



Communities Scrutiny Group

Thursday, 28 January 2021

Rushcliffe Equality Scheme

Report of the Executive Manager - Transformation

1. Purpose of report

- 1.1. The Council is reviewing its existing Equality Scheme, which was adopted in 2016 and ran until 2020, with Councillor involvement following a resolution of Cabinet in July 2020.
- 1.2. At its meeting on 27 August 2020, the Communities Scrutiny Group responded to initial officer proposals in respect of the review of the Council's Equality Scheme and provided a steer on further work to develop a refreshed Equality Scheme before being submitted to Cabinet.
- 1.3. This report provides an update on that work for consideration by the Communities Scrutiny Group.

2. Recommendation

It is RECOMMENDED that the Communities Scrutiny Group note the report and support the proposed approach for the revised Equality Scheme for submission to Cabinet.

3. Reasons for Recommendation

- 3.1. The existing Equality Scheme ran to the end of last year and is therefore being reviewed and updated to reflect current circumstances and actions required.
- 3.2. As a public sector organisation, it is imperative that the Council represents its residents and ensures that its services are accessible to all.
- 3.3. The views expressed by the Group in August 2020 have been taken into account, along with the impact of the COVID-19 response and its implications for consultation.

4. Supporting Information

- 4.1. The Equalities Scheme (at Appendix 1) takes a new approach; it sets out the Council's high-level strategic commitments in the workplace and community under four themes. Each theme will have action plans setting out how the principles are carried forward into actions: two initial action plans can be seen at the end of the Scheme in Appendix 1. Examples of how the Council's

Equalities Scheme is embedded throughout the organisation in all it does, is shown in Appendix 2. Taking this high-level approach to the revised Scheme, with more directed action plans, enables the Council to react and respond to changes, ensuring it is always relevant, impactful and up to date.

Further Development of the Revised Scheme

- 4.2. At its meeting in August 2020, this Group provided valuable feedback on the initial proposals for the refreshed Equality Scheme. The Group agreed the initial proposals, and on the context and factors to be considered as part of the Equality Scheme.
- 4.3. Key points of feedback from the Group included:
 - The Scheme needs to reflect diversity and inclusion in terms of its graphical representation, language and accessibility.
 - The need for the Scheme to provide a living document that enables actions to reflect the changing needs and aspirations of communities, businesses and employees.
 - The importance of engagement with user and community groups to ensure it is relevant and addresses issues of diversity and inclusion.
 - The need for there to be clear actions and objectives, which are reviewed annually.
- 4.4. These points have been taken on board in considering how the Scheme should be developed.

Proposed Approach

- 4.5. Taking into account the views of the Group, it is proposed to put forward an Equality Scheme that keeps its focus at a strategic level, setting out the vision and aims of the Council over the next four years.
- 4.6. In support of the Scheme, annual action plans will be developed to progress against these strategic aims. The action plans will be developed through consultation with key stakeholders and groups, which will ensure that the actions are relevant and support inclusion and engagement.
- 4.7. These actions will be embedded as part of annual service plans to ensure that equality, diversity and inclusion are integral to the work of the Council and the design and delivery of services.
- 4.8. The Scheme remains a broad strategic document and will be developed with the Council's Communications Team to address the feedback from the Group regarding the importance of graphical representation, language and accessibility.
- 4.9. Examples of priorities for action plans for 2021-22 to take account of live issues are:

- Health inequalities, considering an asset-based approach to health and wellbeing.
- The impact of COVID-19 on certain groups in terms of health, safety, housing and employment.
- Lessons and messages from the community regarding diversity issues.
- Recognising and respecting fluid identities.

4.10. An example list of projects and work delivered by the Council is included at Appendix 2. This highlights the work already undertaken and that which is ongoing to ensure that our services are accessible to all.

4.11. The Group had referred to the importance of monitoring progress against objectives. The focus on action planning will enable this to become more integrated within the Council's existing systems and processes. Equality Impact Assessments and monitoring of diversity information will continue to be reported annually to the Corporate Overview Group.

4.12. A key element of the scheme is to conduct meaningful consultation. It has not been possible to conduct this during the COVID-19 pandemic and it will be planned in as part of developing the action plan. This approach is good practice to ensure delivery of the Scheme is relevant and reflects the needs of those it is aiming to support.

5. 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', employees' and Councillors' needs and to ensure that equality considerations are at the heart of what the Council does.

6. Implications

6.1. Financial Implications

There are no financial implications.

6.2. Legal Implications

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

6.3. Equalities Implications

This is covered in the body of the report.

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

There are no S17 implications.

7. Link to Corporate Priorities

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.
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 COVID-19 recovery that start to come to the fore around the equalities agenda.

8. Recommendations

It is RECOMMENDED that the Communities Scrutiny Group note the report and support the proposed approach for the revised Equality Scheme for submission to Cabinet.

For more information contact:	Leanne Ashmore Executive Manager - Transformation 0115 914 8578 lashmore@rushcliffe.gov.uk
Background papers available for Inspection:	Agenda, reports and minutes of Community Scrutiny Group meeting held on 27 August 2020 Equality Scheme 2016-20
List of appendices:	Appendix 1 Draft Scheme Appendix 2 List of Projects