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<b>Date</b>	9 April 2013

<b>Ward (s) affected</b>	All	<b>Key Decision</b>	No
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<b>Subject</b>	<b>Equality Strategy 2013 - 2018</b>
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<b>RECOMMENDATIONS</b>
That the Equality Strategy be approved.

<b>CORPORATE PRIORITIES</b>
The Strategy has been developed so that it is in line with the Council's priorities. Section two of the Strategy sets out the proposed equality objectives which are based around the three priority themes.

<b>The Executive has the authority to determine the Recommendation</b>
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**1.0 BACKGROUND**

**1.1** The Council's Single Equality Scheme (2010-2013) was approved by Executive in 2010; it provided a framework to ensure that services were delivered in an accessible and equitable manner to the community. In addition the Scheme set out how the Council would meet its legislative duties under the Equality Act 2010.

**1.2** In the period since then, the Council has made significant improvements in its approach to equality and diversity. Every aspect of the Council's service delivery has been assessed, to ensure they are provided in a way that enables every member of the community equal access to the services they needed.

**1.3** Furthermore, other specific achievements include:

- Carrying out specific training for our Customer Service Unit on working with people who are blind or have other visual impairments
- Ensuring the Council's new website was more accessible and easy to use; so customers who use assisted technology can successfully navigate the site.
- Developing and maintaining a list of staff who speak other languages, who are available to interpret for non-English speaking customers.

- Ensuring our town and village centres were accessible through our planning work.
- Ensuring our budgets took account of the equality impact of any changes in service delivery.

1.4 Single Equality Scheme covered the period up to March 2013. This has now been reviewed and a new Equality Strategy has been developed to outline the key areas of focus in the period through to 2018.

## 2.0 Equality Strategy

2.1 The draft Equality Strategy is a statement of the Council's approach to equality and diversity. It builds on our achievement and seeks to further embed the principles of equality into our work.

2.2 The Strategy sets out our equality objectives which have been developed based on the Council's three priority themes of Access to Service, Environment and Value for Money. The Strategy is supported by an Action Plan, which will be reviewed annually, which sets out how the objectives will be delivered.

## 3.0 Options

The Executive has 2 options for consideration:

1. Approve the draft Strategy
2. Ask that further work be undertaken before approving the Strategy

Option 1 is the preferred one.

## 4.0 CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS

**Legal Implications** - The Council has a legislative duty under the Public Sector Equality Duty, pursuant to the Equality Act 2010, to publish one or more equality objectives; these are set out within the Strategy.

**Financial and Risk Implications** - There are no direct financial implications arising from this report. There are potential reputational risks, if the Strategy is not approved, for not fulfilling our legislative duties under the Equality Act 2010

**Equalities Implications** - This Strategy seeks to deliver an improved approach to Equalities and Diversity at the Council, there are therefore implications which will lead to improvements in the way we deliver our services.

**Employment Issues** - Employment policies are a key aspect of our approach to equalities and diversity, to ensure that the Council's policies are in line with best practice. The Human Resources (HR) Manager is aware of this and our HR policies are currently being reviewed.

**Sustainability Issues** - Actions identified under the 'Environment' priority theme addresses sustainability issues

**Background Papers** - None

# Mole Valley District Council

## Equality Strategy 2013 – 2018

### 1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The purpose of the Council's Equality Strategy is to define our equality objectives and outline the arrangements we have for continuing to embed equality principles into everything we do. The Strategy sets out our corporate approach to equality and diversity for the next five years and outlines how we will fulfil our statutory duty under the Equality Act 2010.
- 1.2 This Strategy applies to both our internal and external operations and covers all aspects of our work. It applies to officers, councillors, partner organisations, contractors and anyone we are working with to deliver services. It states our position as an organisation and our commitment to recognising and promoting equality and diversity.
- 1.3 The Strategy seeks to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation, promote equality of opportunity and foster good relations between different groups. We are committed to ensuring that the services we provide are accessible to all and meet different people's needs.

### 2. OUR EQUALITY OBJECTIVES

- 2.1 Our **equalities objectives** have been developed so that they are in line with the Council's Corporate Priorities. Our equality objectives are:

#### Access to Service

- Effectively engage and involve our communities in decision making;
- Ensure that members of the community have equal and fair access to Council services;
- Improve our understanding of our existing and future community;

#### Environment

- Ensure the work around the Mole Valley Local Plan, which sets out the vision for the district and guides the type and level of future development, is delivered taking account of and provides for the needs of the Mole Valley community.
- Ensure the needs of the community are considered when environmental improvements schemes are undertaken.

#### Value for Money

- Provide appropriate training for staff to ensure they have more understanding of equality and diversity issues, which will minimise the risks of having these issues;

2.2 Appendix one sets out how we will achieve our objectives

### **3. OUR ACHIEVEMENTS 2010 - 2013**

3.1 The Council has made significant improvements in its approach to equality and diversity since 2010. Every aspect of the Council's service delivery has been assessed in this period to ensure that services are provided in a way which enables equal access to all members of our community. Wherever practical and realistic areas for improvement were identified, these have been implemented to improve service provision. As part of this work, we used the information held within the Council to ensure that we took account of what residents and customers had told us about the way in which services were provided.

3.2 In addition to this, other specific achievements have been:

- Member and officer training on equality and diversity
- Specific training for our Customer Services Unit on working with people who are blind or have other visual impairments
- Ensuring that the new Council website was more accessible and easy to use; so customers who use assisted technology can now successfully navigate the site.
- Developing and maintaining a list of staff who speak other languages, who are available to interpret for non-English speaking customers. This allows us to make the best use of skills and abilities across the Council to provide an improved service to customers who may not speak English.
- Carried out detailed equality impact assessments for a number of Council policies, procedures and key decisions to support our planning policy processes
- Ensured our town and village centres are accessible through our planning work
- Ensured that our physical assets, e.g. car parks, have suitable disabled provision.
- We ensured our budgets have taken into account the equality impact of any changes in service delivery
- We have a better understanding of our community to ensure we spend money in the right way, on the right things.

### **4. THE MOLE VALLEY PROFILE**

4.1 A key part of delivering the right services in the right way to our communities is understanding what our communities look like. Through the Council's Geographical Information Systems, we are able to identify detailed information about the profile of our community and their preferences in terms of accessing services. In addition to this, we make use of a range of other sources to provide information about Mole Valley.

- 4.2 The **2011 Census** showed Mole Valley has a population of 85,375, a 6% increase from 2001. 51% of the district's population are **females** and 49% **males**. Whilst 58% of the population are aged 18-64 years, Mole Valley has an ageing population, with the proportion of those **aged 65 and over** being 21%, the highest in Surrey and above the national average. This is projected to be an increasing trend as people are living longer. The proportion of children aged under 18 is 21%.
- 4.3 Mole Valley is a relatively affluent area, with the 2010 **indices of multiple deprivation** showing it as the 310<sup>th</sup> least deprived authority in the Country. Despite this, there are however some areas of deprivation. Surrey's Joint Strategic Needs Assessments shows that 8% of Mole Valley's children, aged 0-19 years, live in poverty; a significant proportion from around Leatherhead North and Links areas. 7% of households are shown as living in overcrowded accommodation.
- 4.4 The district has one of the lowest rates of **unemployment** in Surrey at 2.5%. The percentage of those aged 16-64 years claiming **job seekers allowance** was 1.3% in December 2012, lower than both the regional and national averages.
- 4.5 Low education attainment is also linked with deprivation and in Mole Valley 16% of residents have **no qualifications**. This is similar to the levels seen in Surrey generally and lower than the average nationally.
- 4.6 The majority of the district's population are white; 5% classified themselves as from **ethnic minorities**; this is nearly double the proportion recorded in 2001.
- 4.7 64% of the Mole Valley population said that they were Christian (75% in 2001). The percentage of people who stated they had no religion increased to 25%. Those stating they were of other religions (Buddhist, Hindu, Jewish, Muslim, Sikh or other) stayed fairly the same from 2.3% to 2.6%, with Muslims highest (0.8%) in this group.
- 4.8 The 2012 health profile showed that generally, the health and **life expectancy** of people in Mole Valley is better than the national average and is increasing for both males and females. The 2011 census showed that 15% of the population had long term limiting illness compared to 18% nationally.

## **5. MONITORING OUR EQUALITY OBJECTIVES**

- 5.1 Progress on delivery of our equality objectives will be monitored regularly through the officer Equality and Diversity Working Group.

## Appendix 1- Equality Action Plan

Equality Objectives	Actions	Timescales	Expected Outcomes	Lead Team
<b>Access to Services</b>				
Engage and involve our communities in decision making	Improve the way we engage with our customers and listen to our communities, which is a corporate priority for the Council in 2013/14	March 2014	A more effective dialogue with our residents about how they want to receive services, what is important to them, and to better understand their views on Council Tax and fees and charges	Customer Services and Communications
Ensure that members of the community have equal and fair access to Council services	Undertake equality impact assessments on new and major projects and policies	As identified through the MVDC Corporate Plan	Effective service provision that meets the needs of users	Policy and Performance
Improve our understanding of our community	Make improved use of currently held organisational data (in particular GIS) in project and service delivery	From April 2013	Better informed decision making and project delivery	ICT
<b>Environment</b>				
Ensure the work around the Local Plan, which sets out the vision for the district and guides the type and level of future development, is delivered taking account of and provides for the needs of the Mole Valley community.	Carry out equality impact assessments of specific pieces of work undertaken as part of the Mole Valley Local Plan.	From April 2013	Provision of developments that meet the need of local residents.	Planning Policy

<b>Equality Objectives</b>	<b>Actions</b>	<b>Timescales</b>	<b>Expected Outcomes</b>	<b>Lead Team</b>
Ensure the needs of the community are considered when environmental improvements schemes are undertaken.	Consult with representatives of the local community and organisations representing people with special access needs	From April 2013	Better access to public places, for everyone in the community	Planning Policy/Development Control/Parks depending on projects
<b>Value for Money</b>				
Provide appropriate training for staff to ensure they have more understanding of equality and diversity issues, which will minimise the risks of having these issues.	Ensure managers identify staff training needs and roll out relevant equality training for staff. Review current equality training provision for new staff.	From April 2013	Staff have the skills and knowledge to effectively tackle equality issues when they arise	Human Resources

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