

# Equality Strategy

2020-2024



“Committed to promoting equality and to help bring about an inclusive society”

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## Appendix A – Action Plan

# 1. Introduction

Welcome to the West Lindsey District Council's Equality Strategy 2020 – 2024.

This Strategy is one of our key policy documents, which contains important information about the work of the Council in meeting its equality and diversity commitments with regards to our equality duties. It forms a major part of our work to truly develop an inclusive society for the communities of West Lindsey.

This Equality Strategy makes a clear corporate commitment to taking forward actions that will enable West Lindsey District Council to achieve our aspirations for a truly diverse society.

This document will ensure that all new and existing equality legislation is placed at the centre of the council's community leadership service delivery and employment practices, and become an integral part of the way in which the council works. We want West Lindsey to be a place where no-one experiences discrimination or is disadvantaged because of race, nationality, ethnic or national origin, religion or belief, gender, marital status, sexuality, gender expression/gender identity, disability, or age.

As a Council we are committed to promoting equality and to help bring about an inclusive society, where no one is marginalised through personal circumstances and where everyone is offered the best opportunity to realise their potential. The strategy will help us find ways to combat discrimination and thereby enable everyone, from all sections of our community, to participate in social, cultural and economic life.

We have a responsibility to provide community leadership within the District of West Lindsey and will use this role to promote equality and community cohesion as well as sharing ideas and good practice with our partners and other service providers.

The overall aim of the Strategy is to build equalities into all of our processes and systems to ensure that equality work is effectively mainstreamed into our policies and service delivery.

## 2. National and local context

### National drivers

As a local authority the Council has a responsibility to meet the Equality Duty which is set by law as part of the Equality Act 2010. The duty gives protection for all persons who might be discriminated against because of their age, race, sex, gender reassignment, disability, sexual orientation, religion or belief, pregnancy and maternity and marriage and civil partnership. These 9 areas of protection are called the protected characteristics.

The duty requires us have **due regard** to the need to:

- **Eliminate unlawful discrimination**, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act.
- **Advance equality of opportunity** between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not
- **Foster good relations** between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

The specific duties placed on public bodies are to:

- Publish information to show our compliance with the Equality Duty – including information relating to employees who share protected characteristics and information relating to our service users
- Set and publish equality objectives, at least every four years

As well as the Equality Act 2010, the council is subject to the provisions of the Human Rights Act 1998 which sets out a framework for the basic rights and freedoms that belong to every person from birth to death. The rights defined in this act and international law are:

- Right to life
- Freedom from torture and inhuman or degrading treatment
- Freedom from slavery and forced labour
- Right to liberty and security
- Right to a fair trial
- No punishment without law (under which people's rights can be restricted if they break the law)
- Respect for private and family life, home and correspondence
- Freedom of thought, belief and religion
- Freedom of expression
- Freedom of assembly and association
- Right to marry and start a family
- Protection from discrimination in respect of these rights and freedoms
- Right to peaceful enjoyment of property
- Right to education
- Right to participate in free elections

## Local context

Understanding the key issues and challenges for our district has provided a sense of purpose for all that the council intends to do over the lifespan of this document from 2020 until 2024 and beyond. We have determined what our vision should be. We have questioned what success would look like, which enables us to succinctly communicate the council's ambition to residents, stakeholders, government and the private sector. We now have clear priorities and delivery programmes.

The Corporate Plan sets out the strategic objectives of the Council for 2020 until 2024. It reflects the opportunities and challenges facing the district and what our residents have told us is important to them. We also express our desired outcomes for the next four years, which will provide our officers with clear direction. It is our aim to ensure that attention is paid to all of our communities, residents and businesses; lives are improved and our district prospers.

The Plan is a strategic document, which is supported by our Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) and the annual Executive Business Plan (EBP). The EBP sets out the environment in which the Council will deliver the objectives set out in the Corporate Plan. It will consider the national, regional and local context for delivery and identifies the 'deliverables' for the next three years.

In order to deliver against this vision, the Council will focus on three themes as illustrated below:



The vision is complemented by a set of values that cut across the whole organisation and we make our values real by demonstrating them in how we behave every day. Our values are:

- Customers First
- One Council
- Business Smart
- Communicating Effectively
- Integrity in Everything

Our values are central to achieving our vision and delivering outcomes for the district which are detailed in our corporate plan, and our behaviours framework is integral to both.

Our vision and values were reviewed by the council in 2018 and staff from across the whole council and members were involved in shaping them.

### 3. Equality Objectives

Our Equality Objectives for the next 4 years are:

#### Objective 1

Review Corporate Plan and Equality objectives to ensure links are clear and objectives are evidence based

#### Objective 2

Ensure that all our staff, elected members and volunteers are aware of our responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010 and the Public Sector Equality Duty

#### Objective 3

Engage our communities to participate in the determination of our priorities and decision making

#### Objective 4

Ensure we are transparent in decision making

Information on our progress against these objectives can be found in our latest Equality Statement.

This can be found at:

<https://www.west-lindsey.gov.uk/my-council/how-the-council-works/key-plans-policies-and-strategies/equality-and-diversity/>

### 4. West Lindsey and the protected characteristics

West Lindsey District Council is committed to promoting equality and inclusion for all our citizens. As such we have developed this Equality Strategy which encompasses all of the nine protected characteristics.

- Age
- Race
- Sex
- Gender reassignment
- Disability
- Sexual orientation
- Religion or belief
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Marriage and Civil Partnership

#### **Gender reassignment, Sex, Sexual Orientation, pregnancy and maternity, Age Equality and marriage and civil partnerships**

West Lindsey District Council acknowledges that some people in our society are discriminated against because of their gender, their sex or sexuality, during pregnancy and maternity, due to their marriage or civil partnership and/or their age. It is clear that this discrimination may result in them being denied fair and equal access to services and employment opportunities.

Lincolnshire Police have the Stop Hate UK initiative to provide reporting of hate crime. This initiative is committed to promoting understanding and awareness of these issues.

We will continue to develop policies and procedures that meet the requirements of the Equality Act 2006 and in particular we will:

- Carry out annual staff surveys to better understand the experiences of our workforce and take action to address any inequality or discrimination.
- Ensure that men and women from all groups within the community feel effectively engaged in decision making.
- Establish whether men or women are underrepresented in using our services and where established take positive action to improve this imbalance.
- Continue the child care voucher scheme within a framework of family friendly policies.
- Continue to recognise the needs of carers and support appropriate work arrangements to allow them to work effectively.
- Provide training for staff to equip them with the necessary skills to fulfil these requirements and provide advice and guidance.
- Deal promptly and systematically to any complaints of harassment.
- Work with our partners to make communities safer and enable lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people to live without fear or prejudice.
- Encourage a culture of openness about sexual orientation to ensure all employees have a safe and supportive environment in which to work.

## **People with Disabilities**

There are many types of disability and discrimination against people with disabilities can take many forms. Disability can be a social constraint where disabled people are prevented from participating in a full and active life because of the social, economic, environmental and physical barriers they face. And it can be the attitudes of individuals and institutions and organisations that can actually inhibit disabled people actively participating in society.

West Lindsey District Council will work to remove these barriers whenever possible and we will ensure that disability issues are understood, provided and taken into account when designing and reviewing strategies, policies and service delivery systems.

We will continue to develop policies and procedures that meet the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act 2005 and in particular we will:

- Seek the views of disabled people and our employees to ensure, where practical, the Council adequately meets the needs of our disabled citizens.
- Make it easy for everyone to use our services and buildings.
- Ensure all information provided is easy to use and understand.
- Train our staff to understand the issues faced by disabled people.
- Undertake impact assessments on existing and proposed policies to establish whether there is a negative or positive impact and take action to minimise any negative effect.



- Endeavour to establish whether disabled people are under-represented in using our services and where established, take positive action to improve this imbalance.
- Under the 'One Council' programme use the competency framework to create a better understanding of disability and allow staff to be able to challenge effectively.
- Deal promptly and systematically with any complaints, incidents or harassment.

## Race Equality

West Lindsey District Council recognises that people may be discriminated against because of their colour, race, ethnicity or nationality and gender. We are committed to challenging all forms of racial discrimination and we will continue to develop policies and procedures to give people from minority ethnic groups fair and equal access to employment and Council services.

We will seek the views of minority ethnic groups, where appropriate, to identify groups in service provision or employment and we will take all reasonable steps to overcome barriers identified. We will also work with our partner agencies and contractors to provide racial equality across our communities and to ensure ethnic minority requirements are taken into account in developing strategies and policies.

We all continue to develop policies and procedures that meet the requirements of the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 in particular we will:

- Continue to monitor our services to establish whether any racial groups are under-represented and where necessary take positive action to improve this imbalance.
- Undertake impact assessments on existing and proposed policies to establish whether there is a negative or positive impact on affected groups. Where there is a negative impact we will take action to minimise the effect.
- Continue to provide a translation service for our customers and produce key council information where appropriate in different languages.
- Set targets and establish appropriate Human Resources policies so that our workforce more accurately reflects the make up of our local community.
- Provide training for staff to equip them in the necessary skills to fulfil these requirements and provide advice and guidance.
- Deal promptly and systematically, according to agreed procedures with any racial incidents or complaints.
- Continue to commit support to the initiative Stop Hate UK on the reporting of racial crime.
- Assess the accommodation and other needs of gypsies and travellers and provide appropriate support to meet these needs.

## Religion or belief

Hatred, and particularly religious hatred, in all forms, is not something that should be tolerated in our society. Whilst there have been instances of hatred appallingly directed at several religions and beliefs, worryingly there is an upward national trend in anti-Semitic hatred that must not be tolerated.



The United Nations Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief recently released a report which agreed that the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) Working Definition of Antisemitism can offer valuable guidance for identifying antisemitism in its various forms.

The IHRA definition is as follows:

“Antisemitism is a certain perception of Jews, which may be expressed as hatred toward Jews. Rhetorical and physical manifestations of antisemitism are directed toward Jewish or non-Jewish individuals and/or their property, toward Jewish community institutions and religious facilities”.

WLDC fully endorses this definition and will use it to address any issue arising out of antisemitism.

## **5. Workforce Responsibilities**

The Council recognises that as well as monitoring the diverse needs of our communities across the district we also need to monitor progress in the way we deliver services to ensure effective outcomes and that our practices are free from discrimination.

The Council’s performance management framework places responsibility on Managers to consider equalities in the development of their Business Plans. This Scheme requires additional responsibilities on service areas to monitor information about who uses their service, satisfaction levels across groups and to identify any barriers to the take up of services which can be addressed by the Council.

## **6. Equality Impact Assessments**

The Equality Duty requires public bodies to consider how the decisions they make and the services they deliver affect people who share different protected characteristics.

We have a process of analysis which looks at the equality impact for our policies and procedures and has been undertaken for many years. Analysis begins prior to the introduction of, or change to, any policy or procedure. Officers assess at this very early stage the impact our decisions could have on the people we serve. We look for both positive and potential negative outcomes relating to the introduction of policies. If negatives are highlighted we look to remove them if possible and mitigate their impact if they remain.

We recognise that the impact our policies and procedures have on people is not always defined because of a single protected characteristic. The need to look at a person as a whole, rather than component parts, is imperative when applying fairness to systems and decision making.

Equality Impact Assessments are taken into account throughout our committee processes by our Members to ensure that their decisions are fair and equitable for the diverse communities they have been elected to serve.

## 7. Access to Services and Information

The Council is committed to ensuring that all sections of the community have access to information about council services and access to the full range of services.

The Council has also implemented creative ways for reaching its local communities to ensure that information about council services is widely distributed and understood. These include:

- The Council's website, which offers residents a wide range of information about how to access council services and the local democratic process.
- The Customer Services Centre located at the Guildhall, Gainsborough, is the council's main enquiry service, where experienced customer care professionals are available to offer residents assistance with their queries.
- A Language Line facility for members of the community who have a language need.
- Field Officers which offer an outreach service to vulnerable residents.

To see the full range of services available visit [www.west-lindsey.gov.uk](http://www.west-lindsey.gov.uk).

Most members of the public, who make contact with the Council, do so by making a telephone call. The Council promotes good practice in handling telephone contact. In addition to the telephone, access is available in a number of ways including face-to-face, visiting buildings, by letter, email, and using the Internet. We will also explore people's preferred method of contact with the Council on service matters and seek to identify and overcome barriers to access to services and information.

## 8. Training and Communication

The Council acknowledges that equality and diversity for staff is critical to ensuring all employees have an adequate understanding of our equality duties and that they are enabled to share the responsibility of promoting all aspects of equality both within the Council and with our external customers.

To ensure that our staff are aware of the Equality Act 2010 and their requirements, all staff will receive awareness training and if they are required to develop any policies then they will also undertake EIA training.

## 9. Strategy Review

This strategy will be reviewed and updated every 4 years to ensure that it stays relevant to the current provision and need for equalities at WLDC. In addition to the strategy review every 4 years the protected characteristics will be reviewed as and when any changes in the legislation occur and will be communicated out to all staff. A yearly update on the action plan will be reported to Management Team.

## 10. Contacts

For further information please contact a member of the Engagement Team.

E-mail: [engagement@west-lindsey.gov.uk](mailto:engagement@west-lindsey.gov.uk)

or visit our website at: [www.west-lindsey.gov.uk/equalities](http://www.west-lindsey.gov.uk/equalities)

## Appendix A – Action Plan

Key Outcome	Actions Required	Performance Measures	Target Date	Lead Officer
<b>E1</b>	Update of internal equalities page for staff	Minerva equalities page updated	June 2020	Corporate Governance Officer
<b>E2</b>	Update of external equalities webpage	Website equalities page updated	June 2020	Corporate Governance Officer
<b>E3</b>	Update of Equalities Statement	Equalities Statement published on website	July 2020	Corporate Governance Officer
<b>E4</b>	Awareness raising of equalities for all staff through Learning Platform	100% of staff achieved	September 2020	Corporate Governance Officer
<b>E5</b>	Raise awareness of internal equalities page through use of Minerva and staff TVs	Information available to through different sources for all staff	September 2020	Corporate Governance Officer
<b>E6</b>	Equality Impact Assessment Training for all Team Managers through Learning Platform	100% of team managers achieved	December 2020	Corporate Governance Officer