



Cabinet

14 July 2020

Rushcliffe Equality Scheme

Report of the Chief Executive

Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Communities, Councillor D Mason

1. Purpose of report

- 1.1. Rushcliffe Equality Scheme was adopted in 2016 and runs to 2020. It is therefore timely that the scheme is reviewed and a new scheme is developed.
- 1.2. Following the significant events of 2020, it is recommended that the review should be rigorous and include Member involvement.

2. Recommendation

It is RECOMMENDED that Cabinet:

- a) Supports the comprehensive review of the 2016-2020 Equality Scheme,
- b) Asks the Corporate Overview Group to programme member involvement and input into the scrutiny calendar,
- c) Receives a future report on a new and revised Equality Scheme.

3. Reasons for Recommendation

- 3.1. Rushcliffe Borough Council has a long history of working towards greater levels of equality in the borough. This covers many facets, some of which are detailed below. As a public sector organisation it is imperative that the council represents its residents and ensures that its services are accessible to all.
- 3.2. The existing Equality Scheme runs to this year and so it is time to review the scheme and update it to reflect current circumstances and actions required.

4. Supporting Information

- 4.1. There are several diversity strands that are protected from discrimination by law. These are:
 - Age
 - Disability
 - Gender reassignment
 - Marriages and civil partnerships

- Pregnancy and maternity
 - Race – this includes ethnic or national origins
 - Colour or nationality
 - Religion or belief
 - Gender
 - Sexual orientation
- 4.2. Rushcliffe Borough Council is an employer, employing around 275 staff. It is also a provider of services both statutory and discretionary, and a purchaser of goods and services.
- 4.3. Many of the statutory services the council provides are there to support residents in their time of need, eg benefits and housing support. It is extremely important that residents can access these services in an equitable manner.
- 4.4. Equally, the non-statutory services, such as leisure provision and parks and open spaces, should be delivered in such a way to welcome all residents.
- 4.5. As a good employer, it is paramount that Rushcliffe ensures that its employees are treated in a respectful way, and that as far as possible, the make up of the staff is representative of the make up of the residents we serve.
- 4.6. As a key element of local democracy, it is right that councillors should not only understand and represent their constituents' issues, but also act as community leaders in the quest to ensure a fair and respectful society in Rushcliffe.

5. Current Social Landscape

- 5.1. 2020 has been an eventful year to date with huge challenges being presented. The data being gathered by NHS England suggests that people from Black and Minority Ethnic backgrounds have been disproportionately affected by the Covid-19 pandemic. As more data becomes available on this matter and any local trends become apparent, they can be taken into consideration when the new equality scheme is being developed.
- 5.2. As services are reopened, and travel and transport return to a “new normal”, data can be assimilated as to what this will mean for different residents who previously relied on public transport which may not be available in the same way. Their access to services may be affected.
- 5.3. Following the lockdown across the UK and the closure of schools, data is emerging that many children have not been able to engage with home schooling and online lessons during the lock down period and social inequalities may be exacerbated in the aftermath of the Covid-19 pandemic – through loss of income, isolation and lack of access to technology or broadband.
- 5.4. Following the death of George Floyd in the US, there have been demonstrations in support of race equality across the US and elsewhere across the world including the UK.

5.5. In short, many issues (the list above is not exhaustive) have been highlighted in 2020 that need to be considered when reviewing the previous scheme and adopting a new scheme.

6. Alternative Options Considered and Reasons for Rejection

6.1. The Council should have an Equalities scheme.

6.2. The Cabinet could choose not to ask scrutiny to play an active part in the development of the scheme but there is clear interest and a desire from Councillors to be widely involved and engaged. It is anticipated that Sam Maher from East Midlands Councils will support the development of the new scheme and will attend the appropriate scrutiny meeting to work with members and officers.

7. Risks and Uncertainties

The risk is in not updating the Equality Scheme. It is important that the Council reviews the scheme regularly in order to continue to be responsive to residents', staff' and councillors' needs and to ensure that equality considerations are at the heart of what the Council does.

8. Implications

8.1. Financial Implications

There are no financial implications.

8.2. Legal Implications

There are equality strands which are protected by law and the Council must have regard for this.

8.3. Equalities Implications

This is covered in the body of the report.

8.4. Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 Implications

There are no S17 implications.

9. Link to Corporate Priorities

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| Quality of Life | It is paramount that Rushcliffe residents can access services in an equitable manner. Discrimination should be avoided and may indeed be unlawful and certainly would impact on residents' and staff quality of life |
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| Efficient Services | It is shown that staff and councillors work to their best capability if they feel they are accepted and valued members of the organisation, whatever their characteristics |
| Sustainable Growth | As housing or industrial developments take place across the borough, Equality Impact Assessments will be taken into account |
| The Environment | There may be some issues linked to public transport and the C-19 recovery that start to come to the fore around the equalities agenda. |

10. Recommendations

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| For more information contact: | Kath Marriott Chief Executive 0115 914 8349 kmarriott@rushcliffe.gov.uk |
| Background papers available for Inspection: | |
| List of appendices: | <i>Equality Scheme 2016-2020</i> |