

Surrey Heath Borough Council
Executive
16 January 2024

Achieving Equity Strategy 2024-2027

Portfolio Holder:	Inclusion & Housing Cllr Lisa Finan-Cooke
Strategic Director/Head of Service	Sally Kipping – Head of HR, Performance & Communications
Report Author:	Renée France – Community Development Manager
PH Sign off:	Yes
Key Decision:	No
Wards Affected:	All

Summary and purpose

The Council's Equality Strategy 2021-2023 has been reviewed and the new Achieving Equity Strategy 2024-2027 has been developed and is presented here for approval and adoption by the Executive

Recommendation

The Executive is advised to RESOLVE that the Achieving Equity Strategy, as set out at Annex A to this report, be adopted by the Council and that officers now proceed to undertake a baseline assessment and develop an action plan which will be included as part of the Council's Annual Plan for 2024-25.

1. Background and Supporting Information

- 1.1. The Council's existing [Equality Strategy 2021-2023](#) sets out its commitment to embed equality and diversity in employment practices, services of the council and work with partners to set equality objectives.
- 1.2. As part of the Annual Plan 2023-2024, the Equality Strategy has been refreshed to reflect the data available in the census published earlier in the year and to reflect the aspirations of the new administration.
- 1.3. The Strategy has been reviewed and updated to set out how the Council intends to meet and exceed the legal framework of the Equality Act 2010 and the additional Public Sector Equality Duty.

- 1.4. The Achieving Equity Strategy 2024-2027 has been developed in consultation with a diverse group of community partners through the new 'Achieving Equity Forum' which aims to meet quarterly to engage with the community around Equity issues. In addition, the strategy has been reviewed with the Joint Staff Consultative Committee and the Engaging Communities Working Group.
- 1.5. It should be noted that whilst the Achieving Equity Strategy refers to staff, it is primarily focused on the approach to residents and therefore has come to the Executive rather than the Employment Committee. However, staff have been consulted at the Joint Staff Consultative Committee.

2. Achieving Equity Strategy

2.1 The Achieving Equity Strategy (see Appendix 1) sets out the case for meeting and exceeding the Equality Act 2010 and related Public Sector Equality Duty. The Strategy aims to achieve equity rather than equality, recognising that some people and groups of people can encounter barriers to accessing sources or opportunities and seeks to understand and then work to remove those barriers

2.2 There is therefore an understanding:

- That barriers to opportunities and resources exist for some people due to their personal characteristics.
- That many people experience 'intersectionality' that is that they may encounter more barriers than others because they experience more than one protected characteristic.
- That the Council aims to remove these barriers in the delivery of services and improve accessibility to services and communications
- That some people experience barriers to opportunities from personal characteristics not specifically identified within the Equality Act 2010, and the Council, where possible, seeks to address those barriers.
- That everyone has their own unique experiences of encountering barriers to resources and opportunities and that the Council aims to understand those and take into consideration those factors that evidence indicates are marginalising.
- The essential part that the voluntary sector plays in moving towards equity and the role of the Council in enabling that sector. We will continue to support volunteering and the voluntary sector through the provision of resources and opportunities.

3. Proposal and Alternative Options

3.1. The Executive has the option to:

- i) Agree the revised Strategy and officers to move forward with completing a baseline assessment which will enable the development of an action plan, the key actions of this to be included in the Council's Action Plan for 2024/25

- ii) Maintain the current Strategy.
- iii) Not to agree the Strategy as it stands and to make revisions to the strategy

4. Contribution to the Council's Five-Year Strategy

4.1. Health and Quality of Life:

4.1.1. Nurturing a strong sense of community across the whole borough lies at the core of the services that the Council provides to its residents fostering a sense of respect and consideration.

4.1.2. We will take a positive approach to supporting all sectors of our community, including those who are most vulnerable. We will promote active and healthy lives for all and a rich programme of cultural and community events.

4.2. Responsive Council:

4.2.1 Surrey Heath Borough Council engages meaningfully with our community on all key policies.

4.2.2 We provide accessible services for all to meet the needs of the diverse communities we serve.

5. Resource Implications

5.1. There will be resourcing considerations when developing the action plan these are expected to be covered within existing resources across the council.

6. Section 151 Officer Comments:

7. Legal and Governance Issues

7.1. No matters arising.

8. Monitoring Officer Comments

8.1 No matters arising

9. Other Considerations and Impacts

Environment and Climate Change

9.1. No matters arising.

Equalities and Human Rights

9.2. The Council must meet the framework set out in the Equality Strategy 2010 and the Public Sector Equality Duty.

Risk Management

9.3. No matters arising.

Community Engagement

9.4. No matters arising.

Annexes

Annex A - Achieving Equity Strategy (Draft) 2024-27