

Portfolio	Corporate
Ward(s) Affected	All

**Purpose**

**To update Members on the work undertaken in 2014/15 to meet the Equality Act 2010 and the Council's Equality Strategy.**

Background

1. The Council has continued to work to meet the legislative requirements of the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED), with our programme of Equality Impact Assessments and implemented recommendations from the Equality Strategy Action Plan which has also been updated and is attached as Annex A. An explanation of the Equality Act is contained in Annex B.

Current Position

2. The Council is still following the requirements to publish sufficient information to demonstrate our compliance with the General Equality Duty and specific duties across our functions. The Council does this by undertaking Equality Impact Assessments demonstrating analysis of the effect that the Council's policies and practices have had on people from equality/protected groups and publishing these on the Council's Equality and Diversity web pages.

Equality Strategy Action Plan

3. The actions completed from the Equality Strategy Action Plan (see Annex A) in 2014/15 include:
  - Officer and Member dementia awareness training undertaken;
  - The opening of the Wellbeing (Dementia) Centre and development of the Memory Garden;
  - The establishment of the Saturday Club at Windle Valley Centre for carers and the cared for with dementia;
  - Capital works have been progressed to make improvements to the gypsy/traveller sites;
  - The appointment of an internal voluntary minority ethnic group staff representative;
  - The appointment of two internal voluntary staff disability mentors; and
  - The review of four Equality Impact Assessments by the Officer Working Group as set out below.

Equality Impact Assessments

4. The programme of Equality Impact Assessments has been undertaken in 2014/15. Four internal policies have been completed including reviewing the

Family Friendly Policy, Flexible Working Policy, Offsite Working Policy and Drugs and Alcohol Policy.

### Disability Two Ticks

5. Surrey Heath Borough Council has recently been recognised as a disability positive employer. Jobcentre Plus has accepted the Council's application to be a 'Two Ticks: Positive About Disability' symbol holder.
6. As an accredited organisation, the Council is required to implement and annually review practices that meet the scheme's five commitments in relation to recruitment, employment, retention and career development of people with a disability. The commitments are:
  - To interview all disabled applicants who meet the minimum criteria for a job vacancy and consider them on their abilities.
  - To ensure there is a mechanism in place to discuss, at any time, but at least once a year, with disabled employees what they can do to make sure they can develop and use their abilities.
  - To make every effort when employees become disabled to make sure they stay in employment.
  - To take action to ensure that all employees develop the appropriate level of disability awareness needed to make this commitment work.
  - To annually review the five commitments and what has been achieved.

### Older Nepalese

7. Surrey Heath has a significant number of retired Ghurkha soldiers and their families living in the borough and about 250 of those are over 60 year olds. In 2013/14 the Council worked with Camberley Adult Education Centre to set up English language lessons. Funding for the lessons was secured from the Government's Ghurkha Resettlement Fund to support the integration of retired Ghurkha soldiers and their dependants settling in the UK. The English language lessons are now embedded in the Camberley Adult Education Programme at the France Hill Centre. The lessons also have a practical element to assist the older people with communication skills to for example, do their shopping or make a doctor's appointment.

### Surrey Heath Faith Forum

8. The second Surrey Heath Faith Lunch was held on 23 September 2013 at High Cross Church Camberley. The aim was to encourage different faith groups in Surrey Heath to work together and strengthen inter faith relationships. The next lunch is being planned by Surrey Police, Churches Together in Camberley, and Surrey Faith Links. There was no lunch held in 2014.

### Dementia

9. The Council is working closely with Surrey County Council (Adult Social Care) and the Surrey Heath Clinical Commissioning Group with respect to dementia. In February 2014, a number of members of staff attended a dementia cascade course. This provided them with information which they can pass onto colleagues. Also several members of staff and elected members are dementia friends and some have become dementia champions. The wellbeing centre opened in Bagshot late last year which is being used by a number of partners including the Alzheimers Society; Carers Support; and song for life (singing for carers and the cared for with dementia). The Saturday club at the Windle Valley continues to grow with a good mix of carers and the cared for with dementia. The Council is currently funding a befriending pilot in Heatherside to provide help and friendship to people who have recently being diagnosed with dementia.

### Gypsies and Travellers

10. The Council manages two permanent traveller sites for Surrey County Council under an agency agreement. One site is located in Bagshot and the other is in Chobham with each having 15 pitches. The site in Chobham is about to undergo major refurbishment which should create one additional pitch. This is subject to planning permission. The old electricity meters on the Bagshot site which operate using prepayment cards purchased from the post office are being replaced by new meters connected directly to the supplier.

### Options

11. Members are asked to note the update on the work in 2014/15 to meet the Equality Act 2010 and the Council's Equality Strategy.

### Proposal

12. That members note the update on the work in 2014/15 to meet the Equality Act 2010 and the Council's Equality Strategy.

### Resource Implications

13. The resource to continue improvement of equality practice at the Council has been reduced but limited on-going work is being achieved within existing staff resources and through work with partners.

### Recommendation

14. That members note the update on the work in 2014/15 to meet the Equality Act 2010 and the Council's Equality Strategy and Action Plan.

Background Papers:

Nil

Annexes:

Annex A Equality Strategy Action Plan  
Annex B The Equality Act Explained

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