged through a directly employed in-house service. It will enable greater focus on what is termed 'low level ASB' incidents and will enable a greater integration with our directly employed localites team. Furthermore, it will help overcome some of the inevitable confusions to the public arising from a front-line service which is run cross authority as opposed to one run solely by WBC.

It should however be recognised that this is not a criticism of the PPP service whose work on COVID in terms of enforcement and test and trace has been invaluable to support the Council's COVID response. This proposed in-house approach is about recognising the particular needs of Wokingham residents and embracing the opportunities of integration within the council. Particularly our Localities team, to enhance the effectiveness of the service and its impact on the community. This is set out in more detail below.

2.Wokingham In-house Approach

The recommendation is to repatriate the responsibility for PPP management in house and to review the service delivery mechanisms for several reasons:

- Integrated service delivery: where pragmatic Wokingham will align and integrate services that transfer back with existing Council services on a local level. The benefits of that being the service can operate within conditions to better understand local issues and are then more effective and responsive (in a joined up approach) to address local issues. (The service will be able to work with organisations on a local level such as the voluntary and community sectors and Town and Parish Councils.) The principal aim is to integrate Wokingham's services so that it is a single and simplified response to residents' concerns and issues.
- Control and influence: It promotes Councillors, Officers and service users to have more democratic control over service provision. There will be greater flexibility on how services are delivered and how we respond to priorities. We want to encourage innovation in responding to local issues.
- Improved service delivery: The Council will ensure that we continue to deliver our statutory responsibilities for public protection, and to exceed residents' expectations. Aligning our public protection to what matters most to Wokingham residents and to address the quality of life issues that are key to our Strategic Aims.

In summary, the Council wants to deliver service excellence to its residents, some of which is statutory, but tailoring it to Wokingham residents' dynamic priorities. In taking the service in house, the Council has an opportunity to change the management, focus and delivery model.

2.1. Benefits and business case for an in-house service for Wokingham

As part of Wokingham Borough's place shaping approach, the Council aims to tailor service delivery at a locality level. This will deliver a clearer cohesive response to issues that confront our communities (such as anti-social behaviour, fly tipping, unauthorised encampments, noise abatement, bonfires, neighbourhood disputes).

The delivery will be integrated into other Council services, such as Localities, Community Safety, Legal, and Children's and Adults. In so doing, this will make better use of the capacity of existing locality officers offering earlier incisive intervention and prevention.

It is also anticipated that this will engender effective joined up professional responses across the Council's service specialisms (safety, enforcement, environmental health), with swift responses, resulting in increased customer satisfaction, and potentially efficiencies.

The benefits and advantages to the Council and the residents of Wokingham Borough, in bringing the control of this service in-house include:

- Greater control, in one organisation with direct influence over policy, implementation, and accountability
- More visible ownership and flexibility to focus on residents' priorities.
- An integrated single Council approach to delivery in localities, which crosses specialisms, with the efficiencies, in respect to time and outcomes, by tackling issues holistically that this approach brings. That is, "do it once" with joined up and combined

responses to issues that consider the range of enforcement powers that the Council possesses. For example, consideration of anti-social behaviour alongside neighbour disputes, planning enforcement, noise and bonfires.

- An improved customer perception and experience due to a less complex customer journey, with a greater emphasis upon prevention and proactivity than reactivity
- A service that delivers valued and visible interventions with timely support at the time when residents most need it.
- Potential efficiencies and economies of scale (within a wider locality team) can increase accessible hours and reduce response times.
- Greater influence and control over preferred suppliers and associated costs.
- It will allow, if the PPP is willing, to retain the services of the PPP when appropriate.

3.Current Resource

It is estimated that the resource within PPP currently deployed to serve Wokingham Borough Council is approximately 32.04 FTE. With staff employed in Licensing; Nuisance and residential, commercial, trading standards, environmental quality, CDO.

Current cost of PPP to WBC

WBC direct payment to PPP 2021/22	£1,326k
WBC Licensing Income to PPP	£300k
Total income PPP from WBC	£1,626k

The initial hypothesis would be that the cost of a modified service would be no more than the current cost for the same service. This will be the strategic focus. However, this cannot be confirmed until exit negotiations are concluded which will include negotiations in respect to one off costs associated with the termination of the service (if any) and any services that will continue to be delivered from the PPP. This will be agreed in the Exit Plan and will address timeframe, mitigation of risks and costs, key milestones, ongoing resources and staffing implications.

Much of the preparation work will occur in financial year 2021/22. This will be a transition year for Wokingham to depart the PPP partnership, and there may be costs to be mitigated during that year (staffing, legal; compensatory costs to partners), there will also be costs to establish the in-house service that will arise in 2022/23.

It is anticipated that the above one-off expenditure will be incurred over two financial years and will be identified both during negotiations with partners and after the formal date of transition. Should there be any further revenue and project costs be identified, these will be included separately in future Executive approvals as the service integration within the Council unfolds.

4. Inter-Authority Agreement (IAA) and Timescales

The IAA governs the responsibilities of the partnership and of each of the partner councils. The current partnership runs until 2028 and should any partner wish to exit the partnership, the following conditions apply: -

- A minimum twelve-month notice period to terminate the agreement is required
- The notice must therefore be given before the 31st March 2021 to exit the partnership on 31st March 2022 which is the next opportunity for termination
- Within 6 months, the Council’s sign off an exit plan and the Joint Management Team shall cooperate in good faith to agree this
- In terminating the contract, the Council will indemnify the other partners against all direct losses (which the other parties must take reasonable steps to mitigate)

If Wokingham elects to serve notice to fully exit the partnership, we can still potentially negotiate that some services remain within PPP as part of the Exit Plan and continue negotiations during the notice period. This again means that all the partner councils must agree to the new proposal as effectively this would be a new contractual arrangement in respect to any services that remain with PPP. Negotiations can begin now in advance of any notice to terminate and continue into the notice period.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE RECOMMENDATION

The Council faces severe funding pressures, particularly in the face of the COVID-19 crisis. It is therefore imperative that Council resources are focused on the vulnerable and on its highest priorities.

	How much will it Cost/ (Save)	Is there sufficient funding – if not quantify the Shortfall	Revenue or Capital?
Current Financial Year (Year 1)	£0	Yes	
Next Financial Year (Year 2)	£250k	Yes	Revenue
Following Financial Year (Year 3)	£250k	Yes	Revenue

Other Financial Information

Given that 2021/22 will be a transition year for Wokingham to depart the PPP partnership, there may be costs to be mitigated during that year (e.g. staffing and legal costs), there will also be costs to establish the in-house service (e.g. licences, IT) that will arise in 2022/23. The above special items are identified to fund these potential costs, whilst negotiations are ongoing with partners. Should there be any further revenue and project costs, these will be dealt with separately in future Executive approvals as the service integration within the Council unfolds.

Stakeholder Considerations and Consultation

Benchmarking of other authority models has taken place, and engagement with PPP partner authorities which will continue during the exit process.

Public Sector Equality Duty
A detailed Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) will be completed once the Exit Plan is agreed and the detail known. This will be shared with Councillors.

Climate Emergency – <i>This Council has declared a climate emergency and is committed to playing as full a role as possible – leading by example as well as by exhortation – in achieving a carbon neutral Wokingham Borough by 2030</i>
PPP deliver specialist support for areas of the Council’s Climate Emergency Action Plan and an in-house service will enable greater integration and focus to deliver the plan

List of Background Papers
Appendix 1 - Trading Standards, Environmental Health and Licensing functions

Contact Chris Traill	Service Place and Growth
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Appendix 1 - PPP Services

Licensing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Licensing Act 2003 • Taxis and Private Hire • Animal Welfare Establishments • Safety Advisory Groups Licensing committee and subcommittee items
Case Management, Policy & Governance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Freedom of Information requests, Member/MP enquiries • Comms
Environmental Health – Residential	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Private Sector Housing Standards • Domestic Nuisance (eg Noise, Bonfires) • Commercial Nuisance • Pests complaints and treatment offered through preferred supplier model. • Caravan Sites
Specialist	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Air Quality

Trading Standards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Metrology • Consumer Product Safety • Fair Trading- Age • Road Traffic • Trading Standards Licensing (Highly specialised eg Petroleum) • Buy/Support with Confidence • Public Health Delivery • Major / Acquisitive Crime Investigations
Case Management, Policy & Governance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Criminal Work • Financial Investigations • Intelligence
Environmental Health – Environmental Quality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Private Water Supplies • Air Quality Scientific advice • Planning applications comments • Public Pollution Consent Approvals- Pollution

Environmental Health – Residential	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Animal Warden
Food Standards, Agriculture and Animal Health and Welfare Health – Commercial	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Food Safety / Hygiene• Targeted Health & Safety• Investigations• Infectious disease notifications

TITLE	Equality Plan
FOR CONSIDERATION BY	The Executive on Thursday 18 March 2021
WARD	None Specific;
LEAD OFFICER	Director, Communities, Insight and Change Keeley Clements
LEAD MEMBER	Leader of the Council - John Halsall

PURPOSE OF REPORT (INC STRATEGIC OUTCOMES)

This report sets out the Equality Plan for 2021-2025. The Plan seeks to build on the Council's vision by setting priorities and actions to tackle inequality.

RECOMMENDATION

That the executive approves the Equality Plan (2021-2025) and associated Action Plan (2021-2022).

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Council has a duty to produce how it meets the Public Sector Equality Duties every 4 years. This Equality Plan has been developed in line with the Council's vision and Corporate Delivery Plan (2020-2024). It strengthens how we will enrich the lives of all residents in safe and strong communities and outlines our ambition to tackle inequality.

Insight tells us that we serve an increasingly diverse community with different needs, in both rural and urban settings. The impact of the pandemic has been devastating for many residents and businesses and brought inequality into sharp focus.

The Equality Plan has been informed by consultation which included an online survey and a number of focus sessions with community groups, staff and Members. The qualitative feedback has provided valuable insight to understand what we can do better within the internal workings of the council as well as what we can do to ensure that we can deliver more inclusive services that will lead to improved outcomes for our communities.

The Priorities which will achieve the ambitions of our Equality Plan are set out below. These directly reflect the areas identified through insight into evidence and outcomes from consultation and engagement. It is proposed that for the coming 4 years we focus on three priorities:

Priority 1 - Listen to and learn from our communities and use this to deliver services that work well for everyone.

Priority 2 – Act on our commitments to equality, diversity and inclusion in the way we plan, deliver and shape our services.

Priority 3 - Build a diverse and engaged workforce, where everyone is respected.

An action plan has been developed and sets out how we will seek to ensure that there is progress against each of the priorities through the first year of the plan period. To ensure that we are successful in making a meaningful impact on key measures of equality and achieve the ambitions set out in this plan, we have adopted the Local Government Association Equality Framework. This is an established, credible and objective performance framework to measure our performance and results. Progress and delivery will be monitored to ensure that we progress to the highest levels possible for each element of the Framework. At a future point, we will be able to invite peer challenge and support to ensure that our assessments of our performance and progress are credible and robust.

BACKGROUND

The Equality Plan (2021-2025) builds on the Council's vision for 2020 to 2024; 'to be a great place to live, learn, work and grow and a great place to do business'. This includes everyone and means tackling inequality together. As a public body we have a legal duty to have due regard to the Equality Act 2010. Although we are determined to do more than just fulfil our statutory obligations, this Equality Plan also provides the basis for how we will address the requirements of the Act. The Equality Act places statutory duties on the council to:

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

The protected characteristics set out in the Equality Act are:

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

These public sector equality duties mean that we need to take actions to minimise disadvantage, meet needs and encourage participation for people protected by the Act. The Equality Act applies not just to the council's responsibilities as a direct provider of services, but also to our suppliers or anyone working with us.

The impact of the pandemic has been devastating for residents and businesses. It has brought inequality into sharper focus, highlighting the importance of reducing risks to our most vulnerable residents and staff. Amidst an unprecedented year, we have also acknowledged the global commitment to eradicate racism through Black Lives Matter Movement. This landscape gives us even more compelling cause to listen, learn and lead in the vital fight for equality.

BUSINESS CASE

The development of the Equality Plan and action plan has been informed by insight from data, consultation and engagement.

Insight tells us that we serve an increasingly diverse community with different needs, in both rural and urban settings. Although the 2011 Census recorded that 11% of the Wokingham population were from Ethnic Minority backgrounds, this proportion has undoubtedly grown, and will continue to grow, in light of the continuing development in the borough: review of schools and education data shows that the percentage of pupils

in our schools from Ethnic Minority backgrounds has increased from 26% in 2014 to 34% in 2020 (Schools Census). The 2021 Census is expected to reflect Wokingham's growing diversity.

National research studies (Stonewall, LGBT Foundation) estimate that 5-7% of any given local population in the UK will identify as LGBT+. In Wokingham Borough this means that around 8,000-10,000 residents could identify as LGBT+. The Wokingham JSNA sets out that some members of the LGBT+ community are disproportionately more likely to experience discrimination and barriers to good outcomes, including challenges around mental health and well-being. According to research by Stonewall (2018), 11% of 'LGBT' people have faced domestic abuse from a partner. This increases to 17% of Ethnic Minority 'LGBT+' people.

We have an ageing population. 18% of our residents are aged 65 and over. Using data for England as a guide, the proportion of our residents aged 65+ is expected to increase to 20.7% by mid-2028. The fastest growing age group is aged 85 and over, which is likely to double by 2041 and treble by 2066 (ONS). There are implications of an ageing population in relation to health and wellbeing, the effects of loneliness and isolation, and vulnerability to crime.

There are likely to be increasing numbers of residents with disabilities that require support. As our population grows older and young people with disabilities live longer, forecasts show that Wokingham Borough will experience: a 42% increase in people whose day-to-day activities are limited a little or a lot by a disability; a 23% increase in people living in care homes, particularly those aged 85 and over, and a 20% increase in people who are 65 and over and have dementia (POPPI & PANSI). We also know that the number of adults with learning disabilities that we support is higher than in many other parts of the country and is the second highest in the South East.

Trend data shows that the demand for SEND support in Wokingham is increasing. Over the last few years there has been a significant upward trend in the numbers of children and young people with Education Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) and numbers of children and young people requiring SEN support in schools. There have been notable increases in demand for support in relation to Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and Social and Emotional Mental Health (SEMH) in particular. The numbers of younger children (aged 7-11) requiring some form of SEN support has increased significantly over the last three years, partly as a result of changing demographics and needs, and partly as a result of better assessments and more successful early identification and prevention.

The Priorities which will achieve the ambitions of our Equality Plan are set out below. These directly reflect the areas identified through insight into evidence and outcomes from consultation and engagement, and by delivering against these we are confident we will achieve our ambition to ensure that Wokingham is a great place for all our residents; that we deliver best practice in terms of fulfilling our duties under the Equality Act; and will be a great employer that builds a diverse, inclusive and engaged workforce.

It is proposed that for the coming 4 years we focus on three priorities:

Priority 1 - Listen to and learn from our communities and use this to deliver services that work well for everyone.

Priority 2 – Act on our commitments to equality, diversity and inclusion in the way we plan, deliver and shape our services.

Priority 3 - Build a diverse and engaged workforce, where everyone is respected.

We know the best outcomes and changes can only be achieved together. That is why we asked for everyone to share their views and ideas about the proposals through an online survey and we held a number of focus sessions with community groups such as the Voluntary Sector, Involved Tenants, Service Providers, CLASP (a charity that supports people with learning disabilities) and other residents who wanted to share their specific ideas. We also held focus sessions with different staff at different levels within the council and our Elected Councillors. This took place through the: Members Equality Steering Group, Employee Equality Steering Group, Managers Network, Leadership Teams, Commissioning Managers, Ethnically Diverse Staff Network, Adult Social Care Staff, Equality Champions and Customer Delivery Managers. We received 563 consultation responses on key questions relating to the suggested priorities and objectives of this Equality Plan. Engagement sessions built on nearly 1800 comments to highlight areas of strength to build on, and areas for future improvement.

The qualitative feedback has provided valuable insight to understand what we can do better within the internal workings of the council as well as what we can do to ensure that we can deliver more inclusive services that will lead to improved outcomes for our communities. The qualitative feedback is summarised within the Equality Plan (Enclosure A) and has helped to shape the Action Plan for 2021-2022 (Enclosure B). This action plan seeks to ensure that there is progress against each of the priorities and it will be a live and iterative document.

To ensure that we are successful in making a meaningful impact on key measures of equality and achieve the ambitions set out in this plan, we have adopted an established, credible and objective performance framework to measure our performance and results, the Local Government Association Equality Framework. As we implement this plan, we will self-assess ourselves against three levels for each part of the Framework. We will monitor our progress and delivery to ensure that we progress to the highest levels possible for each element of the Framework. At a future point, we will be able to invite peer challenge and support to ensure that our assessments of our performance and progress are credible and robust.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE RECOMMENDATION

The Council faces severe funding pressures, particularly in the face of the COVID-19 crisis. It is therefore imperative that Council resources are focused on the vulnerable and on its highest priorities.

	How much will it Cost/ (Save)	Is there sufficient funding – if not quantify the Shortfall	Revenue or Capital?
Current Financial Year (Year 1)	See ‘other financial information’		Revenue
Next Financial Year (Year 2)	See ‘other financial information’		Revenue
Following Financial Year (Year 3)	See ‘other financial information’		Revenue

Other Financial Information

The activity set out in this report to strengthen the Council's initial approach to tackle inequality will be picked up within existing resources and activities. Any additional budget requirements will be sought from Executive as supplementary estimates.

Stakeholder Considerations and Consultation

Research guided this Plan, through public consultation as well as several focus sessions internally and externally including: Members Equality Steering Group, Employee Equality Steering Group, Managers Network, Leadership Teams, Commissioning Managers, Ethnically Diverse Staff Network, Adult Social Care Staff, Equality Champions and Customer Delivery Managers. Sessions were also held with groups in the community, like the Voluntary Sector, Involved Tenants, Service Providers, Clasp and other residents who wanted to share more specific ideas.

Public Sector Equality Duty

An Equality Impact Assessment has been completed and is attached as Enclosure D.

Climate Emergency – <i>This Council has declared a climate emergency and is committed to playing as full a role as possible – leading by example as well as by exhortation – in achieving a carbon neutral Wokingham Borough by 2030</i>

The purpose of this report is to endorse the Councils Equality Plan. Where cross cutting implications are identified the impacts will be given due weight in decision making.

List of Background Papers

- | |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Enclosure A – Draft Equality Plan 2021-2025
Enclosure B – Appendix 1 Equality Action Plan 2021-2022
Enclosure C – Appendix 2 Summary of Delivery since 2017
Enclosure D – Equality Impact Assessment |
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Contact Laura Callan	Service Strategy and Planning
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WOKINGHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL

EQUALITY PLAN 2021-25

Tackling Inequality Together

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1. BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

Our Community Vision is for Wokingham Borough to be a great place to live, learn, work and grow, and a great place to do business. This Vision is delivered through a set of priorities in our Corporate Delivery Plan (2020-2024).

The ambition of this Equality Plan 2021-25 is to ensure that our Community Vision is realised for all our residents, irrespective of their background or characteristics. Our ambition is to ensure that no-one is left behind, and that unfair and discriminatory barriers are removed.

This Equality Plan 2021-25 describes how equality, diversity and inclusion are essential to the way we operate as a community leader, a service provider and an employer.

Our Equality Plan 2021-25 will build on what we have already accomplished in relation to Equality and Diversity and sets out our priorities and objectives for achieving more in the years to come.

Our objectives set out clearly how we will achieve these results, and we will monitor our progress closely to ensure we are on track to achieve our goals and learn as we deliver.

A range of stakeholders were surveyed and consulted, generating valuable evidence, insight and feedback which has directly informed the development of our strategic priorities and objectives. Included within this evidence base are nearly 1800 responses to key questions about areas of strength we can build on and areas for further improvement.

Achieving this plan will require commitment, leadership and collaboration over the next four years, so that we build a more equal and inclusive borough, where nobody is left behind and where all residents are able to prosper and thrive.

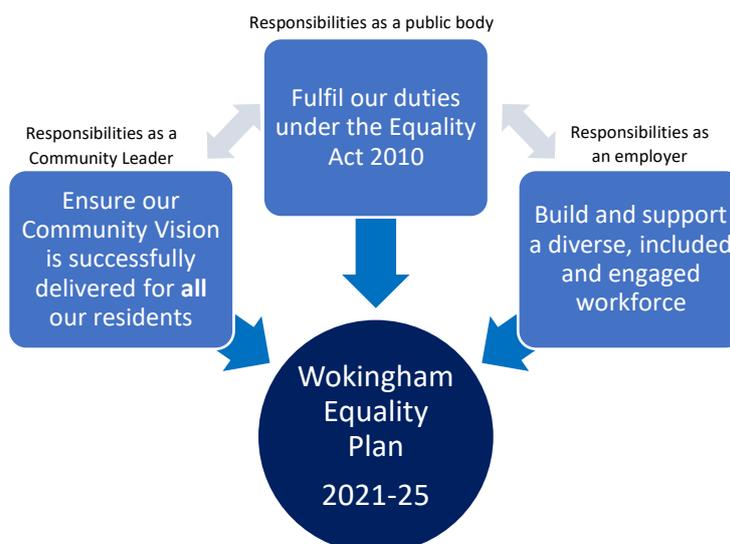
Why we need an Equality Plan: three Key Drivers

There are **three key drivers** which create the need for a comprehensive and strategic Equality Plan:

1. To ensure our Community Vision is successfully delivered for **all** our residents;
2. To fulfil our duties and responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010 as a public body;
3. To build and support a diverse, included and engaged workforce and meet our responsibilities as an employer.

These Key Drivers are set out in Figure 1 and explained in greater detail below:

Figure 1: Drivers behind the development of the Equality Plan 2021-25



Driver #1: Deliver our Community Vision for **all** our residents

Our Community Vision for 2020 to 2024, is for Wokingham to be a great place to live, learn, work and grow and a great place to do business. Our Community Vision is delivered through a set of priorities in our Corporate Delivery Plan (2020-2024). These priorities set out our commitment to equality in all that we do and how we will enrich the lives of all members of our community.

The ambition of our Equality Plan is to ensure that our Community Vision is realised for all our residents irrespective of their background or characteristics. Our ambition is to ensure that no-one is left behind, and that unfair and discriminatory barriers are removed.

Driver #2: Fulfil our duties under the Equality Act 2010

As a public body we have a legal duty to have due regard to the Equality Act 2010. Although we are determined to do more than just fulfil our statutory obligations, this Equality Plan also provides the basis for how we will address the requirements of the Act. The Equality Act places statutory duties on the council to:

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

The protected characteristics set out in the Equality Act are: age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation. Public authorities also need to have due regard to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination against someone because of their marriage or civil partnership status.

These public sector equality duties mean that we need to take actions to minimise disadvantage, meet needs and encourage participation for people protected by the Act. The Equality Act applies not just to the council's responsibilities as a direct provider of services, but also to our suppliers or anyone working with us.

Driver #3: Build and support a diverse, included and engaged workforce

As an employer, we are committed to promoting equality and diversity amongst our workforce. We will take action to ensure that we are a great employer that values and welcomes the different ideas, skills, behaviours and experiences of our colleagues.

The Equality Act also relates to the council's responsibilities as an employer. We have a legal duty as a public body to ensure due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity, eliminate unlawful discrimination and foster good relations between our staff. We want to make sure that we promote equality and diversity inside our organisation, ensuring that our HR policies and procedures reflect good practice in terms of equality and diversity, and that anyone who works for the council or applies to work for us feels confident they are treated fairly.

Building on success

Since 2017 the council has already delivered several actions and initiatives designed to have a positive impact on promoting equality, diversity and inclusion, in line with the objectives of its previous Equality Plan. A summary of these can be found in **Appendix 2**.

In addition to responding to current and likely future challenges, and addressing the key points which emerge from the analysis of data, evidence and feedback from consultation which follows in the next section, our future actions will also build on the most successful aspects of our delivery in previous years.

2. INSIGHT FROM DATA, CONSULTATION AND ENGAGEMENT

In the development of this Equality Plan we reviewed some key data from sources including the following:

- Office of National Statistics (ONS), Census and Local Population Estimates
- Various data sources from the NHS, National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) and Public Health England
- The British Crime Survey
- Stonewall and LGBT Foundation
- Wokingham Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA)
- POPPI & PANSI

Data from the sources listed above were reviewed and analysed in order to gain insights into the Equality needs of our local community and help identify some key priorities for this Equality Plan.

In addition, we have undertaken consultation and engagement with a diverse range of stakeholders to ensure that the priorities and objectives within this plan are underpinned by evidence.

Summary of insight from data and research

- **We serve an increasingly diverse community** with different needs, in both rural and urban settings. Although the 2011 Census recorded that 11% of the Wokingham population were from Ethnic Minority backgrounds, this proportion has undoubtedly grown: review of schools and education data shows that the percentage of pupils in our schools from Ethnic Minority backgrounds has increased from 26% in 2014 to 34% in 2020 (Schools Census). The 2021 Census is expected to reflect Wokingham's growing diversity
- National research studies (Stonewall, LGBT Foundation) estimate that 5-7% of any given local population in the UK will identify as LGBT+. In Wokingham Borough this means that **around 8,000-10,000 residents could identify as LGBT+**. The Wokingham JSNA sets out that some members of the LGBT+ community are disproportionately more likely to experience discrimination and barriers to good outcomes, including challenges around mental health and well-being. According to research by Stonewall (2018), 11% of 'LGBT' people have faced domestic abuse from a partner. This increases to 17% of Ethnic Minority 'LGBT' people.
- **We have an ageing population.** 18% of our residents are aged 65 and over. Using data for England as a guide, the proportion of our residents aged 65+ is expected to increase to 20.7% by mid-2028. The fastest growing age group is aged 85 and over, which is likely to double by 2041 and treble by 2066 (ONS). There are implications of an ageing population in relation to health and wellbeing, the effects of loneliness and isolation, and vulnerability to crime
- There are likely to be **increasing numbers of residents with disabilities that require support**. As our population [grows](#) older and young people with disabilities live longer, forecasts show that Wokingham Borough will experience: a 42% increase in people whose day-to-day activities are limited a little or a lot by a disability; a 23% increase in people living in care homes, particularly those aged 85 and over, and a 20% increase in people who are 65 and over and have dementia (POPPI & PANSI). We also know

that the number of adults with learning disabilities that we support is higher than in many other parts of the country and is the second highest in the South East.

- Trend data shows that the **demand for SEND support in Wokingham is increasing**. Over the last few years there has been a significant upward trend in the numbers of children and young people with Education Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) and numbers of children and young people requiring SEN support in schools. There have been notable increases in demand for support in relation to Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and Social and Emotional Mental Health (SEMH) in particular. The numbers of younger children (aged 7-11) requiring some form of SEN support has increased significantly over the last three years, partly as a result of changing demographics and needs, and partly as a result of better assessments and more successful early identification and prevention.

Summary of insight and outcomes from engagement and consultation

Successful action against inequality requires teamwork and collaboration and is not something the council can achieve without the support and engagement of key stakeholders.

We held focus sessions with staff at different levels. This included our: Members Equality Steering Group, Employee Equality Steering Group, Managers Network, Leadership Teams, Commissioning Managers, Ethnically Diverse Staff Network, Adult Social Care Staff, Equality Champions and Customer Delivery Managers. We also held community sessions with our 'Involved Tenants', service providers, community groups such as CLASP (a charity that supports people with learning disabilities) and other residents who wanted to share their specific ideas.

We received **563 consultation responses** on key questions relating to the suggested priorities and objectives of this Equality Plan. Engagement sessions built on nearly **1800 comments** to highlight areas of strength to build on, and areas for future improvement.

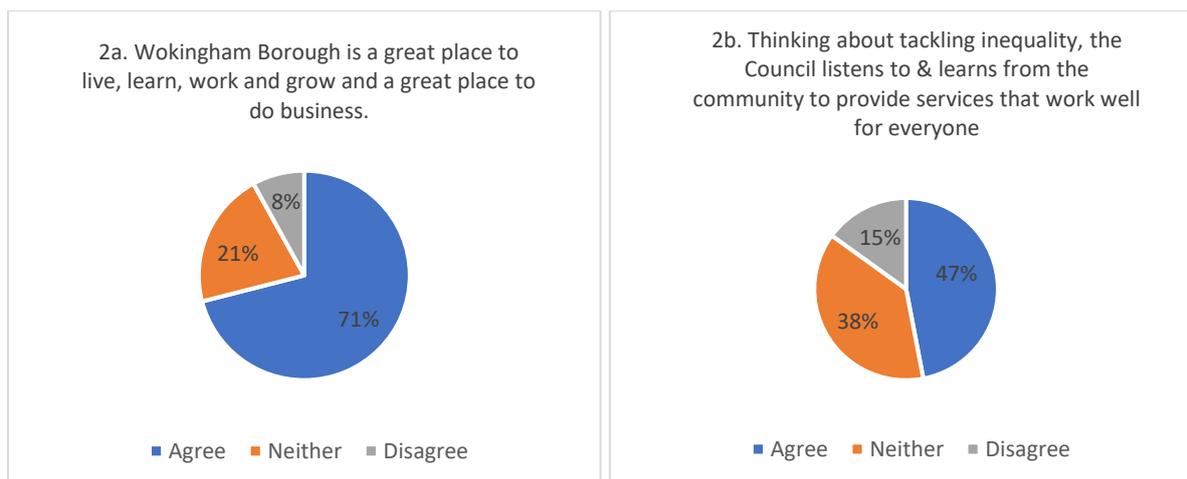
There were **three objectives** behind this consultation and engagement:

- a) To temperature check stakeholder views on our current approach to equality
- b) To identify areas of strength in relation to equality, and areas for improvement
- c) To take feedback from stakeholders on suggested priorities for the Equality Plan

a) Temperature check stakeholder views on Wokingham's current approach to Equality

Stakeholders were asked whether they agreed or disagreed with the statement that Wokingham Borough is a great place to live, learn, work and grow and a great place to do business, and with regard to tackling inequality, the Council listens to and learns from the community to provide services that work well for everyone. The results are set out in Figure 2a and 2b below:

Figure 2a and 2b: Stakeholder responses to questions relating to the Equality Plan



These results show:

- While most stakeholders agreed that Wokingham Borough is a great place to live, learn, work and grow and a great place to do business, a significant proportion (21%) were unsure and 8% disagreed. There is opportunity for improvement.
- We have to do more listening and learning from the community: just under half agreed that this is something we do well, over a third were less sure and 15% disagreed.
- Where data was available, responses from those with protected characteristics were analysed. Analysis showed that responses from Ethnic Minority backgrounds did not differ significantly from the overall pattern of responses, people with disabilities were more likely to disagree with both statements (+3% greater disagreement with Wokingham as a great place, +9% greater disagreement with the council listening and learning from the community).

b) *Identify areas of strength in relation to the current approach to Equality, as well as areas for improvement*

Nearly 1800 feedback responses in relation to questions about our priorities for this Plan generated useful feedback, which can be grouped into two main areas:

- Areas of strength we should build on
- Areas for improvement we should focus on moving forward

Areas of strength included:

- The pandemic response and partnership working to help vulnerable people
- Provision of inclusive events and spaces for children
- Support for older people and people with disabilities
- Some communication and surveys
- Great schools and great place to live for most people
- Feedback stating that there is a good community spirit in Wokingham, and staff care about residents

Areas for improvement included:

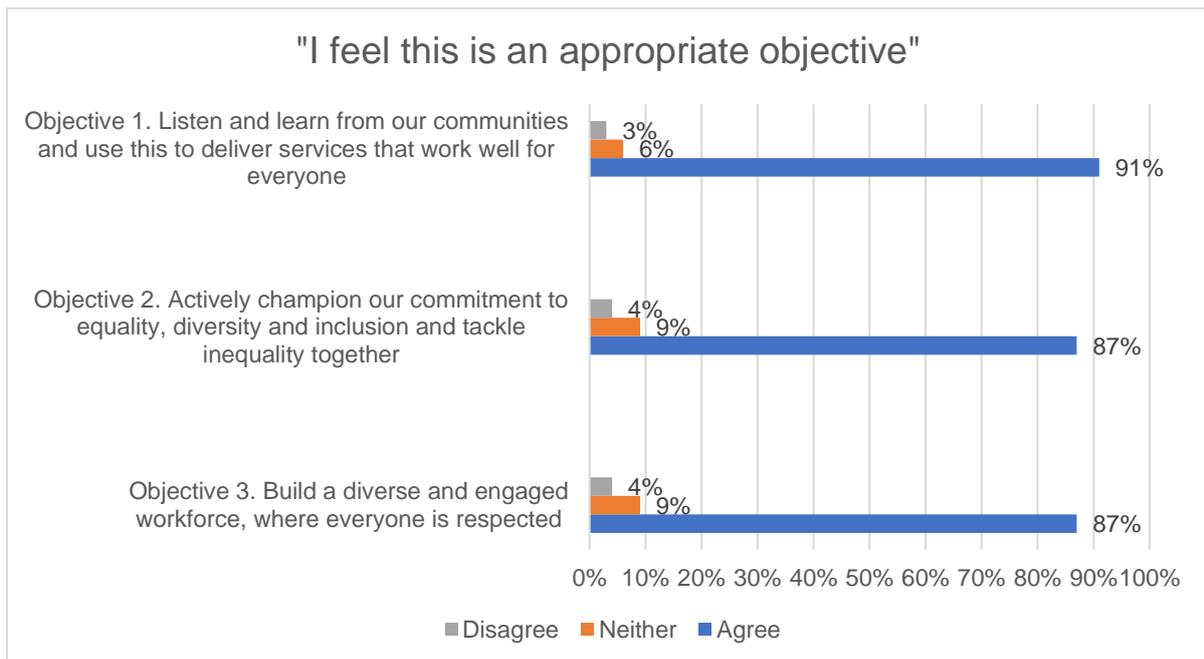
- The need to take action on inequality, publish it and assess the impact of changes
- Co-produce and avoid tokenism
- Could do more to encourage diversity and improve accessibility
- Greater focus on tackling poverty

- Deliver a greater focus on racial equity in schools
- Could do more to give groups with protected characteristics a voice, and improve anti-discriminatory activity particularly in relation to Ethnic Minority and LGBT+ communities
- Communicate better through “easy read” and translated versions
- Encourage diversity at all levels of the council
- Take feedback and monitoring data into account when designing or adapting services

c) Take feedback on suggested priorities for the Equality Plan

Stakeholders were asked for feedback on some suggested priorities for the Equality Plan. The overall responses are set out in Figure 3 below:

Figure 3: Responses from stakeholders to suggested priorities for the Equality Plan 2021-25



Collectively, feedback from the consultation and engagement exercises has helped to shape and inform the priorities and objectives set out in the section which follows.

3. OUR PRIORITIES AND OBJECTIVES

The Priorities and Objectives which will achieve the ambitions of our Equality Plan are set out in Figure 4 below. These directly reflect the areas identified through insight into evidence and outcomes from consultation and engagement, and by delivering against these we are confident we will achieve our ambition to ensure that Wokingham is a great place for all our residents; that we deliver best practice in terms of fulfilling our duties under the Equality Act; and will be a great employer that builds a diverse, inclusive and engaged workforce.

Figure 4: Equality Plan 2021-25: Our Priorities

Priority 1 - Listen to and learn from our communities and use this to deliver services that work well for everyone	
Objective 1	We will improve the collection of data about our communities, publishing it in a transparent manner and acting on this information to improve the way we work. This will help enable us to make the greatest possible positive impact on tackling inequality and ensure that our delivery meets the needs of the communities we serve.
Objective 2	We will engage and communicate with our residents to encourage participation, learn and adapt so that we build trust, strengthen collaboration in delivery, and generate insight and learning to continually strengthen and improve our services. We will adapt our methods of communication and engagement to the needs of our increasingly diverse population to make sure everyone is included.
Objective 3	We will use feedback from residents to identify barriers to equality of opportunity, and continuously improve our approach and learn from mistakes.
Priority 2 - Act on our commitments to equality, diversity and inclusion in the way we plan, deliver and shape our services	
Objective 4	We will embed our commitments and ambitions to promote equality into the way we plan, purchase and deliver. We will assure equality in our approaches in a meaningful way that uses feedback and robust performance and contract management to ensure we address needs for all our residents, and continuously improve.
Objective 5	We will model active community leadership by driving commitments to tackle inequality in our work with strategic partners, including our local area and partnership strategies and plans, and through our collaboration and coproduction with the communities and customers we serve
Objective 6	We will strengthen and improve our use of Equality Impact Assessments to ensure that at the appropriate stages of planning and delivery we take account in a timely way of the various potential impacts of our decision-making and delivery, have due regard to our duties under the Equality Act 2010, and do what we can to promote positive equality impacts and minimise negative equality impacts
Priority 3 - Build a diverse and engaged workforce, where everyone is respected	
Objective 7	We will support staff at all levels of the organisation, including our leadership, to equip them with the right tools to understand how best to tackle inequality and meet the needs of our increasingly diverse community
Objective 8	We will honour the commitments agreed in our Equality Workforce Monitoring Report to help strengthen our approach to equality, diversity and inclusion in our workplace

Our priorities will be delivered through a comprehensive **Action Plan**. This can be found as **Appendix 1**.

4. MEASURING SUCCESS

To ensure that we are successful in making a meaningful impact on key measures of equality and achieve the ambitions set out in this plan, we have adopted an established, credible and objective performance framework to measure our performance and results.

The Framework selected for this plan is the [Local Government Association \(LGA\) Equality Framework](#). This Framework helps councils, in discussion with local partners and local people, to review and improve their performance to advance equality for people with protected characteristics.

This Framework has four parts:

1. Understanding and working with your communities;
2. Leadership and organisational commitment;
3. Responsive services and customer care;
4. Diverse and engaged workforce.

There are three possible levels of achievement described in the Framework:

- Developing
- Achieving
- Excellent

As we implement this plan, we will self-assess ourselves against three levels for each part of the Framework. We will monitor our progress and delivery to ensure that we progress to the highest levels possible for each element of the Framework.

At a future point, we will be able to invite peer challenge and support to ensure that our assessments of our performance and progress are credible and robust.

Focusing on delivery: Equality Action Plan (2021-22)

A detailed Action Plan (attached as Appendix 1) has been developed to ensure immediate focus on delivery, and that actions are taken in the coming financial year to ensure our Priorities and Objectives are achieved.

The various groups involved in Governance of the Strategy (see the section below) will help to monitor progress against delivery of this Action Plan, and ensure that our delivery is having the intended impact on Equality outcomes.

5. GOVERNANCE

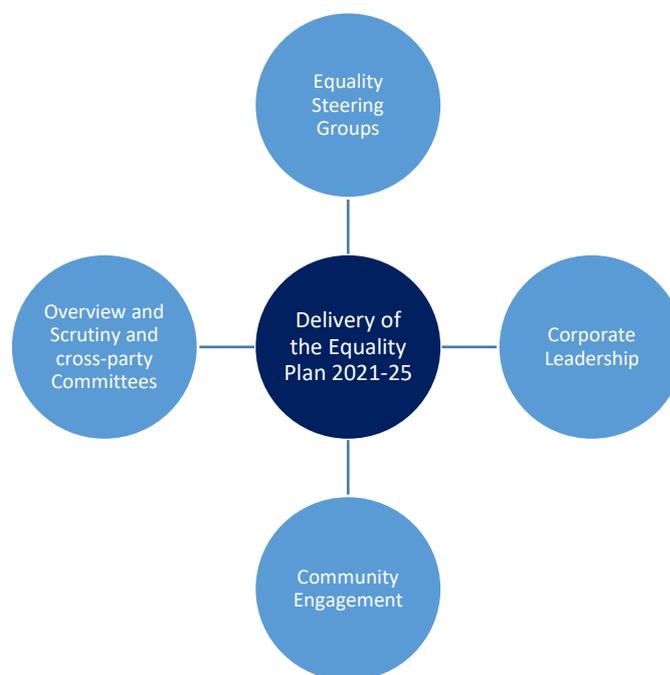
In order to ensure that we take a robust approach to Governing the delivery of this Plan, we have put Governance arrangements in place to ensure the right balance of support and challenge as we implement the Actions set out in the Action Plan.

Given the complexity of the Equality agenda, it is appropriate to engage a range of different groups in the process of helping to steer delivery of the Equality Plan, and help us assess our progress.

Collectively, these groups will help us to ensure that our commitments and actions set out in the Action Plan (**Appendix 1**) are successfully delivered.

The Governance arrangements for the Equality Plan 2021-25 are set out in Figure 5 below:

Figure 5: Governance Arrangements for Delivery of the Equality Plan 2021-25



Equality Steering Groups

In order to help steer development of this Equality Plan a cross-party **Members' Equality Steering Group** was established. The group met at key stages to provide oversight, advice and feedback and help steer the development of the Plan. This helped to effectively align equality activities with our vision and set accountable direction for the Plan.

Internally, our **Employment Equality Steering Group** is chaired by the Head of Human Resources & Organisation Development and made up of representatives from each Directorate in the Council as well as UNISON. The group meets quarterly, and is responsible for ensuring that no potential or existing member of staff is excluded from career and training opportunities or experiences discrimination.

Our newly formed **Ethnically Diverse Staff Network** is agreeing terms of reference so that it can support our equality priorities. In addition, multiple workstreams, including Equality Champions, have been mobilised to tackle racism in the workplace through a network of more than 100 staff volunteers.

Corporate Leadership

Tackling inequality is a key priority for us and we are committed, at every level of the organisation, to take effective and measurable action. The Director for Communities, Insight and Change has been appointed as the corporate lead for equality. As an employer, our staff and Councillors adhere to our code of conduct and we will continue to make clear our position of zero tolerance of harassment and bullying. We embrace constructive challenge at all levels, and the Corporate Leadership Team will ensure that we make measurable progress towards developing an inclusive culture that strives for excellence in everything we do, for all members of our local community.

Overview and Scrutiny and Cross-Party Committees

Our Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee, Audit Committee and Personnel Board (which all have cross-party membership) are responsible for oversight and scrutiny of progress on this Plan, which is included on their forward programmes of work. Their support, advice and challenge will help ensure our actions demonstrate results.

Our Community

We value and welcome the opportunity to hear from all members of our community about how well we are doing against the commitments set out in this Plan, and how we could improve. Although members of the public can present questions at Council meetings to actively participate in democracy and decision making, we recognise that we must do more to ensure that all members of the community have their voice heard in the decision-making process.

Internal audits and external inspections will also help us to quality assure and help us improve. Actions we will take to deliver this Plan include those to continue to strengthen our approach to customer complaints, and ensure that we learn from this feedback and address areas of concern in a timely and appropriate manner.

We have many residents, community groups, partners and voluntary organisations that provide regular opportunities for active engagement in the decisions and services which affect them, including: The Children in Care Council, Wokingham Youth Climate Conference, Wokingham Borough Connect, COVID Community Champions, BME Forum, Children's Rights and Advocacy Service, One Front Door, Involved Tenants, CLASP and the Learning Disability Partnership Board. We will ensure that we engage with and learn from the work of these valuable groups throughout the implementation of this Plan.

6. APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Equality Plan: Action Plan (2021-22)

Appendix 2: Summary of delivery since 2017

Appendix 1: Equality Action Plan 1 (2021-2022)

We have an action plan so that we can measure progress in achieving our three priorities for 2021-2025. It does not include everything that we hope to achieve in the coming years or 'business as usual', it focuses on actions that we will work on in the first year to make a difference. Many actions require collaboration that will help to embed good practice. We will share, publish and review our Equality Action Plan(s) every year to make progress on our 4-year Equality Plan.

	What are we going to do	Measurable Outcomes	Target date for completion
Equality priority 1 - Listen to and learn from our communities and use this to deliver services that work well for everyone			
Objective 1	We will improve the collection of data about our communities, publishing it in a transparent manner and acting on this information to improve the way we work. This will help enable us to make the greatest possible positive impact on tackling inequality and ensure that our delivery meets the needs of the communities we serve.		
Action 1	Publish equality and diversity information on our website	Residents can easily access information about equality on our website	Q1 April to June 2021 and ongoing
Action 2	Review and identify any potential areas of change to improve our equality monitoring form and monitoring practices	An updated equality monitoring form, or a record of reasons why no changes were made, is available. An equality monitoring policy or reasons for the absence of one is available.	Q4 January to March 2022
Action 3	Introduce an 'easy read' equality monitoring Form. Easy read is a way of making information accessible to people with learning disabilities. It can also help people that find it difficult to read and write, younger people, people who have memory problems, or are communicating in another language	An easy read equality monitoring form is available	Q4 January to March 2022
Action 4	Conduct service audits to identify any potential gaps in equality monitoring data	All service areas collect equality monitoring data. Those that do not, have written reasons why.	Q4 January to March 2022
Objective 2	We will engage and communicate with our residents to encourage participation, learn and adapt so that we build trust, strengthen collaboration in delivery, and generate insight and learning to continually strengthen and improve our services. We will adapt our methods of communication and engagement to the needs of our increasingly diverse population to make sure everyone is included.		

Action 5	Identify an approach to develop a Resident Equality Group	A group has been set up to provide a voice to advance equality for people with protected characteristics	Q3 October to December 2021
Action 6	Support the 'BME' Forum to deliver on its objectives, purpose and activities	A representative and independent BME Forum for the Borough	Q3 October to December 2021
Action 7	Identify how to improve the experience of residents who need to communicate in other languages	A document is available to show measures that could be taken to support residents who need additional support.	Q3 October to December 2021
Action 8	Support staff to offer 'Easy Read' for new public documents	More public documents are available in Easy Read	Q4 January to March 2022
Objective 3	We will use feedback from residents to identify barriers to equality of opportunity, and continuously improve our approach and learn from mistakes.		
Action 9	Introduce Equality Monitoring into our complaints process and when gathering customer feedback via phone, email and online and ensure this is used to shape service delivery	Meaningful equality data is captured via customer touchpoints, maximising the reach and quantity received, for improved monitoring	Q3 October to December 2021
Action 10	Listen to a diverse range of community groups and partners to gather insights	Improved channels of engagement with existing groups and new groups to improve inclusive participation in decision making Feedback is used to make improvements in services.	Ongoing

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	What are we going to do	Measurable Outcomes	Target date for completion
Equality priority 2 - Act on our commitments to equality, diversity and inclusion in the way we plan, deliver and shape our services.			
Objective 4	We will embed our commitments and ambitions to promote equality into the way we plan, purchase and deliver. We will assure equality in our approaches in a meaningful way that uses feedback and robust performance and contract management to ensure we address needs for all our residents, and continuously improve.		
Action 11	Review our consideration of modern-day slavery in contract and commissioning activities	Activity has been reviewed and opportunities to strengthen our approach established	Q4 January to March 2022
Action 12	Review equality standards for procurement activities	Contract and monitoring clauses have been reviewed Needs analysis shows that services to be procured are representative, fair and reasonable. Equality is built into corporate procurement strategy	Q4 January to March 2022
Objective 5	We will model active community leadership by driving commitments to tackle inequality in our work with strategic partners, including our local area and partnership strategies and plans, and through our collaboration and coproduction with the communities and customers we serve.		

Action 13	Influence the creation of a wider Councils Equality Forum to share best practice with other councils	Terms of reference for a wider group has been created	Q1 April to June 2021
Action 14	Identify an approach to continue to engage and support collaboration with Councillors	Existing Equalities Members' Steering Group is reviewed and future ways of working agreed, to deliver against objectives	Q2 July to September 2021
Action 15	Celebrate successes made in tackling inequality	Publish 3 case studies of positive actions taken in 2021-2022	Q4 January to March 2022
Action 16	Support partners in the Borough such as schools, Public Health and Community Safety Partnership to tackle inequalities	Actions have been set to collaboratively focus on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Racial equity in schools • Hate crime • Domestic abuse • Approach to poverty • Health inequalities • Autism Strategy 	Q4 January to March 2022
Action 17 37	Role model behaviour that promotes, encourages and showcases the benefits of diversity in our community	Publish communications that relate to protected groups such as Ethnic Minority and LGBT+ communities and people with disabilities. Such as celebrating and marking important dates throughout the year and promoting health and wellbeing Language and images used when we communicate demonstrate diversity and inclusion.	Q4 January to March 2022
Objective 6	We will strengthen and improve our use of Equality Impact Assessments to ensure that at the appropriate stages of planning and delivery we take account in a timely way of the various potential impacts of our decision-making and delivery, have due regard to our duties under the Equality Act 2010, and do what we can to promote positive equality impacts and minimise negative equality impacts		
Action 18	Review equality impact assessments training and procedures to ensure they are completed at the right time and are robust.	Changes made to procedures and tools to improve clarity for staff. Positive feedback from staff feeling more confident with assessments. Assessments are collated so they can be quality checked.	Q3 October to December 2021
Action 19	Review progress against actions and carry out a self- assessment using LGA Equality Framework. Action plan to be reviewed annually with an aim to undertake a peer review during the lifecycle of this plan to inform and strengthen our approach.	Progress is published and action plan is reviewed annually.	Q4 January to March 2022

What are we going to do	Measurable Outcomes	Target date for completion
Equality priority 3 – Build a diverse and engaged workforce, where everyone is respected.		
Objective 7	We will support staff at all levels of the organisation, including our leadership, to equip them with the right tools to understand how best to tackle inequality and meet the needs of our increasingly diverse community	
Action 20	Deliver against the 5 principles of the Race at Work Charter	Share and publish a report about our progress since signing the Charter Q3 October to December 2021
Action 21	Review equality training offered to staff and Councillors and identify gaps	Training gaps are identified, and plans made to address the gaps. Elected Councillors are provided with training and feedback is collected to improve future training Q3 October to December 2021
Action 22	Equip staff with demographic tools to help understand the diversity of the Borough	Key metrics to measure and report on equality position and progress are provided to staff. Q3 October to December 2021
Action 23	Create an internal equality page for staff to collect and share information to support a diverse workforce	A page is available for staff to access information about equality in one area of our intranet Q1 April to June 2021
Objective 8	We will honour the commitments agreed in our Equality Workforce Monitoring Report to help strengthen our approach to equality, diversity and inclusion in our workplace	
Action 24 38	Review our commitment from the staff survey to undertake actions needed for protected groups	Working group on staff survey has equality indicators in its terms of reference Q2 July to September 2021
Action 25	Promote self-declaration of protected characteristics amongst staff	Increased numbers of staff have declared their diversity information compared to figures recorded in the Equality Monitoring Report Q2 July to September 2021
Action 26	Ensure work is conducted to monitor and address any gaps in relation to employees with protected characteristics in our workforce (excluding schools)	Progress reviewed against actions in our Workforce Equality Monitoring Report for 2020-21. A report is produced and published for 2021-22 showing improvements made Q3 October to December 2021
Action 27	Review the feasibility of actions that will support diverse recruitment in senior roles	Recommendations are available on how to improve diverse recruitment in senior roles Q4 January to March 2022
Action 28	Review recruitment practices to attract underrepresented groups	Employee Equality Steering Group has recorded actions taken to review practices Q3 October to December 2021
Action 29	Demonstrate anti-racist practice by understanding if there are gaps in what support could be offered to staff exposed to racism through their work	Options for solutions presented Q3 October to December 2021

Appendix 2: What we have delivered since 2017

Objective 1: Services are easily accessible for all our residents and capable of responding to changing needs of our communities and how we will look after vulnerable individuals and groups.

What we have done:

- ✓ Council services that support our most vulnerable individuals have been reviewed and transformed to more closely meet the needs of our residents
- ✓ We have adopted a continuous improvement approach to ensuring services are accessible and responsive which means we are continually seeking to improve the way that we target support.
- ✓ We enable our vulnerable residents to have a voice and influence decisions that affect them and the services they receive to shape these to suit individual needs.
- ✓ Maximising variety of communication channels and improvements to online transactions which can be more convenient for some people with protected characteristics, whilst acknowledging that digital transactions may not be accessible to all and therefore continuing to offer mediated support either over the telephone, within the Council Offices, Libraries and Locality Hubs (prior to temporary closure due to the pandemic).
- ✓ Complying with the 2018 Digital Accessibility Regulations to ensure the Council's website can be used by as many people as possible including those with impaired vision, motor difficulties, cognitive impairments or learning disabilities, deafness or impaired hearing.
- ✓ On-line citizenship ceremonies.
- ✓ Increased online library offer.
- ✓ Support with the EU settlement scheme (free service to residents).
- ✓ Extending blue badge scheme to include those with hidden disabilities as per Government legislation and 2,500 people are now registered online users of the Blue Badge Scheme
- ✓ The Local Offer and the Community Directory - online key information hub supporting disabled or vulnerable older residents/carers/families (continuously improved and informed by resident and user feedback).

Objective 2: Vulnerable individuals and groups are supported and looked after

What we have done:

2017

- ✓ Berkshire Suicide Prevention Strategy 2017-20.
- ✓ Domestic Violence and Abuse Strategy 2017-20.
- ✓ Childcare Sufficiency Strategy 2017 – securing the right type and amount of childcare provision.
- ✓ Children's Services Recruitment, Retention and Wellbeing Strategy – ensuring our workforce is committed to equality.
- ✓ Achieving Permanence for Children Strategy 2017-2019.
- ✓ Adopt Berkshire Sufficiency Strategy (2017)

- ✓ Engagement Strategy for Children's Services 2017-2018.

2018

- ✓ Wokingham Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2018-21.
- ✓ Education Strategy for Looked After Children (commitment to improve educational outcomes for looked after children).

2019

- ✓ Child Exploitation Strategy 2019-21.
- ✓ Addington Internship Programme 2019.

2020

- ✓ Adult Social Care Strategy 2020-25 – Our ambition for Wokingham Borough to be one of the best Boroughs for adults and carers in need of support to live, where they feel safe, included and a key part of our community.
- ✓ Voluntary and Community Sector Strategy (co-produced with Involve) – Our vision is to have an independent, sustainable and diverse voluntary and community sector, working with the community, Council and partners to meet the needs of local people.
- ✓ Learning Disability Strategy 2020-25 – we want to support more people to be independent and to have the choice of where they live with people they choose. Also supporting young people with a learning disability to prepare for adult life.
- ✓ Draft Arts and Culture Strategy 2020.
- ✓ The Pledge (promises to children in care and care leavers) 2020.
- ✓ Public Rights of Way (PROW) improvement plan 2020 - one of the key aims is to improve access for people with visual or mobility impairments.
- ✓ Customer Charter 2020 – sets out how we will adapt to individual customer needs.
- ✓ Carers Strategy 2020 was co-produced to meet specific needs for vulnerable groups.
- ✓ Autism and Mental Health strategies are emerging, again co-produced and driven by vulnerable groups

We have improved the responsiveness and accessibility of our services through: Improvement to pathways to care and support for protected and vulnerable groups in Children's and Adults Services, facilitated by operational changes to improve outcomes for service users:

- ✓ Children with disabilities.
- ✓ Early help.
- ✓ Edge of care.
- ✓ Youth Offending Service.
- ✓ Adult social care pathway - incorporating lessons learnt from the recent Three Conversations pilot.
- ✓ New Adult safeguarding hub
- ✓ Project Joy – tackling social isolation.
- ✓ Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) improvement programme – improving local placement provision.
- ✓ Community Navigator Scheme – volunteers to introduce people to community services that address their needs.

- ✓ We continue to implement the Wokingham Pledge promise to Children in Care and Care Leavers – and encourage feedback through the Children in Care Council, through the Children’s Rights and Engagement Officer and we monitor our progress every year through questionnaires and telephone surveys and feedback through the Children in Care Council.
- ✓ We support Care leavers into permanent accommodation.
- ✓ Pan West Berkshire safeguarding arrangements.
- ✓ We have committed to addressing racial harassment and hate crime in the Borough.

Objective 3: Consultation and Engagement are effective and inclusive for all our communities

What we have done:

We regularly consult on our policies, strategies and share information on matters affecting our communities. We strive to do this in a variety of ways, involving surveys, co-production of strategies, focus groups, forums and through the democratic process of public participation in Council meetings or representation on partnership boards. Since 2017 we have been developing our approach to reach out to a broader section of the community including through increased social media, online and other media presence.

- ✓ The Children in Care Council meets monthly and is formed of a group of young people who are in care or who are care leavers to act as a second voice for all of Wokingham’s children in care and care leavers. It enables lived experiences to be shared with Managers, Councillors and the Corporate Parenting Board which checks on the service offered. The feedback is used to improve services and strengthen the promises for the future.
- ✓ The Childrens Rights and Advocacy service provides support to around 130 children subject of a child protection plan as well as children in care to ensure that the voice of the child is clearly heard.
- ✓ Strengths Based approach to ensuring we are committed to the wishes, feelings and voice of the child or young person.
- ✓ Regularly shared information with our BME Forum.
- ✓ Wokingham Youth Climate Conference set up to encourage climate friendly behaviours through school visits and educational projects as well as facilitating young people to lead behaviour change across the Borough.
- ✓ We have introduced Wokingham Borough Connect, which has delivered important communications throughout Covid-19 to keep our residents safe.
- ✓ We have kept our phone lines open and worked closely with Citizens Advice with no “wrong” reason to call.
- ✓ Our community engagement officers have continued to have an active presence in our communities, taking care to socially distance and to be there to help our most vulnerable residents.
- ✓ Carried out a Survey on Tackling Racism Matters and Community Cohesion in the Borough to understand communities and set out actions needed.
- ✓ Support and facilitate the Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) Residents Forum, though this is currently paused to consider how best to move forward.

- ✓ Developed our Community Engagement Team offer – working to support residents and communities to lead self-sustaining lifestyles and playing an active role in community groups (e.g. Norreys Community Group).
- ✓ Co-produced Tenants Charter for our Council Tenants.
- ✓ 150 people with a learning disability contributed to creating the Learning Disability Strategy.
- ✓ Ensure that the voice of people with a learning disability is heard through facilitation of an active Learning Disability Partnership Board supported by the voluntary sector.

Objective 4: The Council's workforce is committed to equality and reflects the communities it serves

What we have done:

We have continuously developed our workforce to ensure we are all committed to achieving a fairer and more equal Borough. Since 2017 we:

- ✓ Implemented the Guaranteed Interview Scheme for any candidate who declares a disability and meets the essential criteria of the role.
- ✓ Advertised all roles on our website and made them accessible to all employees, subject to redeployment needs.
- ✓ Prevented staff with protected characteristics being excluded from career or training opportunities through our Employment Equality Steering Group.
- ✓ Ensured all new staff have mandatory equality training and refresh it as necessary.
- ✓ Continued to include equality learning and unconscious bias training in our recruitment training programme.
- ✓ Did full Equality Impact Assessments whenever major changes affected employees, such as our 21st Century Change Programme to mitigate risks to protected groups.
- ✓ Made reasonable building and equipment adjustments to make offices accessible to all.
- ✓ Offer enhanced maternity pay subject to certain conditions on returning to work.
- ✓ Met our statutory duties for family care leave, for example: Shared Parental Leave, Paternity Leave and Pay, Care Leave, Adoption Leave and Pay, Parental Bereavement Leave.
- ✓ Took on 39 apprentices in 2019-2020 through Elevate Wokingham who seek Apprenticeships and Work Experience for 16-19 year olds not in education, employment or training.
- ✓ Opened our dormant staff café to provide work experience for vulnerable and disadvantaged young people from Addington School to enable young people to acquire catering skills.
- ✓ Appointed a lead for the Equalities at Director level.
- ✓ Introduced individual Covid-19 Risk Assessments for vulnerable and Ethnic Minority staff.
- ✓ Responded to our staff survey on Tackling Racism Matters by setting up working groups to review our policy, practices and visible commitment to equality.

- ✓ Established an Ethnically Diverse Staff Network.
- ✓ Started an Equality Champions programme across the organisation to improve visibility of commitment and support the development of equality objectives, actions and embed equality into procurement and service delivery.
- ✓ Signed Business in the Community's [Race at Work Charter](#) to take action that supports Ethnic Minority career progression

Objective 5: The Council is committed to equality through service commissioning and delivery, improved procurement and partnership working

What we have done:

- ✓ Reviewed and strengthened our approach to procurement of services through greater partnership working, co-production of strategies to inform commissioning of services.
- ✓ Improved the commissioning and procurement process through consultation with customer groups.
- ✓ Ensured tenders from potential suppliers indicate their commitment to equality appropriate to the nature of the contract.
- ✓ Shared equality data between the Council and Providers.
- ✓ Fully supported Neighbourhood Plans.
- ✓ Our Community Safety Partnership is well established and strategic development of the partnership is underway working with a range of partners including the children and young peoples partnership, neighbourhood action groups and the Localities Team, to address the targeting of young or vulnerable people to facilitate criminal activity.
- ✓ Improved the Council's Design and Build approval process to ensure equality impact assessments are shared with the approval board prior to any proposed decision.
- ✓ Co-produced the Tenants Charter with our Council Housing Tenants.
- ✓ Monitored the impact of Covid 19 through Public Health response and recovery work. Looking at the impact on Ethnic Minority Communities and developing actions to respond. All Covid 19 recovery workstreams have and are, being informed by the data and insight held by Public Health so that it can be shared with our partners and our communities.

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Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) form: Initial impact assessment

If an officer is undertaking a project, policy change or service change, then an initial impact assessment must be completed and attached alongside the Project initiation document.

EqIA Titular information:

Date:	January 2021
Service:	Communities, Insight and Change
Project, policy or service EQIA relates to:	Equality Plan
Completed by:	Karla Inniss
Has the EQIA been discussed at services team meeting:	Yes
Signed off by:	Laura Callan
Sign off date:	12 th February 2021

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1. Policy, Project or service information:

This section should be used to identify the main purpose of the project, policy or service change, the method of delivery, including who key stakeholders are, main beneficiaries and any associated aims.

What is the purpose of the project, policy change or service change , its expected outcomes and how does it relate to your services corporate plan:

We have an Equality Plan to build on our vision. Our Community Vision for 2020 to 2024, is to be a great place to live, learn, work and grow and a great place to do business. This includes everyone and means tackling inequality together. Our community [priorities](#) set out our commitment to equality in all that we do and how we will meet the needs of our community. We also think it is important to share how we meet the Equality Act, 2010. To:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and any other unlawful conduct
- Advance equality of opportunity
- Foster good relations

Learning from public engagement, looking at the Local Government Association Equality Framework, reflecting on our past actions and building on our vision has helped us to think further about what we want to do better and what our priorities should be for the coming years. We have built this plan to provide structure to our work but the work itself should change based on what we continue to learn.

Outline how you are delivering your project, policy change or service change. What governance arrangements are in place, which internal stakeholders (Service managers, Assistant Directors, Members ect) have/will be consulted and informed about the project or changes:

We know the best outcomes and changes can only be achieved together. That's why we asked for everyone to share their views and ideas about the proposals. We held a number of focus sessions with different staff at different levels. This included our: Members Equality Steering Group, Employee Equality Steering Group, Managers Network, Leadership Teams, Commissioning Managers, Ethnically Diverse Staff Network, Adult Social Care Staff, Equality Champions and Customer Delivery Managers. We also held sessions with groups in the community too, like the Voluntary Sector, Involved Tenants, Service Providers, Clasp and other residents who wanted to share their specific ideas.

Outline who are the main beneficiaries of the Project, policy change or service change?

The equality plan is about tackling inequality together. This affects everyone but we know this is especially important to people directly affected by inequality and likely to people with protected characteristics, defined by the Equality Act 2010.

Outline any associated aims attached to the project, policy change or service change:

The Equality Plan provides structure for the work that needs to be done but the work itself should change based on what the Council continues to learn from communities. Work should align with three identified priorities:

- Priority 1 - Listen and learn from our communities and use this to deliver services that work well for everyone.
- Priority 2 - Actively champion our commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion and tackle inequality together.
- Priority 3 - Build a diverse and engaged workforce, where everyone is respected.

An action plan for 2021-2022 is included to make progress in becoming a more inclusive Borough.

2. Protected characteristics:

There are 9 protected characteristics as defined by the legislation:

- Race
- Gender
- Disability

- Gender re-assignment
- Age
- Religious belief
- Sexual orientation
- Pregnancy/Maternity
- Marriage and civil partnership:

To find out more about the protected groups, please consult the EQIA guidance.

3. Initial Impact review:

In the table below, please indicate whether your project, Policy change or service change will have a positive or negative impact on one of the protected characteristics. To assess the level of impact, please assign each group a Positive, No, Low or High impact score:

For information on how to define No, low or high impact, please consult the EQIA guidance document.

If your project is to have a positive impact on one of the protected groups, please outline this in the table below.

For details on what constitutes a positive impact, please consult the EQIA guidance.

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Protected characteristics	Impact score	Please detail what impact will be felt by the protected group:
Overall		<i>People in these protected groups are at the heart of the Equality Plan. The aim of actions is to set tangible goals so that progress can be made to improve outcomes for people with protected characteristics. The measures introduced will help to advance understanding of people and groups at a disadvantage such as improving equality monitoring and creating a residents' equality group.</i>

Mitigations		
Race:	No	The action plan specifically identifies the aim to role model behaviour that promotes, encourages and showcases the benefits of diversity in our community, particularly in relation to publishing communications that relate to Ethnic Minority communities such as celebrating and marking important dates that we haven't previously. Further steps to take actions against the 5 principles of the Race at Work Charter are also in the plan. It also highlights the commitment to proactively demonstrate anti-racist practice by investigating what additional support can be offered to staff exposed to racism through their work. In addition, there are further actions to support Racial Equity Work in Schools, collaborative work on Hate Crime and health inequalities and how to improve communication to residents who need to communicate in other languages.
Gender:	No	None identified
Disabilities:	No	The action plan identifies areas to make improvements in easy read publications and collaboration on the upcoming Autism Strategy and health inequalities.
Age:	No	Action to progress existing engagement is in the plan.
Sexual orientation:	No	The action plan specifically identifies the aim to role model behaviour that promotes, encourages and showcases the benefits of diversity in our community, particularly in relation to publishing communications that relate to LGBT+ communities such as celebrating and marking important dates that we haven't previously. Further actions include collaboration on Hate Crime.
Religion/belief:	No	The action plan specifically identifies the aim to role model behaviour that promotes, encourages and showcases the benefits of diversity in our community, particularly in relation to publishing communications that relate to Ethnic Minority communities such as celebrating and marking important dates that we haven't previously
Gender re-assignment:	No	The action plan specifically identifies the aim to role model behaviour that promotes, encourages and showcases the benefits of diversity in our community, particularly in relation to publishing communications that relate to LGBT+ communities such as celebrating and marking important dates that we haven't previously. Further actions include collaboration on Hate Crime.
Pregnancy and Maternity:	No	None identified
Marriage and civil partnership:	No	None identified

Based on your findings from your initial impact assessment, you must complete a full impact assessment for any groups you have identified as having a low of high negative impact. If No impact, or a positive impact has been identified, you do not need to complete a full assessment. However, you must report on this initial assessment and it must receive formal approval from the Assistant Director responsible for the project, policy or service change.