

Harborough District Council



Report to Corporate and Performance Overview and Scrutiny Panel Meeting of 26th September 2024

Title:	Equality Plan (Strategy) 2025/28
Status:	Public
Key Decision:	No
Report Author:	Julie Clarke, Equality and Diversity Officer
Portfolio Holder:	Councillor Paul Beadle
Appendices:	A. Equality Plan (Strategy) 2025/28 B. Equality Impact Assessment – Equality Plan (Strategy) 2025/28

Summary

- i. The Council's current Equality Plan 2021/24 requires a review as it is due to expire at the end of 2024.
- ii. The Harborough District Council Equality Plan (Strategy) 2025/28 contains our updated Equality objectives and there is a legal requirement for us to identify and publish these at least every 4 years (Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties) Regulations 2011).

Recommendations

1. That Scrutiny Panel Members have an opportunity to view and consider the proposed Harborough District Council Equality Plan (Strategy) 2025/28.

Reasons for Recommendations

- iii. The Council's current Equality Plan required a review as it is dated 2021/24 and is due to expire at the end of the year (2024).

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1. To provide an overview of the Council's reviewed Equality Plan which outlines the Council's commitment to equality and diversity and how we intend to continue to meet our statutory responsibilities over the next 3 years.

2. Background

- 2.1. The Equality Act 2010 came into force on 1st October 2010. The Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED), which came into force on 5th April 2011, is a duty imposed on all UK public bodies by section 149 of the Equality Act 2010, to take equalities considerations into account when exercising any of their functions and taking decisions.
- 2.2. There is a legal requirement for a local authority to publish employee equality monitoring data annually and prepare and publish its equality objectives and commitments at least every four years. This plan helps to ensure that we can fulfil our responsibility and respond to changes in legislation.
- 2.3. The public sector equality duty is a general duty imposed by section 149 (1) which requires the Council to have 'due regard' to the need to:
 - 2.3.1. Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation
 - 2.3.2. Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not; and
 - 2.3.3. Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- 2.4. The nine protected characteristics are age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation. This plan helps to ensure that we can fulfil our responsibility with regards to our public sector equality duties.

3. Details

- 3.1. It is important that the Council can identify and set out its equality objectives and to demonstrate how it plans to meet and discharge its responsibilities as required under the public sector equality duties.
- 3.2. The draft plan underwent external consultation with local community groups and with groups sub-regionally as well as undergoing internal consultation.
- 3.3. The final plan will be presented to Council on 09.12.24 for adoption. A draft is attached at appendix A for committee members to review and comment upon.

4. Implications of Decisions

Corporate Priorities

- 4.1. Place and Community - Priority 1: Community leadership to create a sense of pride and belonging.

Consultation

- 4.2. Consultation with staff and external partners and community groups was undertaken between May 2024 and August 2024. The plan was reviewed by the Corporate Management Team on 27.08.24. Further information regarding consultation can be found within the associated Equality Impact Assessment – Appendix B.

Financial

- 4.3. All new employees to the organisation receive a one-hour 'introduction to equality' initial briefing. This outlines the Council's responsibility with regards to equality and diversity and forms part of the

plan to embed equality and diversity throughout the organisation, by developing staff knowledge and raising awareness.

4.4. Staff awareness is refreshed at least every 3 years by mandatory completion of an online learning module.

Legal

4.5. There is a legal requirement on the Council to identify and publish its equality objectives every four years to demonstrate compliance with the equality duty, to publish employee equality and diversity data annually and to pay 'due regard' to the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation, advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not and to foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not. Failure to comply with the public sector equality duties could result in the council facing a legal challenge and its reputation being damaged.

Environmental Implications

4.6. None identified.

Risk Management

4.7. There is a potential risk to the council if there is a failure to recognise the requirements of the Equality Act 2010 and adhere to the specific duty implementation deadlines. A failure to comply can amount to an unlawful action, and it is one that is commonly raised as grounds for a judicial review claim.

Equalities Impact

4.8. The main purpose of the plan is to ensure that all people are treated with fairness and respect regardless of their personal characteristics. The plan has been written in clear English, is available for translation, and is written in a way that simplifies the commitment Harborough District Council has towards Equality, meaning that people can easily understand our responsibilities and our dedication to working towards cultivating an inclusive community.

4.9. An Equality Impact Assessment has been completed as part of the plan's development as attached at Appendix B.

Data Protection

4.10. None identified. All information contained within the plan is in the public domain.

5. Alternative Options Considered

5.1. Not reviewing the plan. However, the Council has a duty to identify and publish its equality objectives and the Council's existing equality plan is in need of review, to meet legislative requirements.

6. Recommendation

6.1. The approval of the Harborough District Council Equality Plan (Strategy) 2025/28 by full Council.

7. Background papers

7.1. [Harborough District Council Equality Plan 2021/24](#)