

PUBLIC SECTOR EQUALITY DUTY ANNUAL UPDATE AND EQUALITY OBJECTIVES

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Portfolio: Transformation and Organisational Development

Wards Affected: All

Purpose of the Report:

To summarise the progress made by Broadland District Council during 2023-2024 in complying with the duty under the Public Sector Equality Duty, as required by the Equality Act 2010 and to update the Equality Objectives for the Council.

Recommendations:

1. To note the Public Sector Equality Duty Annual Report, as attached at Appendix A.
2. To approve the Equality Objectives for 2024 – 2028, as attached at Appendix B.

1. Summary

- 1.1 The Equality Act 2010 requires public bodies to publish an annual report demonstrating how they have complied with the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED). Alongside this, the Act also requires public bodies to update their Equality Objectives every 4 years. This report provides the proposed annual report for consideration and the revised objectives for adoption.

2. Background

- 2.1 The Equality Act 2010 introduced a Public Sector Equality Duty. This Duty requires the Council, in addition to other public sector organisations, to have due regard to the need to:
1. Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act.
 2. Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
 3. Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- 2.2 This duty covers eight relevant protected characteristics:
- age
 - disability
 - gender reassignment
 - pregnancy and maternity
 - race
 - religion or belief
 - sex
 - sexual orientation
- 2.3 Marriage and civil partnership is a protected characteristic but not a 'relevant' one. This means we have to consider it only in relation to the first aim of the duty.
- 2.4 As a public authority, we are also bound by 'specific duties' outlined in the Equalities Act. As part of this, we have a requirement to publish one or more equality objectives every 4 years and information on our compliance with the duty annually.

3. Current positions/findings

- 3.1 Broadland District Council has in place an Equality and Diversity Policy which is for the period of 2022 – 2025 and Equality Objectives, which are now due to be reviewed.
- 3.2 The report at Appendix A highlights just some of the activities and work which has been undertaken by the Council during 2023/2024. It sets out an overview of how the Council met the PSED over the last year. It summarises our actions and

progress on improving equality, in the way we serve the people of Broadland and how we behave as an employer.

- 3.3 Members will note that much of this work would have been undertaken even if the Council was not required to comply with the Duty, which demonstrates how the importance of diversity, inclusivity and equalities are at the heart of all we do as a Council.
- 3.4 Appendix B provides updated Equality Objectives. These have been updated to reflect the Council Plan 2024–28 and Delivery Plan for 2024–26 and aims to show the activities we will undertake / are undertaking to achieve both the PSED and the Councils Equality and Diversity Policy. As part of the revised objectives, we have now included target delivery dates and lead officers to ensure greater oversight and accountability for delivery.

4. Proposed action

- 4.1 It is proposed that Cabinet notes the appended annual report for publication and agrees the amended equality objectives in order to meet the statutory duties placed on the Council by the Equality Act 2010.

5. Other options

- 5.1 Cabinet may wish to take another course of action, keeping in mind the requirements of the Public Sector Equality Duty as detailed in paragraph 1.1.

6. Issues and risks

- 6.1 **Resource Implications** – There are no resource implications associated with the publication of this report and amended equality objectives.
- 6.2 **Legal Implications** – If the appended report and objectives are not published, the Council will be in breach of its statutory duties under the Equality Act 2010.
- 6.3 **Equality Implications** – The publication of this annual report is a key mechanism through which the Council can fulfil its accountability to its residents, demonstrating that equality issues are taken seriously and evidencing the progress that has been made. Should this report not be published, as well as not meeting statutory duties, it could have the effect of undermining the importance of equalities to the community.
- 6.4 **Environmental Impact** – There are no environmental impacts.
- 6.5 **Crime and Disorder** – There are no impacts to crime and disorder.
- 6.6 **Risks** – If statutory duties are not met, action could be taken against the Council by the Equality and Human Rights Commission with legal, financial and reputational risks for the Council.

7. Conclusion

- 7.1 The report details the Council's successful work in demonstrating compliance with our Public Sector Equality Duty and the proposed amended Equality Objectives.
- 7.2 Publication of the appended report and amended objectives will not only fulfil our duty but also celebrate the examples of good work undertaken by the Council.

8. Recommendations

- 1. To note the Public Sector Equality Duty Annual Report, as attached at Appendix A.
- 2. To approve the Equality Objectives for 2024 – 2028 as attached at Appendix B.

Background papers

Equality and Diversity Policy 2022 – 2025.