

## EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY PROGRESS REPORT 2022

REPORT OF: DIRECTOR OF RESOURCES AND ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT  
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Tel: 01444 477588  
Wards Affected: All  
Key Decision: No  
Report to: Scrutiny Committee for Leader, Deputy Leader and Housing and Customer Services  
Date of meeting 8<sup>th</sup> March 2023

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### Purpose of Report

1. This report provides Members with an update on progress in 2022 against the Council's Equality and Diversity Scheme 2020 – 2024.

### Recommendations

2. **The Scrutiny Committee is requested to note the Equality and Diversity Progress Report 2022 included at Appendix 1.**
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### Background

3. 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 the relevant Scrutiny 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:

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

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 its 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. 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 have faced a reduction in their financial resources due to the pandemic, while demand for the services they provide has risen.

### **Progress Report 2022**

8. The Annual Report for 2022 is included at Appendix 1. The report includes a summary highlighting the main areas of progress in 2022 and initiatives for the year ahead.
9. The Office for National Statistics has been releasing information from the 2021 Census, which provides updated data on the protected groups in Mid Sussex. These are referred to in the attached annual report, with the headline Census information summarised in the appendix to the report.
10. 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.
11. Overall, the Annual Report concludes that overall good progress has been made in meeting our duties and highlights further initiatives to be developed in the year ahead.

### **Arrangements for updating the Council's Equality and Diversity Scheme**

12. The Council's current Equality and Diversity Scheme runs to 2024 and the Equality Act requires the Council to review its Equality Objectives every four years. A new scheme with reviewed objectives will be produced for approval by Council early in 2024, informed by the new Census data.

### **Policy Context**

13. 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**

14. The report updates on the progress of 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**

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

### **Risk Management Implications**

16. 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**

17. 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 from accessing its services.

### **Sustainability Implications**

18. The Council's Equality and Diversity Scheme supports its community leadership role in the delivery of local and UK sustainable development goals set out in the Sustainable Economy Strategy. Specifically, this contributes towards: Goal 10: Reduced Inequalities, Goal 5: Gender Equality, Goal 1: No Poverty, Goal 2: Zero Hunger and Goal 3: Good Health and Well-Being.

### **Other Material Implications**

19. None.

### **Appendices**

20. Equality and Diversity Progress Report 2022

### **Background Papers**

21. None.