



**OPEN REPORT
GOVERNANCE AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE**

Governance and Resources Committee – 22 September 2022

Equality, Consultation & Engagement Plan 2022-2024

Report of Director of Regeneration & Policy

Report Author and Contact Details

Elizabeth Wilson, Corporate Policy Officer
01629 761240 or elizabeth.wilson@derbyshiredales.gov.uk

Wards Affected

District-wide

Report Summary

The District Council publishes an Equality, Consultation and Engagement Plan which sets out how the Council will meet its public sector equality duties, and what consultation and engagement activities are proposed each year.

This report provides an update on progress against the actions set out in the Equality, Consultation and Engagement Plan 2020-22. This report also seeks approval for the Equality, Consultation and Engagement Plan for 2022-24.

Recommendations

1. That progress against the actions in the Equality, Consultation and Engagement Plan 2020-22 (as set out in Appendices one and two) be noted.
2. That the Equality, Consultation and Engagement Plan 2022-24 (as set out in Appendices three and four) be approved.

List of Appendices

- Appendix 1 Equality Plan outturn 2020 - 22
- Appendix 2 Consultation plan outturn 2020 - 22
- Appendix 3 Equality Plan 2022 - 24
- Appendix 4 Consultation Plan 2022 - 24

Background Papers

None

Consideration of report by Council or other committee

No

Council Approval Required

No

Exempt from Press or Public
No

Equality, Consultation & Engagement Plan 2020 to 2022 Outturns and Plan for 2022-2024

1. Background

- 1.1 The public sector equalities statutory duty comprises a [general equality duty](#) and a [specific duty](#). The District Council must comply with both. The general duty requires the District Council to have due regard in the exercise of all its functions to the need to:
- Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation
 - Advance equality of opportunity between all persons;
 - Foster good relations between all persons.
- 1.2 The District Council must therefore ensure due consideration is given to the aims of the Duty in all its decisions. The paragraph on 'other considerations' at the end of every committee report reminds Members that although Officers have had regard to equality issues when preparing reports, Members should also consider equality issues in order to meet the Equality Duty.
- 1.3 The specific duty requires the District Council to publish:
- Equality information annually about its workforce and service users to demonstrate compliance with the general Equality Duty;
 - Equality objectives (drawing on this information) at least every four years that it needs to achieve to meet the aims of the general equality duty, focusing on its priority equality issues.
- 1.4 The District Council has a comprehensive [Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy](#) which details how the Council meets the requirements of equality legislation and provides the context for the Equality, Consultation & Engagement Plan. It was adopted in September 2021.
- 1.5 The Equality, Consultation and Engagement Plan which set out the activity planned for the period 2020-22 was approved by the Governance and Resources Committee on 20 August 2020. The Equality, Consultation and Engagement Plan, included as appendix three and four, sets out an updated range of objectives linked to the Corporate Plan 2020-24.

2 Equality Objectives 2020-2024

- 2.1 The Council's Equality Objectives for 2020-24 were agreed by the Governance and Resources Committee on 30 September 2021. Informed by the priorities within our Corporate Plan (themselves based on extensive public and stakeholder consultation), the Equality Objectives are:
- Objective 1: Maintain high customer satisfaction about the quality of services we deliver
 - Objective 2: Implement the Derbyshire Dales Climate Change Strategy and make improvements to the operational aspects of the Clean & Green service
 - Objective 3: Promote housing development that meets the needs of the present and future population of the District
 - Objective 4: Seek to attract investment that supports the local economy including the provision of jobs for younger people

- Objective 5: One team, working together as one Council with one purpose

3 Progress: Equality and Consultation 2020-2022

- 3.1 As required by legislation, updated equality information was published on the District Council's [website](#) early in 2022. A proportionate approach to the collection and publication of data continues to be taken, with a particular focus on key service user satisfaction data disaggregated by relevant protected groups. Members are reminded that the Policy Officer (Equalities and Consultation) is a 0.4 FTE post.
- 3.2 The Equality, Consultation & Engagement Plan 2020-22 set out performance measures/targets which are detailed in Appendix One and Two. The majority of the identified targets have been fully achieved, however Covid delayed the achievement of some actions or resulted in reductions in what could realistically be achieved; particularly those related to housing. Another example of the impact of Covid is leisure centres, which were closed by law during the pandemic and therefore consultation amongst users was not possible.
- 3.3 Successes to highlight include;
 - The Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy was updated and following consultation with the employee group, CLT and members it was approved at the Governance and Resources Committee meeting on 30 September 21
 - Consultation results showed that 100% of respondents would recommend the external insulation retrofitted to their homes by the District Council
 - The target to provide adaptations to the homes of 50 disabled people by March 2021 was exceeded, with the total number being 71
 - A tailored Equality & Diversity mandatory training programme for Members and Senior Managers was delivered via Zoom in Nov 2020, Nov 2021 and early 2022
 - The Equality Impact Assessment Programme for 2020-22 was largely completed including EIAs for the Housing Allocation Policy, Local Council Tax Support Scheme, Card payment for car parks, Local Plan review. Other EIAs that were completed but not in the plan include Anti-Social Behaviour Policy, Black's Head, Council Tax Backdated Case write off, GDPR Policy, procedure, guidance, Public Space Protection Orders, Flexible Working Policy, Test and Trace payments, Public conveniences opening, Covid discretionary grant, Sex entertainment venues, Bakewell Market re-opening, Empty Homes premium, Derbyshire Clause, Data matching, Reward and recognition policy
 - Consultation on the proposed empty home premium was successful. The survey was promoted in January 2022, both online and by a letter to empty home owners containing a link to the survey. In summary 154 responses were received including 24 from owners of empty homes. Results were typically polarised between the majority of respondents who did not own empty homes and the minority that did. The majority supported the proposed Council Tax increases from April 2023

- Three Area Community Forums were held in February 2021. Topics included, Council Tax, Climate Change: Achievements and Future Actions, the Levelling Up Fund, Waste and Recycling update, and Q&A
- A review of the Council's Car Parking Order, with 600 responses to the public consultation received. The Order was amended in 2020 with the introduction of 25 EV charging points in 5 car parks.
- Over 95% of residents in surveys carried out in 2020 and 2021 felt safe outside during the day, and over 84% felt safe outside at night

3.4 The following targets were not met fully;

- Satisfaction with waste services reduced from 76% in 2020 to 30% in 2021
- SERCO did not carry out the satisfaction survey in 2020 or 2021, but have stated it will go ahead next year
- The target to provide adaptations to the homes of 70 disabled people by March 2022 was not met, however a total number of 59 adaptations were completed. A further 19 grants remain approved but not yet completed. The reduced number of completions in 2021/22 is a delayed reflection of the slowdown in referrals received during the pandemic. It is worthwhile noting that all District Council actions have been completed in a timely manner and no application has been delayed as a result of our processes.

4 Equality, Consultation and Engagement Plan 2022-24

4.1 The Equality and the Consultation and Engagement Plan provides structured frameworks for the District Council's equality, consultation and engagement activities.

4.2 Updated Equality, Consultation and Engagement plans for 2022-24 are set out in Appendices three and four. Key areas for consultation in this period will include:

- Annual Online Panel Surveys – finding out how satisfied residents are with the District Council, its services and quality of life in the Derbyshire Dales. Results are analysed by equality groups where numbers permit. The surveys provide important feedback on the performance of services and suggest areas for improvement, which supports service planning and management.
- Research into conditions and outcomes for private landlords and tenants. Results will inform development of policy proposals to improve conditions and outcomes for tenants and landlords
- Undertake community engagement at four events and provide advice to rural communities through the use of the 'Fantastic Homes' exhibition to advise residents about domestic energy efficiency, renewables and low carbon heating
- Engage with 4 community groups across the main towns to become actively involved in the roads, verges and biodiversity project
- Budget 2023/24 consultation to cover the medium term (not just one year), to inform the MTFP & MTFS as well as the annual budget
- The Business Engagement Programme will include business forums/workshops and businesses will be surveyed for their views

4.3 Key areas of equality work will include:

- Actions to fully utilise the refuse collection vehicle in-cab software that links to Serco and our Meritec customer service system (CRM). The outcome is that the CRM will provide an improved customer experience and improved communication, with the aim of helping improve satisfaction levels with waste services
- Annual Online Panel Surveys – finding out how satisfied residents are with the District Council, its services and quality of life in the Derbyshire Dales.
- Continue to deliver the Sustainable Warmth grant funded works to reduce fuel poverty, improve the energy efficiency of homes and decarbonise heating
- The provision of security equipment for victims and survivors of Domestic Abuse
- Having a positive impact on young people: we plan to support three diversionary projects using £17,000 of funding provided by the Police Crime Commissioner
- Hold two business events to help increase SME productivity, exporting and innovation, and promote opportunities in the low carbon economy

5 Equality Impact Assessments

5.1 To minimise the risk of legal challenge and to ensure that the potential impact upon protected groups is taken into account in the District Council's decision making framework, Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs) are prepared where needed. Each year a number of priority Equality Impact Assessments are identified in the Equality, Consultation & Engagement Plan as having to be undertaken, where they are linked to potential future policy development or potential changes in service delivery. Completed Equality Impact Assessments are summarised and presented for Members' review when new or revised policies are being considered at Committee or Council meetings. Completed Equality Impact Assessments are also published on the District Council's website to demonstrate compliance with the Equality Duty.

5.2 The programme of EIAs is dynamic, and will alter if unexpected policy changes take place or if expected changes do not take place. At present, the EIAs expected for the period 2022/23 include:

- Controlled Substances at Work Policy
- Monitoring & Surveillance Policy
- £150 energy rebate
- Text Payment System
- Live streaming of council meetings
- Clean and Green review depending on recs
- PSPO dependent on data
- Parks survey – dependent on results
- Car park review – dependent on review outcomes

6. Options Considered and Recommended Proposal

6.1 The equality plan is required by the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy, the Equality Act [2010] and the public Sector Equality Duty which forms part of the Act. The plans demonstrate that we making due regard to equality

issues. The Council's Consultation Strategy requires the creation of a consultation plan, where actions from Service Plans are drawn together. An option to prepare separate, unrelated equality and consultation plans was rejected because many equality issues are best explored and resolved through consultation and engagement; and because much consultation activity relates to and involves protected groups. Because of the strong de facto links between consultation and equalities, the option to consider them separately was rejected and the option to consider a single set of plans was favoured.

6.2 There are two recommendations.

1. That progress against the actions in the Equality, Consultation and Engagement Plan 2020-22 (as set out in Appendices one and two) be noted.
2. That the Equality, Consultation and Engagement Plan 2022-24 (as set out in Appendices three and four) be approved.

7. Consultation

7.1 The Council's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy (which steer actions in the plans) was subject to extensive consultation prior to adoption by the Governance and Resources Committee in 2021.

7.2 As the plans contain many actions that are the responsibility of a number of services, consultation will take place on individual actions contained within the plans, as appropriate.

8. Timetable for Implementation

8.1 The plans cover the period from April 2022 to end March 2024. They include a simple timetable to show the deadlines for implementing actions. Reports to Council will be made on progress annually.

9. Policy Implications

9.1 The plans link to the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy, and the Consultation Strategy 2020-27.

9.2 The equality objectives within the Plan are linked to the Council's Corporate Plan 2020-2024

10. Finance and Resource Implications

10.1 The costs of addressing the statutory requirements in relation to equality are contained within existing service budgets. As such the financial risk is low. However failure to comply with the relevant statutory requirements may expose the District Council to legal challenge and therefore the potential for higher financial risks.

11. Legal Advice and Implications

11.1 Under the provisions of the Equality Act 2010, the District Council has specific statutory duties. All decisions taken by the Council, all services

provided or enabled by the Council and all personnel functions of the Council are required to take account of this duty. Failure to comply with the equality duty could render the Council open to legal challenge. The areas of activity identified within this report seek to reduce any potential risk. The legal risk has been assessed, at the current time as Low. This however may change if a challenge is received.

- 11.2 The District Council also has a duty to consult, and to demonstrate that it has consulted in making decisions on how to undertake its functions and activities which affect the public. Failure to consult or demonstrate how consultation has influenced the decision making process is an area where the District Council could face legal challenge. As such the areas of activity identified in the Equality, Consultation and Engagement Plan seek to reduce any potential risk.

12. Equalities Implications

- 12.1 Equality Impact Assessments will be made for the actions contained in the plans, as each action is begun.

13. Climate Change Implications

- 13.1 A CCIA is not necessary as much of the content of this report is reporting the results of past actions. The remainder of the report contains action plans. For each action consideration as to whether a CCIA is required will be made as the action is begun.

14. Risk Management

- 14.1 Progressing the activity identified within the report will help manage the risks of legal challenge, enforcement action for non-compliance with statutory equality duties, and potential loss of good reputation.

Approvals obtained from:

	Named Officer	Date
Chief Executive	Paul Wilson	07/09/2022
Director of Resources/ S.151 Officer (or Financial Services Manager)	Alison Wood	07/09/2022
Monitoring Officer (or Legal Services Manager)	James McLaughlin	12/09/2022