

18 March 2021

New regulations came into effect on 4 April 2020 to allow Councils to hold meetings remotely via electronic means. As such, Council and Committee meetings will occur with appropriate Councillors participating via a remote video link, and public access via a live stream video through the [Mid Sussex District Council's YouTube channel](#).

Dear Councillor,

A meeting of **SCRUTINY COMMITTEE FOR COMMUNITY, CUSTOMER SERVICES AND SERVICE DELIVERY** will be held **VIA REMOTE VIDEO LINK** on **WEDNESDAY, 24TH MARCH, 2021 at 5.00 pm** when your attendance is requested.

Yours sincerely,  
KATHRYN HALL  
Chief Executive

#### **A G E N D A**

	<b>Pages</b>
1. Roll Call and Virtual Meeting Explanation	
2. To note Substitutes in Accordance with Council Procedure Rule 4 - Substitutes at Meetings of Committees etc.	
3. To receive apologies for absence.	
4. To receive Declaration of Interests from Members in respect of any matter on the Agenda.	
5. To confirm the Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 3 February 2021	<b>3 - 8</b>
6. To consider any items that the Chairman agrees to take as urgent business.	
7. Equality and Diversity Progress Report 2020.	<b>9 - 28</b>
8. Questions pursuant to Council Procedure Rule 10.2 due notice of which has been given.	

To: **Members of Scrutiny Committee for Community, Customer Services and Service Delivery:** Councillors A Boutrup (Chair), Anthea Lea (Vice-Chair), L Bennett, P Chapman, R Clarke, B Dempsey, S Ellis, I Gibson, J Henwood, T Hussain, J Mockford, M Pulfer, S Smith, A Sparasci and D Sweatman

**Minutes of a meeting of Scrutiny Committee for Community,  
Customer Services and Service Delivery  
held on Wednesday, 3rd February, 2021  
from 4.00 - 5.35 pm**

**Present:** A Boutrup (Chair)  
Anthea Lea (Vice-Chair)

L Bennett	J Henwood	D Sweatman
P Chapman	T Hussain	J Knight
R Clarke	M Pulfer	S Hatton
S Ellis	S Smith	
I Gibson	A Sparasci	

**Absent:** Councillors B Dempsey and J Mockford

**Also Present:** Councillors P Brown, R Bates, A. Bennett, A Eves, J Knight and S Hatton.

**Cabinet Members:** Councillors J Belsey, R De Mierre and N Webster.

**1 ROLL CALL AND VIRTUAL MEETING EXPLANATION.**

The Vice-Chairman carried out a roll call to establish attendance at the meeting. The Solicitor to the Council provided information on the format of the virtual meeting.

**2 TO NOTE SUBSTITUTES IN ACCORDANCE WITH COUNCIL PROCEDURE  
RULE 4 - SUBSTITUTES AT MEETINGS OF COMMITTEES ETC.**

Councillor Hatton substituted for Councillor Dempsey. Councillor Knight substituted for Cllr Mockford.

**3 TO RECEIVE APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE.**

Apologies were received from Councillors Dempsey, Ellis, and Mockford.

**4 TO RECEIVE DECLARATION OF INTERESTS FROM MEMBERS IN RESPECT OF  
ANY MATTER ON THE AGENDA.**

None.

**5 TO CONFIRM THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE COMMITTEE HELD ON  
13 OCTOBER 2020.**

The minutes of the meeting held on 13th October 2020 were agreed as a correct record and electronically signed by the Chairman.

**6 TO CONSIDER ANY ITEMS THAT THE CHAIRMAN AGREES TO TAKE AS URGENT BUSINESS.**

The Chairman had no urgent business.

**7 OVERVIEW OF COMPLAINTS 2019-20.**

Rafal Hejne, Interim Head of Digital and Customer Service, introduced the Complaints Annual Report. He noted the positive feedback from the Local Government Ombudsman. Members were recommended to note the report.

Members' attention was drawn to paragraph 14, which explained why there was a difference in the number of complaints and enquiries received, as some complaints were dealt with outside the reporting year.

A Member queried a decrease in compliments compared to 2018, asking if there was a reason for this. The Interim Head responded that there was no notable reason and that this year the Council has already reached the level of compliments received in 2018.

A Member was glad to see the Council is performing well and thanked officers for their work.

A Member queried a planning issue relating to officers and site visits. The Member noted she had never been accompanied by a planning officer when going on such visits and sought clarity on the current position. The Chairman noted this was planning matter and so outside of the scope of the report. Written clarity was agreed to be provided outside of the meeting.

A Member expressed delight at the number of compliments received by the Council and asked if it would be possible for the Committee to see them. She further cited the Annual Review letter, which emphasises learning, not numbers. The Chair agreed with this request, noting a particular interest in the areas receiving compliments from the public, as did the Interim Head agreed that they would look at how they can communicate on a regular basis the number of compliments received and examples of this best practice to Members.

The Chairman took Members to a vote on the recommendation contained in the report. This was approved with 15 votes in favour.

**RESOLVED**

The Committee noted the report.

**8 AIR QUALITY.**

The report was presented by Adam Dracott, Team Leader for Environmental Protection, to inform Members about the Council's Annual Status Report on air quality and highlight the air quality programme across the District. The Committee was recommended to endorse the approach of the Council on Air Quality Management.

The Team Leader Environmental Protection summarised the findings of the report which relate to the 2019 data sets. He emphasised the importance of working with colleagues at West Sussex County Council, further noting the schedule from the Air Quality Management area action plan.

The Team Leader concluded that two of the last three previous years have seen levels drop below the objective level and remain in line with the national trend, though there are further areas for improvement. He noted that further investigation was required at a site in London Road East Grinstead due to elevated levels of Nitrogen dioxide (NO<sub>2</sub>) This will involve the installation of an air quality station, which will enable more accurate real-time data for future decision-making.

A Member questioned if the officers were considering the reduction in traffic during the pandemic. Another Member wanted to emphasise the problems of pollution for residents living in properties above shops in busy areas and asked if it was possible to mitigate such circumstances with the County Council. The Team Leader replied that the monitoring being carried out in 2020 reflected lower traffic levels due to the pandemic and therefore an increase in better air quality in general. He added that officers were waiting for guidance from DEFRA concerning the use of this data.

Members discussed the air quality monitoring sites and the function and effectiveness of monitoring. The Team Leader said that there was a review of the monitoring sites every year and they would consider other options for new site locations (including Turners Hill) for next year's review.

There was further discussion about the impact of bonfires as they are a significant source of pollution. The Team Leader noted the Environmental Health Team took a very strong line against fireworks and bonfires during the lockdown, given the nature of the pandemic.

The Cabinet Member for Community thanked the Members for considering the report and added he believed it demonstrated that the Council takes the issue of air quality very seriously. He noted the death of a child in London, which was the first time in the UK that air pollution had been listed as a cause of death and reflected further on the effect of pollution in less affluent areas.

He concluded by thanking officers for providing necessary training for Members.

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He concluded by thanking officers for providing necessary training for Members.

There were no further indications for comment, therefore the Chairman took Members to a vote on the recommendation contained in the report. This was approved unanimously.

## **RESOLVED**

The Committee endorsed the approach of the Council on air quality management.

## **9 SCRUTINY COMMITTEE FOR COMMUNITY, CUSTOMER SERVICES AND SERVICE DELIVERY WORK PROGRAMME 2020/21.**

Tom Clark, Head of Regulatory Services and Solicitor to the Council, introduced the Work Programme, noting there are no items currently scheduled for the March meeting, though he added that could be subject to change.

A Member queried if there was cross-party support for further discussion on the future of Clair Hall. It was decided that this was a matter for the Cabinet to consider before it could lead to a working party discussion.

The Cabinet Member for Customer Services welcomed the report, adding that she would meet with the Interim Head of Digital and Customer Service and the Team Leader Environmental Protection to discuss the inclusion of the air quality app on the Council website. The Chair asked for a brief report for the Committee on this matter.

The Chairman took Members to a vote on the recommendation contained in the report. This was approved with 12 in favour, 2 against and 1 abstaining.

### **RESOLVED**

The Committee noted the Committee's Work Programme as set out in paragraph 5 of the report.

### **10 QUESTIONS PURSUANT TO COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE 10.2 DUE NOTICE OF WHICH HAS BEEN GIVEN.**

None.

The meeting finished at 5.35 pm

Chairman

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## EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY PROGRESS REPORT 2020

REPORT OF: HEAD OF REGULATORY SERVICES  
Contact Officer: Neal Barton, Policy and Performance Manager  
Email: [Neal.Barton@midsussex.gov.uk](mailto:Neal.Barton@midsussex.gov.uk) Tel: 01444 477588  
Wards Affected: All  
Key Decision: No  
Report to: Scrutiny Committee for Community, Customer Services and Service Delivery  
Date of meeting 24<sup>th</sup> March 2021

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### Purpose of Report

1. This report provides Members with an update on progress in 2020 against the Council's Equality and Diversity Scheme 2020 – 2024.

### Recommendations

2. **The Scrutiny Committee is requested to endorse the Council's approach to meeting its duties under the Equality Act, as evidenced by the Equality and Diversity Progress Report 2020 included at Appendix 1.**
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### Background

3. The Equality Act 2010 places a duty on the Council to publish an annual report setting out progress against their Equality and Diversity Scheme. The Council's Equality and Diversity Scheme 2020 – 2024 was approved by Council on 22 July 2020 and it was agreed that annual reports on progress should be provided to this Committee.
4. The Council's Equality and Diversity Scheme has been shaped by the Equality Act 2010, which introduced a number of responsibilities for councils, including a public sector equality duty and a requirement to promote equality of opportunity between those with "protected characteristics" and others. The public sector equality duty means that the Council must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to:
  - Eliminating unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act
  - Advancing equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not
  - Fostering good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

The nine protected characteristics are:

- age
- sex
- race
- disability
- religion or belief
- pregnancy and maternity
- sexual orientation
- marriage and civil partnership
- gender reassignment

The Act also introduced specific duties for public bodies to publish Equality Objectives and equality data to show their compliance with the duty.

5. The Council continues to mainstream its equalities work with our customer service activities, recognising that meeting the needs of individual customers for Council services is consistent with good equalities practice. In addition to considering the needs of those with protected characteristics, our equalities work looks at disadvantage arising from income or skill level and by virtue of where people live.
6. The Equality and Diversity Scheme also covers the Council's work in relation to the Armed Forces Community Covenant to support those who have served in the Armed Forces and their families. The Covenant and achievement of the Bronze Employer Recognition Scheme award shapes the Council's work to support the armed forces community.
7. The Covid-19 pandemic has greatly impacted the Council's work to support the protected groups in 2020. The pandemic has especially affected BAME groups, older people who have been most physically at risk from the virus and young people who have had their education disrupted and suffered particular mental health issues arising from the lockdown.
8. Social distancing and lockdown measures have also necessitated changes to how the Council has been able to deliver its support to protected groups. Example include but are not limited to:
  - (a) the Council's Wellbeing Team have been unable to deliver face-to-face interventions and have had to move to a telephone and virtual service.
  - (b) The Wellbeing Team were mobilised as part of the Community Hub to provide support to those in the District who were "shielding".
  - (c) A different delivery model was utilised for the Councils Silver Sundays events to address issues of loneliness in older people.
9. Much of the Council's work to support the protected groups in Mid Sussex involves working with community groups and voluntary organisations. The provision of grants to support the voluntary sector are especially important, given that many CVS organisations face a reduction in their financial resources due to the pandemic, while demand for the services they provide is rising.

### **Progress Report 2020**

10. The Annual Report for 2020 is included at Appendix 1 and sets out progress against the Council's Equality Objectives. Particular areas of progress include:
  - Continuing to use our Grants Schemes to provide for organisations that support vulnerable people.
  - Provision of the £300k Covid Grants Fund Scheme to support community groups and voluntary organisations affected by the pandemic.
  - Working with Citizens Advice to establish a Community Champions Network to engage with local minority communities to improve access to support, information and services linked to Covid.
  - Supporting young people who are Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEETs) through initiatives such as the NEETs Forum and YMCA Positive Placements mentoring scheme.

- Providing a programme of Play Days at Home during school holidays to replace the usual series of Play Days events
- Alternative provision for Silver Sunday, which is intended to mitigate the problem of loneliness amongst older people, saw the Council working with Age UK and Befriended to identify older people who would benefit from a personal treat of an afternoon tea delivered to their home.
- Provision of a new format for the Falls Prevention Programme for older people to improve their strength and mobility in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, through virtual classes and telephone support.
- Investment in our property assets and working to provide facilities with improved accessibility through the new Council Chamber.
- Signing up to the national Citizens Advice Good Practice Protocol and the Council's Revenues team putting people struggling to pay their Council Tax in touch with the Money & Pensions Service, who provide free independent debt advice.

11. The Annual Report provides examples of work that has been done over the past year to mitigate the effects of the pandemic on some of the most disadvantaged members of our community. It concludes that overall good progress has been made in meeting our duties and highlights further initiatives to be developed in the year ahead.

12. In addition to service developments for those with protected characteristics, the progress report comprises information about the composition of the Council's staff with regard to age, ethnicity, disability and gender. This includes the Council's gender pay gap and related information, which is required to be published under the Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties and Public Authorities) Regulations 2017.

13. Members are asked to consider the Annual Report and advise whether there are any areas of the Council's Equality and Diversity activity that require further emphasis.

### **Policy Context**

14. The Annual Report demonstrates progress against the Council's Equality Objectives. The delivery of these objectives will make a major contribution to the priorities set out in the Corporate Plan.

### **Other Options Considered**

15. The report updates on progress to the Equality and Diversity Scheme, which is designed to set out a programme to meet the Council's statutory requirements under the Equality Act. No other practicable options were identified.

### **Financial Implications**

16. There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.

### **Risk Management Implications**

17. The Progress Report helps the Council to continue to demonstrate that it is meeting the public sector equalities duty under the Equality Act and to avoid the risks associated with non-compliance.

### **Equalities and Customer Services Implications**

**18.** Customer service and ensuring equality of access are of continuing importance, especially with regard to meeting the needs of those who are vulnerable or may find it difficult to access our services. The report sets out steps to meet the needs of vulnerable groups and refers to the Council's programme of impact assessments, which are designed to promote equality and to identify and address the barriers that may prevent people accessing its services.

**Other Material Implications**

**19.** None.

**Background Papers**

**20.** None.



# **MID SUSSEX DISTRICT COUNCIL**

## **Equality and Diversity**

## **Progress Report 2020**

March 2021

## INTRODUCTION

1. This is the Council's annual Equality and Diversity progress report, setting out the achievements made in supporting equality and diversity in Mid Sussex. The report highlights key pieces of work we have undertaken as a District Council and sets out the future direction in our provision of fair and inclusive services.
2. Progress is reported against the context of the Council's Equality and Diversity Scheme 2020-24, which contains the following Equality Objectives:

**Objective 1-** We will show leadership and commitment in promoting equality and diversity.

**Objective 2-** We will consider the needs of individuals across the whole community, and especially those groups protected by the Equality Act 2010, when we plan and deliver our services.

**Objective 3-** We will seek to prevent discrimination and to promote good relations between different sectors of the community.

**Objective 4-** As an employer, we will seek to promote equality and respect for diversity in the workplace by providing appropriate policies, training and support, including assistance for former members of the armed forces.

3. The Scheme identifies actions to support the delivery of these objectives. It also sets out measures to ensure that the Council meets its public sector equality duty and ensures that discrimination does not occur on the grounds of the protected characteristics set out in the Equality Act 2010. These protected characteristics are race; disability; sex; gender reassignment; sexual orientation; religion or belief; age; pregnancy and maternity; marriage and civil partnership.
4. In addition to considering the needs of those with protected characteristics, our Equality and Diversity Scheme and this progress report considers disadvantage arising from income or skill level, by virtue of where people live and the Council's work to support the Armed Forces Community Covenant.

## PROGRESS IN DELIVERING SERVICE IMPROVEMENTS IN 2020

5. This section identifies service improvements for the protected groups, together with those who may find it difficult to access services by virtue of where they live and those with poor skills or low incomes. Some of our initiatives cover a range of equalities issues. These include our systems for reporting and dealing with hate crime and anti-social behaviour; safeguarding; the operation of our grants schemes; provision of activities through our leisure centres; and the Health and Wellbeing service.

### **Implications of the Pandemic for the Protected Groups in Mid Sussex**

6. The Council's work to the Equality and Diversity Scheme during 2020 has been greatly influenced by the pandemic, with the protected groups especially impacted. 5,194 elderly and vulnerable Mid Sussex residents were required to be shielded from the pandemic, with 2,300 registering for support. Emergency Community Voluntary Sector (CVS) support was developed during the shutdown through the local authority

community hubs and community responders, for example to support food supply and distribution to vulnerable people. There were also significant economic implications for the District, with 23,700 jobs in Mid Sussex in June 2020 supported through the Job Retention and Self-Employment Schemes.

### **Covid Grants Scheme**

7. Much of the Council's work to support the protected groups in Mid Sussex involves working with community groups and voluntary organisations. Grants to support the voluntary sector are especially important, given that many CVS organisations face a reduction in their financial resources due to the pandemic, while demand for the services they provide is rising.
8. As part of its Covid Recovery Plans, the Council has introduced a £300,000 Covid Grant Fund Scheme for local businesses, community groups and voluntary organisations affected by the coronavirus pandemic. Grants of £1,000 to £5,000 are available to help local businesses and organisations in three key areas:
  - **Emergency Response** - financial help with the additional costs that are incurred while operating under Covid-19 restrictions
  - **Return to Pre-Covid Provision** – a grant to local groups and businesses to help them reopen and return to business as usual in a way that is Covid-19 secure.
  - **New service or business innovation** – financial support to help local businesses and support organisations adapt to new ways of working.
9. To ensure that the Community Voluntary Sector were able to take full advantage of the grant scheme, targeted engagement was undertaken by the Council's Community Services Team. This included 2 Zoom meetings hosted by Mid Sussex Voluntary Action which outlined the grant offer and application process, followed by the provision of assistance to applicants who needed support with their bids. The first round of grants awarded £70,108 to 26 community voluntary organisations. Of these:
  - a. Fourteen organisations were funded to re-model, adapt and in many cases increase their communication channels to continue and extend their reach with their service users. Communication has been greatly affected by Covid for CVS groups that have not been able to meet in person and have had to adapt the ways in which they continue to keep the essential levels of contact with their, frequently vulnerable users. Examples of bids included the delivery of live community radio with home broadcasting equipment for volunteers, costs towards increased expenditure on printing and distribution, setting up new and developing existing websites and online platforms for e-learning.
  - b. Ten organisations were awarded funds to purchase additional equipment, PPE and resources to make their services Covid safe. These included improvements to facilitate safer social distancing and segregated access routes, additional coaching hours and resources to enable smaller numbers in classroom teaching and Covid screens.
  - c. Three groups received funding to implement changes in how they deliver their community services; replacing the usual Christmas lunch for older residents with home delivered hampers, venue costs to meet in halls where they have traditionally met in private homes and the purchase of a buddy bench for school children to combat anxiety and promote positive mental health.

## Support to community organisations through our Community Development and Facility Grants Scheme

10. The Covid Grants Scheme is in addition to the Council's existing Community and Development Grants Schemes, which continues to support a wide range of community organisations and projects that seek to assist vulnerable groups. The grants scheme includes partnership agreements with a core of voluntary organisations that support vulnerable people of all ages and backgrounds. These agreements are in place with Citizens Advice; Age UK; Mid Sussex Voluntary Action (MSVA); and Action in Rural Sussex. The partnership agreements are awarded over a three-year period to provide continuity and financial security to these organisations, with grants of £236,394 awarded in 2019/20.
11. Information about the contributions of the partnership agreement organisations to disadvantaged groups in Mid Sussex is provided below:
  - a. **Citizens Advice** deals with a variety of clients, with its biggest recent developments in its areas of advice for Mid Sussex clients being around Universal Credit claims and debt advice. They provide advice sessions at the job centre in Haywards Heath and at Saltworks, a community hub in the Bentswood area of Haywards Heath. The Council is working with Citizens Advice on the Mid Sussex Community Champions project to create a network of volunteer community champions from EU, Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic groups, and providing them with up-to-date information about Covid-19 to share with their communities.
  - b. **Age UK** has around 800 older people in Mid Sussex who are members of their three centres in Burgess Hill, East Grinstead and Haywards Heath. There have been significant challenges to Age UK during the pandemic, including a shutdown of facilities, temporary furlough of staff and significant loss of volunteers who were required to shield for their own safety. Despite these challenges, all three centres have continued to provide for older people in Mid Sussex, many of whom were on the NHS shielding list, offering: information and advice, signposting, telephone befriending, hot meals, doorstep deliveries, wellbeing checks, welfare and safety support and wellbeing advice.
  - c. **Mid Sussex Voluntary Action (MSVA)** supports local charities, volunteers, community groups, non-profit organisations and social enterprises. In 2019/20 MSVA had 388 member groups, gave practical 1:1 help to 51 community groups and charities, advertised 93 new volunteering roles, assisted in 30 successful volunteer placements, offered 11 training courses. MSVA has been closely involved in supporting the voluntary sector in responding to the pandemic and assisting the Council in enabling the community voluntary sector to access its Covid Grants Scheme
  - d. **Action in Rural Sussex (AirS)** provides valuable support to village halls, which are often the heartbeat of rural communities. This has included provision of legal, organisational and development advice for the trustees and management committees running these facilities on behalf of local people. They are working to support recovery for community halls and similar buildings for recovery from Covid19 closures and the impacts of related restrictions.



12. In addition to the Community Development Grants schemes, in 2019-20 there were 13 Facility Grants, fully funded through the release of s106 contributions, totalling £695,488. Recipients were aiming to raise £1,615,588 from external funding sources to deliver these projects. The awards supported sports club, community centres, arts organisations and playground improvements.

### **Review of the Grants Scheme**

13. A review of the Council's Community and Economic Development Grants Schemes and the organisations supported was undertaken for grants awarded in the period 2015- 20. This was reported to the Cabinet Grants Panel on 19<sup>th</sup> October 2020. The review found that for Community Grants, whilst disability, older and younger people's groups as-well as organisations supporting respite care are well represented in grant awards, there is a noticeable lack of awards for projects, groups or organisations that specifically support BAME and LGBT+ communities.
14. As a result of the review, targeted community engagement work is being undertaken to further understand any specific unmet needs these communities may have and where appropriate to encourage and enable funding bids. This work is being undertaken in partnership with MSVA.

### **Leisure Centres**

15. The Council's Leisure Centres have been significantly affected by the pandemic, with periods of statutory closure and opening at reduced capacity due to social distancing. When able to operate, the centres aim to provide a balanced range of activities to suit all sectors of the community and includes a scheme for concessional use. Groups who benefit from concessional charges include the over 60's; juniors of 16/17 years of age; students in full-time education; those in receipt of certain benefits such as Job Seekers Allowance; and registered carers. The Leisure Centres also work through the GP Exercise Referral Programme and provide activities for local schools and community groups.

### **The Health and Wellbeing service**

16. The Council's Health and Wellbeing Hub continues to be developed with a high emphasis on targeting people in the community who are at risk of the poorest health, with their services of particular benefit to vulnerable groups. Ways of promoting healthy lifestyles have been disrupted during the lockdown, for example the Sussex District Council's Wellbeing Team have been assisting with the provision of emergency support to those shielding. The Team has had to move to more virtual, rather than face-to-face contact due to social distancing requirements.
17. Examples of how their work has responded to the pandemic this year include:
  - a. The falls prevention programme which has been integrated into the Local Falls Pathway (especially useful for older people to improve their strength and mobility). During the COVID-19 pandemic the service quickly adapted to support its clients, many of which are in the shielded category. Home exercise sheets and Get Up & Go leaflets were sent to all participants, with 5 virtual classes now being delivered weekly. A Facebook page 'Wellbalanced for Wellbeing' has been set up and populated with a range of exercise videos, links and downloads from trusted sources. There is also you-tube account

containing the home exercise videos. There have been 147 participants in the programme.

- b. The Better You Virtual Exercise Referral Programme has been introduced across Mid Sussex using Sport England Tackling Inequalities funding. This seeks to help reduce the negative impact of COVID-19 and the widening of the inequalities in sport and physical activity. It provides a bespoke programme of one-to-one consultations alongside 12 weeks of online fitness classes designed to improve your health and mental wellbeing. The programme seeks to engage people from lower socio-economic groups; BAME communities; disabled people and those with long-term health conditions.
- c. The service also developed several new community talks which were piloted in November and October 2020 and offered in the community from the New year. The free Community Health Talks are for any Mid Sussex to book onto and offer a range of topics which include: Sleep awareness, Food & Mood, Menopause, Physical Activity, Stress & Resilience & breaking habits (smoking and alcohol).
- d. The Hub convenes the Mid Sussex Health and Wellbeing Network which is made up of approximately 80 organisations, both statutory and third sector, working within the broad field of wellbeing. This is a key source of exchanging information and getting referrals to and from the service. The Network has had to move to virtual meetings and this year included a dedicated COVID Support meeting regarding the services available from the Council's Housing Needs and Revenues and Benefits Teams and from Citizens Advice.

## Hate Crime Reporting

18. Figures for Hate Crimes reported in Mid Sussex for the last two years are shown below:

Table A: Reported Hate Crime

Type of Hate Crime	Mid Sussex		West Sussex	
	2019	2020	2019	2020
Transgender	10	9	38	30
Religion	11	5	87	66
Disability	14	10	138	127
Sexuality	23	24	201	206
Race	96	113	791	809
Total	154	161	1,255	1,238

19. A hate incident/hate crime is any incident where the victim or another person believes that they, the victim have been targeted because of their perceived race, religion, sexual orientation, disability or gender identity. Sussex Police point out that hate crimes are under reported and the increases are seen as the success of initiatives to raise awareness of hate crime and how it can be reported. Training has been provided to staff and Members on recognising and responding to hate crime and extremism.

## Safeguarding

20. Mid Sussex District Council continues to work in partnership with both the West Sussex Safeguarding Children's Board and Safeguarding Adults Board to ensure co-ordinated responses across West Sussex. The Council's Safeguarding Children and Adults Policy and Operating Procedures and Guidance were reviewed and updated in 2020. A programme of safeguarding training for both Officers and Members is also being delivered.

## FOCUSED WORK AROUND PROTECTED CHARACTERISTICS IN 2020

21. The next section of the report identifies service improvements for the protected groups last year.

## Disability

22. The 2011 census showed that 14.2% of Mid Sussex households contained at least one person with a long-term illness, health problem or disability which limits their daily activities. Health Study information and projections to 2030, suggest a particular increase in the number of people aged 65+ with a disability in Mid Sussex. A further consequence of our ageing population is the projected increase in the numbers living with dementia in Mid Sussex, from the current 2,270 to 3,500 by 2030. Mental health issues have also been accentuated during the pandemic and those with severe health issues were amongst the shielding groups provided with emergency CVS support.

### Specific action in 2020 included:

- a. The Council's Housing Standards Team provided 137 Disabled Facilities Grants during 2019/20. These delivered a range of home adaptations to help disabled people to live more independently in their own homes, including ramps, stairlifts, adapting kitchens for wheelchair use and replacing baths with level access showers. A further 96 have been awarded in the period April to December 2020.
- b. A "With You in Mind – 25 years of Better Mental Health" event was held in Haywards Heath provided by the Council with a number of partners including Sussex Oakleaf, Together in Sussex and Clarion Futures. Over 500 people attended the event, which provided advice and information about local support, a pop-up café and art exhibition and workshops and activities.
- c. A Community and Economic Development Grant was awarded to Mid Sussex Community Support Association to deliver a drop-in club in Haywards Heath for people with mental health issues.
- d. Improvements to the Council Chamber and Public Gallery are being progressed, designed to improve accessibility. The scheme involves the installation of a lift to provide disabled access, together with the renewal of old and obsolete equipment, including heating, air conditioning, audio-visual system and installation of hearing loops. The replaced audio-visual system will provide larger clearer pictures and improved sound, and together with the hearing loops will further improve access to those with hearing and visual impairments.
- e. A grant was awarded to 4Sight Vision, a sight loss charity supporting the visually impaired community of West Sussex. This was to fund their outreach that provides one-to-one support with low vision assessments. They also

received a Covid 19 Recovery Grant award to fund the increase of newsletters that will be available online, through audio or braille.

- f. 2 wheelchair accessible new affordable housing units have been provided in 2019/20.
- g. A Covid 19 Recovery Grant was awarded to the Sussex Association for Spina Bifida and Hydrocephalus to fund a schedule of online workshops, groups and activities, including fitness, cookery, art, discussions and quizzes.
- h. A Covid 19 Recovery Grant was given to the Friends of Bolney School for the purchase of a 'Buddy Bench' for children feeling anxious to promote good mental health.
- i. A Covid 19 Recovery Grant Fund was awarded to Crawley and East Grinstead Branch of Parkinson's UK to fund the creation of a website to promote the subsidised care and transportation services offered and to raise awareness of Parkinsons.
- j. The Wellbeing Team is supporting Every Mind Matters, a Public Health campaign that aims to support people to feel more confident to take care of their mental health and wellbeing.

### **Age- older people**

23. Age is a fundamental factor affecting people's life experiences. Mid Sussex has an older age structure with 20% of residents over 65 compared to 18% in England as a whole. The number of people aged 65+ and 85+ is projected to rise in the next 10 years by 22% and 28% respectively. An increasing number of people have one or more long-term health conditions and there are over 14,000 carers in the District. A large number of older people live alone (over 7,500 65+ in 2011) and due to the predominantly rural nature of the District, there is an increasing danger that many older people will face social isolation and feel cut off from the wider community. Older people formed the majority of the shielding groups provided with emergency CVS support.

#### **24. Specific action in 2020 included:**

- a. A grant was awarded to Age UK East Grinstead to fund improvements following their move from Swan Mead to enable them to upgrade the electrical power supply at Glen Vue. This, in turn, will allow installation of new kitchen appliances needed to run a catering kitchen and provide hot lunches for members.
- b. Silver Sunday is a national day of celebration for older people and to mitigate the problem of loneliness amongst them. In previous years organisations and venues across the district have hosted parties, commemorations and tea parties. The pandemic led to a different Silver Sunday as the Chairman of the Council worked with Age UK and Befriended to identify older people who would benefit from a personal treat of a tea delivered to their homes. Packages also included advice on local services available to help and support them.
- c. A Covid 19 Recovery Grant Fund was awarded to Handcross Rosemary Club to fund Christmas hampers to replace Christmas lunch, monthly tea and visit. The club provides opportunities for the over 55s, lonely and disabled people in and around Handcross.
- d. A Covid 19 Recovery Grant Fund grant was awarded to Mid Sussex Older People's Council to fund additional costs incurred with increase in postal newsletters.
- e. A Covid 19 Recovery Grant was given to Mycarematters 2020 CIC to fund the set-up a Buddy system for people who are struggling to plan for later life and

end of life, specifically the elderly, including those living with early stages of dementia.

- f. A Covid 19 Recovery Grant Fund was awarded to St Peter & St James Hospice to fund the expansion of telephone befriending service; focusing on elderly people living alone and carers including volunteer training.
- g. A Covid 19 Recovery Grant Fund was given to Age UK East Grinstead & District to fund the undertaking of an analysis of survey conducted during lockdown and the purchase of new IT equipment, marketing, postage and activity equipment
- h. The Council co-ordinates the Dementia Friendly Mid Sussex Group comprising the three local town Dementia Action Alliances and West Sussex County Council. The group meets to work towards dementia friendly communities across the district, share good practice and undertake joint projects.
- i. The Council has been working to provide a Dementia Friendly reception at Oaklands in association with the Mid Sussex Dementia forum run by the Alzheimer's Society.
- j. The Council supported an event which was due to be held by Mid Sussex Older People Council with advice for people to continue to live in their own home. This event has been postponed to later in the year due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

## Age – younger people

25. National research suggests that young people have been one of the groups most affected by the Covid-19 pandemic through:

- a. Disruption to their education
- b. Worsened mental health outcomes
- c. Worsened economic wellbeing from loss of work and earnings

26. In Mid Sussex during the Summer of 2020, Sussex Clubs for Young People undertook a survey with 65 young people organised by MSDC's Community Engagement and Events Officer. Feedback on the impact of COVID-19 was that young people found it hard mentally and felt trapped with no routine. There were also worries about being behind on school work, finding it hard to concentrate at home and struggling to learn either due to lack of tech or the home environment. The pandemic had also impacted on specific mental health issues and feelings of social isolation.

27. The number of NEETS (Not in Education, Employment or Training) in the District is one indicator of the economic wellbeing of young people. MSDC facilitates a NEETS Forum, which is made up of representatives from the Better Young Lives Partners group forum and works to support young people who are NEET. A meeting was held on 8<sup>th</sup> December 2020 facilitated by MSDC with representatives from Clarion Futures, WSCC and Jobs Centre Plus to discuss the current situation for this group of young people and the implications the pandemic.

28. The position with NEETs in Mid Sussex at 1<sup>st</sup> December 2020 was:

- **NEETs seeking Employment, Education and Training: 37** (Haywards Heath 18, Burgess Hill 11, East Grinstead 5)

- **NEETs not available (those young people who for personal circumstances are not able to look for work – e.g. through pregnancy, illness etc.) 17** : (Haywards Heath 5, Burgess Hill 5, East Grinstead 3)
  - **Unknowns 146** – these are young people who WSCC officers have been unable to contact who might be NEET or EET but no details are available.
29. The last Mid Sussex Partnership Board meeting in January focused on issues for young people in Mid Sussex arising from the pandemic and the support available. Haywards Heath College are now represented on the Board and provided a presentation on providing inclusive educational services, including their apprenticeships, vocational and support services.
30. The Council continues to work with West Sussex County Council's Youth Cabinet who have young members resident in Mid Sussex. During the pandemic there has been an increase in cabinet members and Mid Sussex has 7 representing areas across the district. Regular contact through Zoom meetings are now taking place with the Youth Cabinet, and their work is being promoted through the Comms Team.
31. The Council's Community Engagement and Events Officer leads a forum of professionals from both the statutory and voluntary sector, Better Young Lives, to ensure better lives and outcomes for children and young people. The current number of partners is 66 representing 34 organisations. Three meetings are held per year with updates given by local organisations on the services provided. Issues discussed at meetings of the Better Young Lives Group have included addressing drugs related crime involving young people in County Lines and Cuckooing; Challenges and Positives during 2020, Mental Health and Wellbeing of Young People.
- 32. Specific action in 2020 included:**
- a. Play Days at Home this summer replaced the usual series of Play Days for local families to enjoy in town and village parks across the district. This provided for families while they were at home during lockdown. This involved many of the usual performers who attend the outdoor events creating a varied programme of videos to keep children entertained over the summer holidays. The Play Days at Home scheme continued in both Half Terms in October '20 and February '21 alongside Nature Trails and Spring Into Action activity trails in 3 parks in each town.
  - b. The Young Volunteer and the Community Service awards were merged in 2019 and were delivered through the 'Mid Sussex Applauds' awards. During 2020 the Mid Sussex Applauds awards were held online with winners being recognised in a video and shown on Facebook. Officers delivered the certificates and gifts to all the winners across the district which was very well received.
  - c. Unfortunately the three planned Skatefest events due to be held this year in Haywards Heath, Burgess Hill and East Grinstead had to be cancelled due to the pandemic.
  - d. A Covid 19 Recovery Grant was awarded to Victim Support to fund the purchase of a laptop for a volunteer to support their virtual delivery.

- e. A Covid 19 Recovery Grant was awarded to Concordia to fund the set-up a virtual e-learning zone for the Youth Action Programme, which supports youth volunteering.
- f. Support has been provided for 16-19 year old NEETS through the NEETS Forum and the Council's commissioning of the Positive Placement Scheme delivered by the YMCA Downslink Group. This provides mentoring support, with an annual target of 30 young people supported into education, employment or training.

## **Race**

33. The 2011 Census showed that 9.7% of the Mid Sussex population are from Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) Groups. "White Other" is the biggest of the BME Groups at 4.8%, with Asian or Asian British: Indian the largest single other group at 1%. There is increasing evidence of the disparity of Covid-19's impact on Black, Asian and Minority ethnic groups. This is reflected in Covid-19 diagnosis and mortality rates.

### **34. Specific action in 2020 included:**

- a. The Council is working with Citizens Advice to engage with local minority communities to improve access to support, information and services. The project seeks to find new informal volunteers in our community to be champions; to share information at a community level and to help develop preventative messaging to ensure they are more effective across all of the District's diverse communities. Many of our NHS and social care workers in Mid Sussex are from a BAME and EU background, meaning they may be at greater risk of Covid.
- b. We have previously worked to assess the need for additional pitches for Gypsy and Traveller accommodation in the District and are actively identifying potential sites for their location through the Traveller Sites Allocations Development Plan.
- c. The Council continues to manage the Bedelands site at Burgess Hill, which provides 9 plots for Gypsies and Travellers.

## **Sexual Orientation**

35. Hate crime reporting on the basis of homophobia continues to be reported through the Community Safety Partnership.

## **Religion or Belief**

36. Information from the 2011 census shows that 62.7% of Mid Sussex residents stated their religion as Christian, with the second largest group being those with no religion at 26.6%. Of the remaining 2.8% who stated their religion, responses were spread across a number of faiths, with Muslim being the largest at 0.8%.

37. Churches and other places of worship are often the first to recognise problems in their local communities and many offer help to vulnerable people who are affected. The Council's work in this area centres upon countering religiously motivated hate

crime, helping to promote good relations between the different faiths in Mid Sussex and using our links with faith-based groups to provide access to services.

38. Our Housing Needs and Benefits Teams refer people to the Burgess Hill, Haywards Heath and East Grinstead Foodbanks, which have connections to local churches. Vouchers are provided which can be redeemed for three days of emergency food.
39. The Council was represented at an event at Muster Green, Haywards Heath to mark Holocaust Memorial Day and the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz. This was multi-faith event organised by Amnesty International. The Art Project organised as part of the memorial was displayed in Oaklands reception and later in the Haywards Heath library.
40. When agreeing the new Equality and Diversity Scheme, the Council also adopted the working definition of antisemitism produced by the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance from the Stockholm Declaration

## **Sex**

41. An important aspect of our service provision related to the protected characteristic of sex is the assistance provided for people suffering domestic abuse. The number of recorded domestic abuse crimes in Mid Sussex has risen slightly in 2020, with 1,163 crimes compared to 1,151 crimes in 2019. There are concerns arising from the pandemic and periods of lockdown that there is a greater incidence of domestic abuse, some of which may be unreported.
42. In 2019/20, the Council's Housing Needs Team took 65 homeless applications from households who said the main reason for loss of their settled home was domestic abuse or other forms of violence. There is a cross-tenure outreach service provided by Home Group (Stonham). This provides housing related support to victims of abuse to enable them to be "safe at home" or enable victims to secure a safe home.
43. There are a range of services and initiatives aimed at responding to domestic abuse. These include the WORTH services, which provide support to victims of domestic abuse and are based at hospitals in West Sussex, and the Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) which brings together responsible agencies in West Sussex to discuss those cases with the highest risk of harm.
44. Safe in Sussex were awarded Government funding to deliver an outreach domestic abuse service across Sussex aimed at isolated and marginalised communities who cannot easily access support, which launched in May 2019.

## **Gender Reassignment**

45. Community safety - our hate crime incident reporting includes the recording of hate crime motivated by transphobia, which refers to various kinds of aversion towards transsexual people.
46. With regard to gender identity issues amongst young people, the Council's Community Engagement and Events Officer leads a forum called Better Young Lives, which currently has 60 partners representing 34 organisations from the voluntary and



statutory sector. The forum provides an opportunity to share information and network. The group has discussed support services available for young people facing gender identity and wider LGBTQ+ issues.

47. The Group received a presentation from Allsorts, which is a charity that works with young people that identify as LGBTQ+. They currently deliver services in Chichester, Worthing and Horsham Find it Out centres and are keen to branch out in Mid Sussex. They offer advocacy for 11-19 year olds by appointment and deliver work in schools. They also work with the Youth Emotional Support Service (YES) who refer to the service for young people who identify as LGBTQ+ for support on various issues.
48. A new page is being developed for the Council's website –“ Information for Parents and Carers “– recognising that Parenting teenagers can be challenging, and many parents find it hard to adapt to changes in their child's behaviour as they grow up. This will include specific information and advice for LGBTQ+ young people.

## **Residential Location**

49. The Council recognises that whether our residents live in a rural or urban location can affect how they access our services. Issues from rural isolation include transport difficulties for those dependent upon public transport, high local housing prices and a lack of community facilities.

### **50. Supporting local communities**

- a. A Covid 19 Recovery Grant was awarded to Being Neighbourly an East Grinstead community group, to fund the set-up of a website and hosting and purchase of card readers, volunteer information packs, resident leaflets and social events.
- b. A Covid 19 Recovery Grant Fund was awarded to Bolney Community Café Society to fund the purchase of 2 Covid screens and an outdoor shelter to be erected on the café terrace.
- c. A Covid 19 Recovery Grant was given to Bolnore Village Community Partnership to fund improvements to the facilities to ensure that they can be cleaned more easily and be Covid safe.

### **51. Community facilities and Housing Initiatives**

- a. The Council has contributed to the development of a new multi-use community building and village centre in Ansty through grants and the release of section 106 developer contributions.
- b. The Council has been involved with consultation on facilities at the Kings Weald Community Centre at the Keymer Brick and Tile site Burgess Hill. Also, its transfer from the developer and putting in place of management arrangements for the centre, which will provide a sports hall, a kitchen, café and creche facilities.

- c. A grant was awarded to Clarion Futures to fund the installation of seating, play equipment and natural landscape features in the Spring Copse woodland area, Stonequarry, East Grinstead, thereby creating a new community park.
- d. New affordable housing delivered in 2019/20 included 54 homes in rural areas, outside of the three main towns.

### **Income or Skill Level**

- 52. The District is generally prosperous, but there are pockets of deprivation in each of the three main towns. Worklessness is more prevalent amongst those in social housing and people on low incomes are also in danger of suffering from fuel poverty. The pandemic has implications for the prosperity of the District with the number of households claiming Universal Credit increasing to 6,245 from 3,440 in the period May to November 2020.
- 53. 214 new affordable housing units were delivered in 2019/20, 147 for rent and 67 shared ownership. A further 183 new affordable homes have been delivered in the period April to December 2020.
- 54. The Council's Housing Needs Team assisted 77 households to access private rented sector accommodation in 2019/20.
- 55. The Council has signed up to the national Citizens Advice Good Practice Protocol, a public commitment to the principles of fairness, partnership working and transparency in local authority debt collection. This includes sending people locally for debt advice. The Council's Revenues team put people struggling to pay their Council Tax in touch with the Money & Pensions Service, who provide free independent debt advice.

### **Support for the Armed Forces Community**

- 56. Mid Sussex District Council signed the Armed Forces Community Covenant in September 2014, which is a statement of mutual support between the District Council and the local Armed Forces community. The Council also received the Bronze Employer Recognition Scheme award in January 2018, which shows support for the Armed Forces community through its employment policies. Initiatives associated with this have included the adoption of a guaranteed interview scheme for suitably qualified applicants with an armed forces connection and proper recognition in the Council's employment policies of provision for members of the Reserve Forces.
- 57. The main Council service that has had contact with veterans, reservists or active members of the Armed Forces is Housing. The Housing Register identifies those with an armed forces connection as they are exempted from the usual requirements to have a local connection. The Housing Needs Team provides specialist advice and support to homeless ex-forces people and liaises with organisations such as the armed forces charity SSAFA (Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen and Families Association).
- 58. The Council continues to publicise the Heroes Welcome Scheme and there are 12 businesses signed up to the scheme in Haywards Heath.

## Equality and Diversity and the Council's staff

59. In addition to looking at improvements to services in the context of the equality and diversity, this progress report also provides information about the Council's staff. As part of the requirement to publish Equality Data, we produce an annual monitoring report about the composition of our staff compared to the background Mid Sussex population. This includes information about age, sex, pay gap, ethnicity, sexuality, religion and belief and is published on the Council's website <http://www.midsussex.gov.uk/my-council/about-the-council/equality-and-diversity/equality-data/>

60. At the end of December 2020, the Council had 297 employees (274 full-time equivalents), 223 full-time and 74 part-time, with the following profile:

- 119 (40%) are men and 178 (60%) women
- 44% of senior managers (defined as the top 5% of earners) are women
- 22 (7.41%) have identified themselves as disabled
- 11 (3.70%) are from ethnic minority communities
- 2 (0.7%) are under 21 years of age
- 28 (9.4%) are 21-29
- 57 (19.2%) are 30-39
- 71 (23.9%) are 40-49
- 105 (35.4%) are 50-59
- 34 (11.4%) are over 60.

61. The Council's gender pay gap in 2019/20 was 10.9% calculated by comparing the mean average male and female employee pay. This compares to 7.7% in 2018/19. The median average gender pay gap for 2019/20 was 10.0%, compared to 9.8% in the previous year. The 2020 ONS national median average pay gap was 15.5% for all employees and 12.2% nationally for local government administrative staff. The gender pay gap is different to equal pay. Equal pay deals with the pay differences between men and women who carry out the same jobs, similar jobs or work of equal value. It is unlawful to pay people unequally because they are a man or a woman.

62. The Council is required to submit this gender pay gap information to Government, together with the quartile gender pay distributions as shown below for 2019/20:

Upper Quartile-	Men 58.4%	Women 41.6%
Upper Middle Quartile	Men 39.0%	Women 61.0%
Lower Middle Quartile	Men 33.8%	Women 66.2%
Lower Quartile	Men 35.9%	Women 64.1%

63. For staff with a disability, the Council is a "Disability Confident Committed" employer, recognising our commitment to the employment, retention, training and career development of disabled employees. This includes a commitment to interview all disabled applicants who meet the minimum criteria for a job vacancy and to consider them on their abilities.

## Equality and Diversity Training

64. All recent new starters at the Council have received equality and diversity training. This has had an emphasis on understanding unconscious bias. All staff are also required to complete an equality and diversity on-line training module. Equalities

training for Members was also provided in March 2020 which covered recognition of the 9 Protected Characteristics and enhancing communication with our communities.

## **Equality Impact Assessments**

65. The Council completes impact assessments where there are major changes to a service area or new policies. The assessments identify opportunities to promote equality and the barriers to services/differential impact on the protected groups in Mid Sussex. The assessments that have been completed in 2020 include the Place and Connectivity project and Food Waste Pilot.
66. Completed impact assessments are included with relevant Committee reports and published on the Council's website. These can be found at <http://www.midsussex.gov.uk/my-council/about-the-council/equality-and-diversity/equality-impact-assessment/>
67. There is also a standard section in all of the Council's reports to Members, which assesses the "Equality and Customer Services Implications" of the actions referred to in the report.

## **CONCLUSIONS AND LOOKING FORWARD TO THE YEAR AHEAD**

68. This report includes many examples of how the Council, working with its partners, is providing for the needs of the protected groups in the District and addressing disparities arising from where people live and their income or skill level. This is in the context of the pandemic which has changed the way that the Council delivers its services, greatly affected partnership working with the community and voluntary sector and especially impacted the protected groups.
69. The Council will be looking to further develop its equality and diversity work in the year ahead. Specific areas for development in 2021 include:
  - a. Development of the Community Champions initiative working with Citizens Advice to engage with the BAME community in Mid Sussex to address issues arising from the pandemic.
  - b. Further implementation of the Covid Grants Scheme to support the voluntary sector.
  - c. Completion of the improvements to the accessibility of the Council Chamber and Public Gallery.
  - d. Further initiatives to support young people and their issues arising from the pandemic.
  - e. Publication of a new page on the Council's website – Information for Parents and Carers – including information on local organisations that support young people with their mental and emotional wellbeing.
  - f. Delivering the Play Days and Play Days at Home programme.