



# IPSWICH

## BOROUGH COUNCIL

### **Ipswich Borough Council Comprehensive Equality and Diversity Policy**

July 2010

***Committee: Full Council  
Responsible Officer: Russell Williams***

***Date of Next Review – July 2016***

*I.B.C Comprehensive Equality and Diversity Policy*

*July 2010*

## Our Commitment

Ipswich Borough council is committed to taking effective action to eliminate discrimination and to promote equality of opportunity and diversity in all that it does as an employer, a service provider and as a community leader. We believe that all people are entitled to be treated with dignity and respect and we are determined to ensure that both our employees and everyone entitled to use our services receives fair and equitable treatment.

We are committed to working with our partners and communities to promote good relations and to combat prejudice, discrimination and harassment. We will therefore champion equality, diversity, community cohesion and human rights under all nine of the following equality strands:

- . Race
- . Sex
- . Disability
- . Sexual Orientation
- . Religion or Belief
- . Age
- . Gender Reassignment
- . Marriage and Civil Partnership
- . Pregnancy and Maternity

## Scope Of This Policy

This policy applies to all of the Council's functions and activities:

- The provision of services
- The commissioning and purchasing of goods and services
- Recruitment, employment, training and development of staff
- Grants to voluntary and community organisations
- Landlord functions in respect of housing and other property
- Exercising of statutory powers and responsibilities
- How we work in partnerships with other organisations
- Community involvement and consultation

## Underlying Principles

We will work to the following principles:

- **To promote and comply with all legislative requirements with regard to equality and diversity and ensure they are communicated to the workforce to ensure full compliance and consistency of approach.**

The Council recognises that this is a specific area of law that has grown significantly in recent years and continues to do so. It is

therefore committed to ensuring it remains abreast of all legal developments and to sharing this learning within the organisation.

- + **To recognise that our community is made up of people with different cultures, beliefs and experiences which bring a rich diversity to the town.**  
That these differences should not be lost by merging everyone together and treating everyone the same – this is not equality. To promote respect and mutual tolerance so that these differences can flourish and strengthen the diversity of our town.
- + **To eliminate discrimination by adopting an anti-discrimination culture, and to promote equality of opportunity and good relations between people of different and diverse communities**
- + **To engage with the local community through communication and consultation to ensure that our services are accessible to all people, free from prejudice and discrimination and are sensitive to the needs of the community.**  
Further that our participation and engagement strategies encourage representation from all groups including those who may normally feel excluded from the decision-making process.
- + **To improve our equalities practice at corporate, departmental and individual levels throughout the council through instruction and training and encourage a positive and inclusive workplace culture that values all employees equally.**
- + **To work with partner organisations including the voluntary/community sector to share resources and to ensure that equality and diversity issues are fully taken into account when developing strategies and plans.**
- + **To encourage all of the organisations from which we procure and purchase services to express their commitment to equality and diversity and to comply with the spirit and intention of this policy.**
- + **To demonstrate leadership and direction by providing a platform to improve equality outcomes both internally and within the community.**
- + **To be aware of and adopt (as appropriate) recognised/formal equality standards and programmes designed to improve best practice such as the Equalities Framework for Local Government (introduced by the Improvement and Development Agency)**

## **Service Delivery Aims**

### **As a service provider the Council will:**

- Ensure that service users are treated with dignity, respect and fairness and have equal access to all the Council Services.
- Ensure that services are relevant and responsive to the changing needs of our local community and are delivered without discrimination, prejudice or bias.
- Endeavour to ensure that our buildings and services are accessible to all, especially to individuals or groups who feel disadvantaged or face discrimination.
- Provide clear and understandable information about our services and policies and endeavour to make these available in more accessible formats where service users need this. In addition to try ensure that our services - both face-to-face and written - can be made available to those service users whose first language is not English in a manner in which they understand. There are separate corporate Translation Guidance notes covering this.
- Require external contractors and partners delivering services on the Council's behalf to comply with the requirements of the law, to express their commitment to equality and diversity and to comply with the spirit and intention of this policy.

## **Employment Delivery Aims**

### **As an employer the Council will:**

- Aim for a workforce that is representative of the community it serves – across all levels and grades. By ensuring there are no barriers to progression or positions and by employing the best person for the job the Council will aim to reflect the strength of diversity in the Borough.
- Aim to ensure that jobs within the council are accessible to all members of the community, and that our recruitment policies and practices do not deter applications nor discriminate in any way against applicants in any particular equalities group.

- Aim to create a working environment that is inclusive and free of discrimination, and that encourages its employees to respect each others' values, beliefs, identities and cultures.
- Undertake monitoring of major employment policies and practices for example training, promotion, remuneration, grievance, disciplinary and capability to ensure there is equality and fairness in terms of access **to** and application **of** these procedures, and generally to the application of all terms and conditions.
- Provide equalities information, advice, training and support to employees appropriate to the needs of their job to ensure equality and diversity is mainstreamed into the culture of the organisation and into the services it provides.
- Ensure that employees are made aware of the Bullying and Harassment Policy and reporting and support mechanisms.
- Promote the adoption of equipment, facilities and work practices that ensure all employees have the ability to develop their full potential.

## **How we are organised to deliver Equality and Diversity**

### **Councillors**

Elected members of the Council have overall responsibility for this policy. The Portfolio Holder for Health & Well-being – which includes the equality and diversity remit – chairs the Equality & Diversity Steering Group.

### **Equality and Diversity Steering Group**

The corporate steering group meets to co-ordinate, review and lead on equality and diversity issues and initiatives across the organisation. It is made up of a Director, a Trade Union Official, an elected Councillor and a Legal Services representative together with representatives from all of the Heads of Service groupings to ensure representation across the Council.

### **Corporate Management Team**

Provides overall leadership on all equality and diversity issues.

### **Human Resources**

The Human Resources team will coordinate relevant workforce equalities monitoring and review procedures, and also the provision of various types of training from induction and general awareness training through to specialist training.

### **Employees**

Have an integral part in making the policy effective in all aspects of their work and ensuring that they report any discrimination to a relevant manager so that appropriate action can be taken.

## **Trade Unions**

Unison has self-organised group structures that cover all the strands of equality and diversity and is therefore able to support and/or signpost its members on most issues that will arise at the Council. In addition the Branch Secretary for Unison is a member of the Council's Equality and Diversity Steering Group and embraces the joint working opportunities this gives rise to.

## **How We Will Deliver Equality and Diversity**

### **Communicate our policies and commitment to employees**

Ensure this Comprehensive Equality and Diversity policy is circulated and communicated to all existing employees and to all new employees (via induction) Ensure all other equalities-related policies and schemes are available to employees for example Bullying and Harassment Policy, Corporate Equality schemes for example through the Intranet etc.

### **Communicate our policies and commitment to service users and the public**

Ensure the Council's equality policies and schemes are made available to the public on the Council's internet site, and that we will try to make them available in another format or language if required in accordance with the corporate Translation Guide.

### **Train our employees and councillors with regard to equality and diversity**

- Ensure that training is available to employees which is relevant to the equalities aspects of their job in order to mainstream equality and diversity across the organisation. For example:
  - giving due regard to equalities aspects in recruitment and selection training,
  - making new employees aware of the Council's and their own responsibilities during induction,
  - providing equality and diversity awareness training,
  - providing specialist/specific training for example for equality impact assessments.
- Ensure Councillors have access to training materials and receive specific briefings as necessary

We will complement formal training with additional briefings and communications to raise the profile and awareness surrounding equality and diversity issues, best practice and legislation.

**Carry out assessments of all our strategies, policies and functions to prevent, where possible, any negative impact on anyone in the equality strands**

The Council will ensure that a programme of equality impact assessments are carried out across all strategies, policies and services to ascertain whether there could be any negative impact on anyone in any of the 9 equality strands and that where discovered this is mitigated wherever possible. The assessments will be part of mainstream service planning and provision for all new strategies, policies and functions too.

**Monitor our workforce and service users**

Gather monitoring data in order to review the equalities profile of the workforce to assess whether it is representative of the community it serves, and to monitor the application of all of its terms and conditions. Assist managers to monitor the profile of their service users to ascertain whether their service is accessible to all sections of the community and appropriate to their needs.

**Consult with our service users and workforce**

The Council undertakes a variety of consultation exercises with its service users to gain information on an array of topics and the information is used to formulate council priorities and improve services. The Council encourages positive engagement through its' forums and partnerships with local community groups and other organisations. The corporate Consultation Strategy forms the framework within which this takes place. In addition consultation with various groups and service users will take place as necessary in order to carry out effective equality impact assessments.

Consultation with the workforce takes place through employee questionnaires and periodic focus groups on specific topics as necessary.

**Deliver equality and diversity action plans and schemes**

The Council will produce and review equality schemes as required in law, for example: Race Equality Scheme, Disability Equality Scheme and Gender Equality Scheme. It will also implement and review various equality action plans as necessary through the Equality and Diversity Steering Group for example to address issues that may be identified through equalities monitoring procedures.

**Ensure strong community development and cohesion**

The Council has a strong Community Development Unit who support, strengthen and engage with our local community in accordance with the Community Cohesion Policy. Ipswich is a multi-cultural centre, with more than 60 languages spoken. We want to work together with our partners to develop a culture of community participation and engagement and to achieve community cohesion. We will strengthen community cohesion by:

- Encouraging a clearly defined and widely shared sense of the contribution of different individuals and different communities to a future vision for our neighbourhoods and Town.

- Encouraging strong and positive relationships between people from different backgrounds
- Ensuring people know their rights and responsibilities,
- Encouraging trust between individuals and their local institutions
- Endeavouring to ensure that people enjoy similar life opportunities.

### **Promote equality and diversity events**

The Council will support events which promote the nine main equality strands and provide a framework for engaging different individuals, groups, partners and communities for example:

- Black History Month
- LGBT History Month (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transsexual)
- Holocaust Memorial Day
- International Women's Day

**Progress through the Equality Framework for Local Government** The Equality Framework is a national framework established in 2001 by the Improvement and Development Agency (IDEA) to help Local Authorities comply with their legal equalities responsibilities as well as helping to ensure best practice. It incorporates various criteria which Council's should meet in order to progress through the various levels of the framework and which will help them to mainstream equality into service delivery and employment. The Council will endeavour to progress through the framework to improve its' equalities performance and adopt best practice.

### **Deal with formal complaints regarding equality and diversity**

We will investigate promptly all complaints of harassment, discrimination or victimisation by employees through the Bullying and Harassment policy, and all such complaints made by the public through the Council's corporate complaints procedure.

### **Review this Policy**

We will review our practices to ensure that we follow our principles and achieve our objects and priorities in line with this policy. The Equality and Diversity Steering Group will review this policy every three years.