

Decision Report – Cabinet Key decision

11th March 2019

Agreement of Equality Objectives 2019 - 2023

Cabinet Member(s): Cllr Christine Lawrence – Cabinet Member for Public Health and Wellbeing

Division and Local Member(s): All

Lead Officer: Trudi Grant / Director of Public Health

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	Seen by:	Name	Date
	County Solicitor	Honor Clarke	27.02.18
	Monitoring Officer	Scott Wooldridge	26.02.18
	Corporate Finance	Peter Lewis	19.02.18
	Human Resources	Chris Squire	27.02.18
	Property	Paula Hewitt / Claire Lovett	27.02.18
	Procurement / ICT	Simon Clifford	18.02.18
	Senior Manager	Trudi Grant	27.02.18
	Commissioning Development Team	N/A	
	Local Member(s)	All	27.02.18
	Cabinet Member	Cllr Christine Lawrence	27.02.18
	Opposition Spokesperson	Cllr Amanda Broom	27.02.18
	Relevant Scrutiny Chairman	Cllr Hazel Prior-Sankey	27.02.18
Forward Plan Reference:	FP/18/07/05		
Summary:	<p>Somerset County Council [SCC] is required by statute to review and establish organisational equality objectives. Our existing objectives are due to end in April 2019.</p> <p>The Public bodies (District and County Council, Health and Fire) in Somerset have again chosen to work together on a set of equality objectives. This will make the most effective use of reducing Public Sector resources for equality and diversity. The hope is that it will also improve the impact of any changes on the community as a whole.</p> <p>A refreshed set of objectives are proposed for approval and endorsement. This is supported by</p>		
Recommendations:	<p>That Cabinet are asked to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Agree and endorse the proposed five Equality Objectives for the organisation from April 2019 till April 2023. 2. Agree and endorse the revised Joint Equality and Diversity Policy 		

	<p>3. Request Directors to identify further actions to support the identified Objectives.</p> <p>4. Receive an annual review of the equality objectives and outcomes achieved by 30 September 2020</p>
Reasons for Recommendations:	The objectives aim to improve the lives for the residents of Somerset. The objectives also support the Council's legal requirements identified through the Equality Act 2010.
Links to County Vision, Business Plan and Medium Term Financial Strategy:	<p>These objectives will contribute to the council's vision themes of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A thriving and productive County that is ambitious, confident and focused on improving people's lives. • A County of resilient, well-connected and compassionate communities working to reduce inequalities • A County where all partners actively work together for the benefit of our residents, communities and businesses and the environment in which we all live.
Consultations and co-production undertaken:	<p>Joint Equality and Diversity Policy During the process of creating the policy the relevant service areas were consulted and their feedback was incorporated within the Policy. We have also consulted with the Unions on the Policy and its implications for staff.</p> <p>Equality Objectives The Equality Objectives have been supported by a range of engagement opportunities. Once a long list of Objectives was created consultation was undertaken to create a shorter and achievable list of Objectives. This included an online consultation that went to over 150 organisations supporting protected characteristics. This process asked people to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • identify their priorities for the equality objectives • identify any actions to support these objectives • identify any Objectives they think we might have missed. <p>We also engaged with the Unions on their views on the Equality Objectives.</p> <p>Finally, we attended 4 equality events in Somerset to get direct feedback from the community. At these events we asked people to rate their top three objectives.</p> <p>These three pieces of information informed the final list of 5 Equality Objectives. It also contributed to the potential actions supporting these objectives.</p>
Financial Implications:	It is not envisaged that there will be any direct cost commitments arising from agreeing the equality objectives set out in this report.

	<p>However, there may be some costs arising from specific actions and any funding required will be requested on a project by project basis. This will include seeking external and joint funding where appropriate. No commitments to action that involves spend will be given by Somerset County Council staff before approval to spend has been sought and given by the Director for HR and OD and the Director of Finance.</p>						
Legal Implications:	<p>The objectives and the information gathered for them contribute to the Council's compliance with the Equality Act 2010. Either not having Objectives or collecting data could find the Council in breach of the Equality Act 2010.</p>						
HR Implications:	<p>The Equality Objectives support the Council's ability to meet its duties under the Equality Act 2010.</p>						
Risk Implications:	<p>The main risk identified for these objectives would be not completing the objectives setting process. This would place us in breach of our legal duties. It is felt this would be unlikely as a set of objectives have been created. Once these Objectives have been agreed through the decision-making process this risk would no longer be valid.</p>						
	<table border="1"> <tr> <td>Likelihood</td> <td>1</td> <td>Impact</td> <td>3</td> <td>Risk Score</td> <td>3</td> </tr> </table>	Likelihood	1	Impact	3	Risk Score	3
	Likelihood	1	Impact	3	Risk Score	3	
<p>These are joint equality objectives. As such they are reliant on all partners identifying and completing the actions connected to them. Should these actions not be completed then it would put the joint completion of these objectives in jeopardy. As part of the monitoring process a joint monitoring report will be completed every year to make sure we are on track. This is further explained in 1.12</p>							
	<table border="1"> <tr> <td>Likelihood</td> <td>3</td> <td>Impact</td> <td>3</td> <td>Risk Score</td> <td>9</td> </tr> </table>	Likelihood	3	Impact	3	Risk Score	9
Likelihood	3	Impact	3	Risk Score	9		
Other Implications (including due regard implications):	<p>By the nature of what is being considered, the report addresses any equality implications.</p> <p>The objectives also go some way to supporting the Council's requirements around community safety, human rights, access, health and wellbeing.</p> <p>There will be no impacts in relation to privacy, sustainability and health and safety</p>						
Scrutiny comments / recommendation (if any):	<p>Scrutiny Committees will be invited to consider the proposed annual review of the equality objectives and outcomes achieved ahead of these being reported to Cabinet by September 2020.</p>						

1. Background

1.1. Legislative Background

The Equality Act 2010 came into force on the 1st October 2010. It replaced over 100 pieces and sections of legislation that afford people protection through the delivery of service or when in employment. The Equality Act also sets out the Public Sector Equality Duty that includes the General and Specific Equality Duties.

The Public Sector Equality Duty came into force across Great Britain on 5th April 2011. It means that public bodies must consider all individuals when carrying out their day-to-day work – in shaping policy, in delivering services and in relation to their own employees. It also requires public bodies to:

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

These Duties are supported by Specific Equality Duties that came into force on the 10th September 2011. The specific duties require public bodies to publish relevant, proportionate information showing compliance with the Equality Duty, and to set equality objectives at least every four years.

1.2. The Equality Act identifies who is protected under the legislation and refers to them as Protected Characteristics. They are:

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

Locally we have also recognised the following characteristics:

- Carers
- Military status – Connected to our commitments around the Military Covenant
- Rurality
- Low income

This report does not change the status for any of the protected characteristics

1.3. Current Objectives

1.4. For the Equality Objectives 2016 – 2019 we set ourselves some very challenging targets. These were dependant on working with other partners and successfully engaging the community. Over the life of these objectives there have been some substantial changes to how some of those partner

organisations work. As an organisation we have also had some substantial organisational changes that have seen capacity within the equality service used to support the organisation through this change.

1.5. Considering this the completion rate of the equality objectives has not been 100%. Currently we have a completion rate of the actions supporting the equality objectives of 64%.

1.6. Below are a number of the success achieved over the last 3 years:

- Supporting Race communities within Somerset to come together and get both a stronger single voice. This includes increasing the visibility of the communities and supporting them to work together going forward. https://somersestrcc.org.uk/our_work/supporting-individuals/diversecommunities/
- Re-establish connections with and between the Faith and Belief communities within Somerset. This is with recognition of the support they provide to the most vulnerable members of Somerset and the areas for joined up working.
- Re-establish a forum with the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender communities within Somerset. As a marginalised community in Somerset we have started working with them to establish the support that is missing and how this can be filled together.
- Established a single list of potential land through public bodies that could be used to meet District Council requirements for the Gypsy and Traveller community in Somerset.
- Re-established a single public sector group for the recognition of Hate Crime in Somerset. This was supported with a single approach to hate crime, new promotional materials and work with the community on recognition of what a hate crime is. We have also provided yearly training sessions for our staff around identifying what a hate crime is and how to support people reporting it.
- We are currently going through a process of training all staff to remind them of their responsibility from the Equality Act 2010.

1.7. Equality Objectives 2019 - 2023

1.8. The Public bodies (District and County Council, Health and Fire) in Somerset have again chosen to look at working more collective on a set of equality objectives. This will make the most effective use of reducing Public Sector resources for equality and diversity. The hope is that it will also increase the impact of any changes on the community as a whole.

1.9. Considering this a joint engagement of potential equality objectives took place between September and November 2018. This included an online consultation form, promotion to 150+ equality organisations and consultation at 4 equality events. The following set of objectives have been agreed to be taken forward. These are being taken forward with the understanding that each Public Body can choose which they will sign up to, identify local actions, be able to identify additional objectives if needed.

1.10. The collectively identified Objectives are:

- Work with Communities to improve the opportunities for integration and cohesion.

- Improve public understanding of mental health
- Work with the Gypsy and Traveller community to improve relationships
- Create an Equality Working group for staff in the Public Sector in Somerset
- Implement and review the Accessibility Information Standard to create consistency around its implementation.

1.11. These objectives and action table can be found in Appendix 1. This identifies the process the objectives will follow and how they were identified. It also provides information on the actions that will be completed to support the identified Objectives.

1.12. Governance and Management

1.13. As these objectives are being completed collectively, at a county wide basis, we need to consider how they will be carefully monitored. Each action that supports the objectives will have a lead officer connected to it. This officer will be responsible for this actions completion. We will then provide feedback on the objectives in the following ways:

- Year one – A report indicating completion and progress on actions. This can then be shared with partner organisations and interested partners.
- Year two – A consultation event with communities to establish if the objectives are making a difference.
- Year three – A report indicating completion and progress on actions. This can then be shared with partner organisations and interested partners.
- Year four – Consultation and engagement on new objectives.

1.14. Equality and Diversity Policy

1.15. Alongside the joint equality objectives, a joint equality policy has been created. The aim will be to create consistency in what a member of the public, staff or potential employee can expect from Public Bodies in Somerset. The policy can be found in Appendix 2.

2. Options considered and reasons for rejecting them

2.1. It was considered to create of Equality Objectives specifically for the County Council. This would mean that we would miss out on the opportunity to work with others on securing additional funding into the area. It would also mean we would be removed from additional work that could benefit our residents.

3. Background Papers

3.1. There are two background papers attached to this report:

- Appendix 1 – Equality Objectives Action Plan
- Appendix 2 – Equality and Diversity Policy