



Cabinet

Tuesday, 11 May 2021

Rushcliffe Equality Scheme 2021-2025

Report of the Director Development and Economic Growth

Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Community and the Environment Councillor A Brennan

1. Purpose of report

- 1.1. The Council has reviewed 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. The new Scheme was presented to the Communities Scrutiny Group in August 2020 and in January 2021. The Committee supported the refreshed Equality Scheme and supported its submission to Cabinet for approval.
- 1.3. This report includes the new Equality Scheme 2021–2025, as at Appendix 1, as well as the results of the public consultation carried out in March and April 2021.

2. Recommendation

It is RECOMMENDED that Cabinet approves the Equality Scheme 2021–2025 and supporting Action Plan for 2021/22.

3. Reasons for Recommendation

- 3.1. The existing Equality Scheme ran to the end of 2020, and therefore needed to be reviewed and updated to reflect current circumstances and new 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 and the Council's employees are treated equally.
- 3.3. The views expressed by the Communities Scrutiny Group have been taken into account to further inform the Equality Scheme. The Action Plan consultation document was developed following the scrutiny meetings and the responses received have informed the Plan, which will continually evolve and develop.

4. Supporting Information

- 4.1. The refreshed Equality Scheme keeps its focus at a strategic level, setting out the vision and aims of the Council over the next four years (Appendix 1). It has been revised to better reflect inclusion for all and is therefore broader than focusing just on equality and diversity related to the protected characteristics.
- 4.2. This strategic approach is underpinned by the Council's Equality and Diversity Policy and Equality Impact Assessments (Appendix 3), which ensure that our policies and decisions have been taken with due regard to their implications for people with protected characteristics.
- 4.3. In support of the Scheme, annual Action Plans will be developed to progress against these strategic aims. The outcomes delivered against the 2021/22 Action Plan will be presented to Scrutiny and future Actions Plans will be discussed with the relevant Portfolio Holder before being adopted.
- 4.4. These actions will be embedded as part of the annual service plans (these set out the Council's objectives and projects each year) to ensure that equality, diversity and inclusion are integral to the work of the Council and the design and delivery of services.
- 4.5. The Communities Scrutiny Group 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 (Appendix 4 is the latest report taken to Corporate Overview Group).

Consultation

- 4.6. Following the Communities Scrutiny Group meeting in January 2021, officers carried out public consultation on the draft action plan (Appendix 2) to get views on whether people felt the proposed actions were focussed on the right things and if there was anything missing. The Action Plan was intended to gain views on the key areas of focus rather than covering everything the Borough Council does in detail.
- 4.7. The consultation was shared in Councillors Connections, on the website and social media. In addition, a direct email was sent to around 90 key local stakeholders including Parish/Town Councils, local community groups, and representative organisations. The consultation ran from 26 March to 23 April 2021, and 11 responses were received.
- 4.8. The questions asked whether respondents agreed with the proposed actions under each theme and whether they had any additional comments or actions they felt should be included. Of those that responded, the majority agreed that the themes were the right ones and so were the actions to support them.

4.9. The feedback received covered areas such as:

- The need for more engagement with young people and particularly those that are or are at risk of being not in education, employment or training (NEET).
- Involving more young people in democracy.
- Ongoing staff training to support delivery of the actions and ensure the plan is embedded across the Council.
- Access to interpreters when contacting the Council.
- Review website to make sure it is in 'plain English'.
- Making sure that actions are delivered and demonstrating to the community what has been done – ensuring this is the start of a regular and ongoing conversation that is transparent.
- The need for County Council and Borough Council to work together on initiatives.

4.10. The draft Action Plan (Appendix 1) has been updated in response to the consultation.

4.11. There were some comments received in the response to the consultation which are not related to the Borough Council and these will be passed on to other organisations where relevant.

5. Alternative options considered and reasons for rejection

5.1. The refreshed Equality Scheme takes a different approach to the previous Scheme and allows for the Action Plan to be reviewed and refreshed on an annual basis, ensuring it remains relevant and responsive. The Action Plan will also be further developed and enhanced through ongoing consultation and engagement with the Rushcliffe Community Cohesion Network.

5.2. The alternative is to have a Scheme like the previous version, which once published remains the same for the period and therefore loses the opportunity to be flexible.

6. 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.

7. Implications

7.1. Financial Implications

There are no financial implications.

7.2. Legal Implications

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

7.3. Equalities Implications

This is covered in the body of the report.

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

There are no Section 17 Implications.

8. 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 equality's agenda.

9. Recommendation

It is RECOMMENDED that Cabinet approves the Equality Scheme 2021-2025 and supporting Action Plan 2021/22.

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Background papers available for Inspection:	Communities Scrutiny Group – August 2020 Communities Scrutiny Group – January 2021
List of appendices:	Appendix 1 – Draft Equality Scheme and Action Plan Appendix 2 – Consultation document Appendix 3 – Council's Equality Impact Assessment Appendix 4 – Report to Corporate Overview Group December 2020