

Equality Policy Statement and Objectives 2022-26



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1. Equality Policy Statement and Objectives 2022-26

1.1 Policy Statement

Mole Valley District Council (MVDC) celebrates diversity and promotes inclusion for all. The Council aims to be fair and accessible when delivering, designing and evaluating services, buying services from others, developing policies, and considering the needs of Council employees.

MVDC, and any organisations that have been contracted to carry out public functions on MVDC's behalf, must have 'due regard' to the three aims of the Public Sector Equality Duty, as set out in the Equality Act 2010:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act.
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not, including:
 - Removing or minimising disadvantages suffered by people due to their protected characteristics.
 - Taking steps to meet the needs of people with certain protected characteristics where these are different from the needs of other people.
 - Encouraging people with certain protected characteristics to participate in public life or in other activities where their participation is disproportionately low.

The protected characteristics are age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race and ethnicity, religion and belief, sex, sexual orientation, and marriage and civil partnership.

- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

MVDC conducts and publishes Equality Impact Assessments to demonstrate that it, as an employer and as a service provider, has considered the three aims of the equality duty as part of its decision making processes. These impact assessments are undertaken when policies and services are being introduced or reviewed. They are published online with the relevant committee reports and on the [Equality and Diversity](#) page of the Council website. As well as considering the impact on people with protected characteristics, these impact assessments also consider wider factors such as the impact on carers, rural/urban access issues and HR issues.

MVDC's commitment to equality is enhanced by the Customer Promise:

- We will **listen** to you and help you to find a solution

- You can **trust** us to be honest and open with you, and to be professional at all times
- We will be sensitive to your enquiry and will treat it with **care**. We will explain our decisions and be clear about how we can help
- We will treat you with **respect** and ask you to do the same
- We will take the **lead** on making improvements to our services based on your feedback

MVDC's commitment to equality directly delivers against the [Council Strategy 2019-2024](#). In particular the priority 'Community Wellbeing: Active communities and support for those who need it' and two of the guiding principles, 'Putting People First' and 'Openness and Accessibility'.

1.2 Objectives

Every four years MVDC publishes one or more equality objectives to deliver in relation to the Public Sector Equality Duty. In preparation for writing this statement MVDC undertook a review of its equality arrangements based on the Equality Framework for Local Government (Local Government Association, 2020). MVDC used the findings of the review as the basis for developing the two objectives in this statement and these objectives will focus on external facing arrangements to ensure services reflect the needs of Mole Valley residents and communities. These are considered to be the building blocks for equality arrangements at MVDC.

Extensive work has been done in recent years relating to the workforce at MVDC as part of the Organisational Development Strategy, with a particular focus on Health and Wellbeing, and this work continues. This has therefore not been chosen as an area of additional focus for 2022-26.

Two equality objectives have been set for 2022-26 and these are set out below.

Leadership of MVDC Members in relation to equalities work will be key in making progress in these areas over the next four years. Greater involvement and input will be sought from Members and this work will be championed by the Cabinet portfolio holder with responsibility for equalities. The Cabinet will also be appointing a Member champion specifically for (a) ethnic minority groups and (b) people with disabilities. There will be scope to consider Member champions for other protected characteristics.

Objective 1: Improving use of data and local intelligence in decision making

Why is this important?

MVDC needs to ensure its services reflect the needs of Mole Valley residents. Data and local intelligence can help improve knowledge and understanding of what those needs are. By making this information available, those making decisions about services and business planning can be better informed about the needs of residents.

Success will look like:

- Summary information about district residents and communities, with a focus on protected equality characteristics, is available publicly
- Information about residents and communities, including those with protected characteristics, is used by decision makers to inform service improvements and business planning

Activity in this area will focus on:

- Improving the availability of equality data, and raising awareness of service users' needs to inform decisions about services

Objective 2: Ensuring information and services are accessible to residents and service users

Why is this important?

MVDC is a public body and therefore needs to make sure all Mole Valley residents are able to access Council information and services, and provide feedback about these services.

Success will look like:

- Residents and other service users can access the Council services that they need in a straightforward manner
- Residents and other service users are able to provide views, comments and feedback about Council proposals and services

Activity in this area will focus on:

- Improving stakeholder engagement to ensure services and information are accessible for those with protected characteristics

An operational-level action plan will be put in place to develop these ideas further and progress against the action plan will be monitored internally by the Corporate Governance Board.

1.3 Policy Review

The Equality Policy Statement and Objectives will be kept under review by the Corporate Governance Board and submitted to Cabinet for approval every four years.

Approval of minor changes is delegated to the Strategic Leadership Team lead with responsibility for equalities in consultation with the Corporate Governance Board and the relevant Cabinet Member.