



Progress in delivering Equalities across BCP

2021



Foreword

“BCP Council plays an important role as an employer, service provider and community leader.

“We are committed to demonstrating respect for difference, working proactively to eliminate discrimination, advancing equality of opportunity for all and building positive relationships and understanding between people of different backgrounds who live, work or visit the communities that we serve.

“Our aim is to exceed our duties under equality legislation and in doing so establish a community where everyone matters, feels safe, can participate in public life and achieve their full potential feeling they are treated with respect and fairness.”



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1. Introduction

Equality is at the heart of this council. It is fundamental to building vibrant communities where everyone plays an active role and a fairer society, and during these difficult times, equality is even more important. As we rebuild our post covid economy, it is essential that we make sure we benefit from the talents of everyone in BCP Council area, and we are determined to do so fairly whilst protecting the most vulnerable and prioritising equal opportunities for all.

As a country, we have come a long way in the fight against inequality in the last fifty years: from the Race Relations Act in 1965, to the Equal Pay Act in 1970, the Disability Discrimination Act in 1995 and finally to the Equality Act in 2010.

We are an increasingly diverse and accepting society, and this progress should be recognised. However, the reality remains that despite increasing legislation from government, far too many people's life chances are still dependent on who they are or where they come from and not their effort or ability. But legislation will only get us so far. Increased regulation has produced diminishing returns. In recent years progress on equality has stalled and, in some areas, begun to reverse. Too often the word 'equality' is misused and misunderstood.

This paper sets out our approach to the progression of equality. It is one that recognises that we need to move from acting with intent to acting intentionally by taking specific actions as required, to meet particular challenges. Equality is a complex issue, so we need to move beyond defining people simply because they've ticked a box on a form. We also need to take account of intersectionality, recognising that our social identifiers make us all individual and valuing those differences. We will work with people and communities to ensure that they are at the heart of everything we do as a council.

We will ensure that we act with transparency and integrity so we can be challenged and held to account. We will be the driver for change as we recognise that equality is the core element of our work.

Equality can mean many different things to many different people. This paper is based upon two key principles of equality: equal treatment and equal opportunity.

Equal treatment and equal opportunities for all does not mean uniformity. It means giving everyone equal access and recognition to be treated fairly as an individual, recognising both their needs and their abilities so that there is an equal opportunity to progress.



2. Our vision for BCP

We want the BCP city region to be world class – one of the best coastal places in the world in which to live, work, invest and play. To achieve this, we will harness the potential of our environment and communities creating a place where people and businesses want to be.

The [Big Plan](#), introduced by Councillor Drew Mellor, the Leader of BCP Council, in February 2021 reflects the scale of our ambitions to recognise the vibrancy of our communities; the strength of our economy; the skills of our people; the wealth of our culture; the quality of our infrastructure; our environment and quality of life.



The plan sets out how we will deliver our commitment to improve people's lives building on the Corporate Strategy which was adopted by BCP Council in November 2019 and recognises the council's commitment to understanding and valuing our diverse communities.

The Big Plan consists of five themes:



Iconic: We will increase participation and accessibility to transport to our urban and natural environment. By working with our partners, we will increase diversity in employment opportunities and community life.



Seafront: We will improve our facilities and access to our seafront. We will support people to make healthier life choices so more people can access our beautiful city region and some of the best coastlines in the world. We will support our restaurants and hospitality industry, famous for the quality and imagination of their international food offering and the excellence of their service.



Rejuvenate Poole: We will rejuvenate Poole, bringing a vibrant, attractive and sustainable mix of residency, business, hospitality, retail, culture and green spaces within the historic town and on the Quay, creating new employment opportunities.



Infrastructure: We will invest in the physical and digital infrastructure of our coastal city region. We will reduce internet poverty by providing superfast broadband and digital connectivity through exploiting the full potential of digital infrastructure to make BCP a genuinely smart city region. We will use digital data to plan, manage and deliver better services for our residents and businesses.



Act at scale: We will use census data to invest in the development of new homes making sure that social housing includes accessible homes for life along with an investment in a sustainable mix of affordable and high-end apartments and houses.

Central to the delivery of the Big Plan are Community, Culture and Children.



Community: We will introduce and advance the principles of Asset Based Community Development (ABCD) through a whole system approach of better engagement to inform decision making and the development of services. The principles of ABCD allow the council to utilise lived experiences; individual and collective knowledge; and places people at the centre to co-produce and co-design our services.



Culture: We will redefine the promotion of our diverse heritage and culture through our new cultural compact using creative education, development and investment in arts and culture. This will enable more people of all backgrounds to recognise, and actively participate in our maritime and leisure heritage, music, food and the arts in support of our aspiration to become a City of Culture.



Children: We will ensure that the BCP city region becomes one of the best places in which children can live, learn and grow up, where there are opportunities to stay in the area after they leave school, whether to go to university, to train or to work. This means supporting the health, wellbeing and development of children from birth, through their early years, right through their education and into adulthood.

Through the Big Plan we will contribute to the delivery of clean, safe and affordable accommodation; improve wellbeing across all age groups, from our youngest to our oldest; improve access to good health and care, good quality local services, jobs for working-age residents and provide financially sustainable livelihoods for families in the BCP Council area. All of this will help to deliver our vision for vibrant communities with outstanding quality of life, where everyone plays an active role.

3. Our equalities journey so far

BCP Council has made good progress towards its commitments to equality which are set out in the Corporate Strategy and towards its goal of achieving excellent accreditation of the Equality Framework for Local Government (EFLG).

Actions set out in the Equality and Diversity action plan, which is framed around the four modules of the EFLG, will help the council achieve and exceed its duties under equality legislation.

1. Understanding and working with our communities
2. Leadership and organisational commitment
3. Providing responsive services and customer care
4. Having a diverse and engaged workforce

The council has adopted an [Equality Policy and implemented an Equality and Diversity Governance framework](#), which is led by a Strategic Equality Leadership Group.

The framework includes five active staff network groups, an active service unit equality champion network, a communities' network and an independent Equality Action Group (EAG).

The self-organised staff network groups represent the areas of Disability¹, Race and Cultural Diversity, Religion and Belief, LGBTQ+ and Women. They provide a safe space for the discussion of issues; help raise awareness of issues in the wider organisation; provide an invaluable source of support for individual staff who may be facing challenges in the workplace and, offer a collective voice for the workforce to management and by default, highlight organisational improvement opportunities.

¹ A physical or mental impairment that has a 'substantial' and 'long-term' negative effect on your ability to do **normal daily activities**. (The condition must be expected to last for a period of at least 12 months from the point of prognosis)

Service Unit Equality Champions (SUECs) meet on a quarterly basis and have an interactive Teams channel where they share advice, guidance and support in between meetings. A key responsibility for SUECs is to help ensure their service units discharge their equality duties in the way they develop and deliver services and to be actively involved in the equality impact assessment process. This group has been key in supporting the implementation of Equality Impact Assessment panels.

The communities network of equality champions have been integral to the council's community resilience response to COVID 19 through the successful 'Together We Can' project. It has helped improve access to information and our services for people whose first language is not English. Information has been provided in Arabic, Bengali, Chinese, Polish, Portuguese, Romanian and Urdu and British Sign Language services were added to our helplines.

By working in partnership with local community leaders and community champions the council has improved community engagement and extended its reach to those communities who are 'harder to hear'.

Funding has been provided to community groups to enable them to provide food to households in need who they were in contact with during the lockdowns. This funding also helped to purchase fridges for those who needed them in order to support themselves or their families to provide better access to fresh food.

We have increased the diversity of our volunteer network and the take up of volunteering opportunities across each protected characteristic is a key priority of the community engagement strategy.

Members of the Equality Action Commission worked with Public Health Dorset to publish covid advice and support videos by 'Trusted Voices champions' which has led to an improved vaccine take up among under-represented groups.

The Trusted Voices champions network published weekly emails, ran network sessions and developed resources to be used on social media around the covid agenda with representatives from a wide range of communities.

Other successful initiatives have seen the delivery of vaccines in places of worship such as Mosques and the recruitment of 2,000 volunteers to act as marshals at the BIC mass vaccination site and pharmacies. Some volunteers were also trained to administer vaccines and run covid testing stations.

Community engagement with resident and transient Gypsy, Traveller and Romany communities has significantly improved, with one representative commenting that

"The Council has never engaged so much with the Gypsy Traveller and Romany Communities"

This collaborative approach has led to a co-produced display at Poole Museum - [Unearthed! Gypsy and Traveller Heritage](#).

Health Equality Partnership Programme funding will be used this year to develop community insights around preventative interventions for vulnerable groups such as

annual checks for people with learning disabilities, physical checks for severely mentally ill people and vaccinations for minority ethnic groups.

The [Equality Action Commission](#) was established in response to the death of George Floyd and local Black Lives Matter protests. This independent group has been set up to address public perception of the council, under representation of minority ethnic groups in senior officer roles and to extend engagement and increase trust and confidence among our communities². It now forms part of the Equality and Diversity Equality Governance Framework.

In response to the tragic murder of Sarah Everard and subsequent Reclaim Our Streets protests an internal women's group was formed specifically to capture the experiences of women. It had become evident because of Sarah's death that some women did not feel safe in the home, street or at work and were routinely harassed or discriminated in other ways which adds to barriers to recruitment, retention and progression.

Open 'equality matters' discussions have been held with staff with our communities to help the council have a clearer understanding of people's lived experiences from unique perspectives and to gain a qualitative understanding of people's perceptions of the council as employer, service provider and community leader.

The council has developed a range of key strategies and plans which will reduce inequality and provide support residents. Some of these are:

- [Special Educational Needs and Disabilities \(SEND\) and inclusion strategy](#)
- [The Children's and Young People's Plan](#)
- [Continuation of the Learning Disability Big Plan](#)
- [Preventing Domestic Abuse Strategy 2020–2023](#)
- [Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2021-2025](#)
- [People First ForCourcum Charter for people with a Learning Disability \(adopted by Council in November 2020\)](#)

² Public trust in the council will be measured through the residents' survey 2021 and reported by protected characteristic

4. Introduction of an Equalities Footprint

We have embedded the principles of equality into our Corporate Strategy to ensure that fairness and the progression of equality are central to the development of BCP as a new council and are part of the DNA of the organisation.

We will be innovative and transformative in our approach to the delivery of our services making sure that we put people at the forefront and at the centre of everything we do. This will be evident in our organisational culture and demonstrated through our values, fundamentally changing how we carry out our approach to 'business as usual'.

We aim to reinforce these commitments through the introduction of an Equalities Footprint which is defined as:

The activities undertaken by the council in accordance with their role that contribute to the delivery of BCP Council's equalities agenda and the duties of the council at individual, team, and service levels.

The equality footprint is informed by eight actions that the council will need to take forward:

1. The introduction of independent observers where appropriate for appointments to Heads of Service or above, including promotions and secondments to these positions.
2. Stakeholders or service users will be included to sit on interview panels, if appropriate, for all interim, permanent appointments, secondments, or internal promotions to positions that sit within the Senior Managers Network.
3. The undertaking of Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs) at the point of registering committee reports and portfolio holder decisions on BCP Council's ModGov system
4. The introduction of EIA Panels
5. The requirement to demonstrate fulfilment of the requirements of the PSED in annual appraisals process enabling staff to evidence how they are contributing to the council's Equalities Footprint and Corporate Strategy.
6. Development of a new hybrid training package that is fit for purpose and takes account of variation in learning styles to enable officers and councillors to understand and discharge their responsibilities under the PSED during their work
7. The delivery of the equality and diversity communication plan and diversity calendar, and production of accessible communication standards
8. Completion of a user-friendly website that conforms to website regulations 2018 and is easy to read, navigate and access.



In summary the introduction of an Equalities Footprint will change the organisation's business model and allow BCP Council to carry out its decision making from a different perspective which is inclusive in its delivery of services for those who work, live and visit BCP.

An Equalities Footprint will ensure equality and diversity is at the heart of the council and allow BCP Council to carry out its decision making from a perspective which is inclusive in its delivery of services for those who work, live and visit BCP.

5. Implementing the key actions of the Equalities Footprint

The council is already embracing the equality footprint and making progress with taking forward a number of the actions set out above. This section provides more information about why they are important.



Independent observers

We recognise that there has been considerable change to the demographic profile of the BCP Council area over the past two decades. However, the workforce profiles of the local authorities of Bournemouth, Christchurch, and Poole Councils has remained largely unchanged.

This means that BCP Council is not where it would like to be in terms of its workforce profile being representative of the communities which it serves. This is notable in the most senior positions within the organisation which could undermine the reputation of the council. We are looking to ensure that we have a diverse workforce at all levels of the organisation, so we are seen as an employer of choice by the communities we serve.

The Independent Observers Initiative was applied previously at Bournemouth Borough Council and identified as good practice by the Local Government Association during an equality peer challenge in 2016 which contributed to its accreditation at the level of 'Excellent' on the Equality Framework for Local Government.

The LGA commented as follows in their report on Bournemouth Borough Council that:

"In an attempt to start making its workforce more diverse, the council has trained a group of volunteers from the community with BME backgrounds to become independent observers of its recruitment and selection practices. Although the project is relatively new and it has not yet had an impact on the workforce profile, it has shown the BME population that the council is serious about addressing the perception some residents have that it is an all-white, middle class organisation".

Independent observation assists in the identification of unconscious bias when recruiting. The role of independent observers is to observe the council's recruitment process. It is not to assess the performance of elected Members or employees whose role requires them to recruit new staff.

On completion of recruitment and selection training, volunteer observers can select any vacancy at the agreed levels within the council and observe the whole selection process relating to that appointment which works in the following way:

- Observers score candidates, using the same methodology as the recruitment panel, at each stage of the process, from initial paper sift through to interview and offer of employment.
- If observers' scores differ significantly from that of panel members, they will engage in a conversation to explore how each party had arrived at a different conclusion.
- Observers' scores are noted but will not contribute towards the scores on which an appointment is based. Observers are not entitled to influence the appointment of any candidate or form part of the decision-making process. The council's members or officers retain sole responsibility for making selection decisions.
- As trained independent observers they can understand the criteria used to invite applicants to interview, the council's scoring matrix, and why an application may be rejected at the initial stages of recruitment or a person be unsuccessful at interview.

Independent Observers will be reimbursed for their expenses and their recruitment will be managed by partner organisation as part of an existing grant agreement.



Involving stakeholders and service users in interviews

The ethos of co-production is central to ensuring that people are at the heart of everything we do. To ensure that lived experiences are fed back into our decision making we will include service users and other stakeholders to form part of interview panels where appropriate from senior management positions. The duty to tackle inequality falls to all councillors, officers and staff or anyone acting on the councils' behalf. Therefore, it is critical that commitment to the progression of equality is conducive to BCP Council's adopted values and behaviours and is demonstrated from the top down and bottom up.



The leadership must model behaviours to improve the likelihood that people further down will replicate it and in doing so create a culture that is unique to BCP as a new council. The inclusion of stakeholders on interview panels sends a strong message to candidates about accountability and gives a clear indication of our values as an organisation.

Co-productive recruitment tips the balance back towards the consumer as it negates hierarchical structures. It is often easier for someone not directly employed by the organisation to challenge senior positions. Therefore, the inclusion of stakeholders will increase confidence, widen participation and invite challenge from differing perspectives enabling the interview panels to be accountable for their decisions, giving a voice and a presence to those who are seldom-heard.

Stakeholders will expect reimbursement of expenses. As the involvement of Independent Observers, stakeholders and service users in the recruitment process will be a change in the council's recruitment processes, cabinet will need to support this proposal in accordance with BCP Council's constitution.



Equalities Impact Assessments

Equality Impact Assessments are intended to:

- encourage a more proactive approach to the promotion of equality within public policy development
- identify any adverse equalities impact and detail actions to reduce this impact
- detail any positive equalities impacts.

The Council understands that a pragmatic approach to undertaking Equalities Impact Assessments (EIA) is essential and that some policies, projects, functions, or major developments/planning applications are more relevant to and have a greater impact upon equality and diversity than others.

We are required to give meaningful due regard to the affect the actions we take as an organisation could have on residents, customers, and staff, in the delivery of services and employment practices. An EIA is a thorough and systematic analysis to support this.

The requirement to complete an EIA and record EIA conversations has been added to the ModernGov system at the point of registering reports for a committee or Portfolio Holder decisions. This is to ensure that meaningful due regard can be considered, and the impacts of any proposals are fully considered at the very earliest opportunity.

As soon as officers are aware that the organisation needs to either amend, stop delivering or introduce something new, an EIA conversation and screening tool should be completed. The impacts of any decision should be considered and recorded as soon as proposals are discussed.

Equality implications should inform a business case and be part of our change process. If different options are being explored, the equality implications of all options should ideally be considered. These discussions or conversations are a key part of the EIA process and shouldn't be lost. They may be captured in notes or minutes of meetings and are a helpful reference for completing EIAs.

The EIA is an integral part of decision-making processes and ensures impacts are considered and responded to all the way through. EIAs should not be carried out after a decision has been made. Retrospective EIAs will not stand up in the event the council is challenged about a decision and subject to judicial review, so timeliness is key.

The EIA conversation and screening tool will help officers to identify:

- the relevance of each policy, project, function, or major development/planning application to equality
- whether a full EIA should be undertaken.

This needs to be applied to ALL new policies, projects, functions, staff restructurings, major developments, or planning applications, or when revising them. It should also be used to help identify existing policies or projects that should be subject to an assessment.



EIA panels

There are several checks, balances, and reminders in place across a range of council processes where the equality impacts of proposals and/or decisions are considered and assessed.

These include, but are not limited to:

- the ModernGov review of portfolio holder decisions
- project change briefs for Transformation Board
- Corporate Management Board decision records
- policy development
- consultation
- budget processes
- procurement processes
- committee reporting processes.

However, there is no single gateway or assurance process that gives decision makers confidence of the adequacy of these assessments. This can lead to a significant variation in the quality of EIAs produced across the council. Such inconsistencies place the council at unnecessary risk of legal challenge, reputational damage and mean the organisation could fail to meet its statutory duties as determined by the Equality Act 2010. EIA panels will help address these concerns.

Officer-led EIA panels have now been set up and will meet weekly (if required). The panels have a consultative and assurance role and will:

- ensure a consistent approach to our impact assessment processes
- introduce robust checks and balances without causing additional delay in moving ideas from conception to implementation, or extending committee reporting lead in times
- recommend the approval of EIAs
- reject EIAs where it is evident that the public sector equality duty has not been met and/or continuance with a project or proposal will lead to direct or indirect unlawful discrimination that cannot be legitimately justified.

The panel will act as a 'critical friend', providing advice and guidance to EIA authors, where required, and it will RAG rate all impact assessment documents.

The RAG rating will alert the decision maker(s) to the 'risk' of proceeding without mitigating actions, using the following criteria:

Green – good to go/approved, providing sufficient evidence the public sector equality duty has been met.

Amber – good to go subject to minor changes or mitigating actions being put in place and followed through in the development of the project/service/policy/procedure or practice.

Red – inadequate, needs to be reworked before the decision goes forward, where it is evident the public sector equality duty has not been met or continuing with the project or proposal will lead to direct or indirect unlawful discrimination that cannot legitimately be justified.

Panels will be chaired by the equality and diversity policy lead or their nominated substitute and will include:

- independent policy officers
- independent service unit equality champions
- representatives from [staff network groups](#)
- HR officers
- Community officers
- trade union representatives

A panel will include up to five members with a quorum of at least three for a decision to be made.

When appropriate, representatives from external partners (eg Dorset Race Equality Council, DOTs Disability, Community Action Network) or statutory organisations (such as Public Health Dorset, Dorset Police or Dorset and Wiltshire Fire and Rescue Service) will be invited to participate.



Introduction of equalities agenda into staff annual appraisal

The employee's objectives and personal performance targets should be consistent with the objectives of their team, unit and directorate. The appraisal process focuses on how the employee's work contributes to the achievement of overall targets and standards of performance carried out to represent the values of BCP Council.

Equality is the responsibility of everyone within the organisation, so it is essential that equality objectives are included in the induction and appraisal processes.

The principals of equality are about recognising barriers and removing discrimination and Local Authorities have a major part to play in promoting equality and diversity both as a larger employer and also as a key stakeholder in the community. By considering equality

during the appraisal process, we will ensure that good practice is captured, and that all employees can embed equality in the way they work.



Training package

BCP Council is a modern, accessible, and accountable council that is committed to providing effective community leadership and the delivery of efficient and effective services. The council is committed to embedding equality at the heart of its decisions and carried out a desktop review to determine the accessibility of the equality and diversity training available.

The review identified gaps in the organisational training need and concluded it was of a basic level and that additional training is required to provide greater depth content and quality.

The following key areas were highlighted:

- It has been identified that current equality and diversity training alone is insufficient to meet the organisations changing and future needs.
- A training programme needs to be in place that is accessible for all Members and staff, but flexible enough to take account of the different type and level of training that is necessary to meet the variety of roles, functions, and levels of responsibility with the council.

Therefore, we are investing in a new style ‘hybrid’ training package which will be a mix of online and face to face training for both staff and members. It is imperative that staff are knowledgeable and well trained to meet the needs of the communities they serve, and we will support officers to achieve this with a revised hybrid training package. This new approach can meet the obligations of the organisation, both legally and for our communities, and ensure that decision makers understand the importance of equality when making decisions.



Communications Plan and Diversity Calendar

In order to ensure all of our communities feel that they are valued and are fully participating residents of this conurbation, we will ensure that our communications are accessible, relevant, reliable, and timely. As a council we will continue to foster and promote good relationships between people who share protected characteristics and those who do not. We will make sure that communications cover a wide range of topics and that the information is available within and outside the council. This will include our formal and informal interactions between the council and its’ diverse communities.

Commitments set out in the council’s communications strategy include demonstrating the operational effectiveness of the council through engaging and accessible content, and explaining policies and decisions in an accessible way, providing trustworthy, concise, and clear public information There is a commitment to amplify the content of partners, of those representing seldom-heard groups and trusted voices who advocate for equality and our

communities across the BCP area, to further the agenda of the internal staff network groups, and to support key priority equality and diversity themed events.

To make sure we are as inclusive as we can be, we will adopt consistent and standardised approaches when communicating to improve representation, trust and confidence. We will follow [national best practice](#) on the production of social media campaigns and other content, and in [communicating with disabled people](#) and others with protected characteristics. We will take proactive steps to reach and represent all our communities in our aim to facilitate access to services, to encourage, support and improve participation enabling people to influence decision making. In doing the above mentioned we will improve participation in public life and be confident that people from all groups feel they are able to influence decisions.

We will highlight positive content that celebrates diversity and raises awareness of emerging issues faced by people through internal communications channels and by sharing content on social media and newsletters.

Our communication strategy and plan will:

- Support community cohesion by celebrating diversity and raising awareness of issues faced by protected groups
- Raise awareness and understanding of equality and diversity, both internally and externally
- Help promote formal and informal interactions between the council and its diverse communities
- Share information about Staff Network Groups with colleagues so they are informed and can engage
- Help build trust/advocacy/support among internal and external audiences



Website

The [Accessibility Requirements](#) for the public sector aim to help make sure online public services are accessible to all users, including disabled people. Councils should adopt the following four steps which are set out in the requirements, to make sure their online services are accessible. They must:

1. Understand how the regulations will impact their organisation
2. Decide how to check their website or apps for accessibility problems
3. Make a plan to fix any accessibility problems they find
4. Publish an accessibility statement

The council will complete the development of a single, accessible BCP Council website, and close legacy websites by September 2021. Content will be aligned in step with service harmonisation. Our content design process is user-centred and inclusive. We will continue to engage with users, community and disability groups as we strive for continuous improvement to our user-led content design and user-experience processes.

Our BCP Council website meets requirements under the Public Sector Bodies (Websites and Mobile Applications) (No. 2) Accessibility Regulations 2018, Equalities Act and follows Government Digital Service (GDS) best practice.

6. Our onward equality journey from 2021-2023

We are determined to champion and support the diversity of our communities and create an environment where communities feel stronger together. We will help build communities where there is a strong sense of belonging, positive relationships and understanding between people of different backgrounds who live, work, or visit the communities that we serve.

We understand that every individual matters and everyone has the undisputable right to feel safe, participate in public life, achieve their full potential and that they are treated fairly and with respect.

To show that we are delivering on our commitments, the council aspires to achieving excellence accreditation under the Equality Framework for Local Government (EFLG) by autumn 2022 and thereafter to maintain this level of performance.

The council will achieve these aspirations by embedding the characteristics of an excellent authority as defined within the principles of the EFLG 2020 and delivery of an Equality and Diversity Action plan that is framed around the four modules of EFLG.

The EFLG supports councils to deliver accessible and responsive services to customers and residents in their communities by taking account of the needs of different groups and to develop a workforce that is representative of its communities.

It also supports councils to meet the requirements of the Public Sector Equality Duty framework and to pay due regard to the impact of their decisions on each of the nine legally protected characteristics as defined within the Equality Act 2010.

As well as the nine protected characteristics of age; disability; gender reassignment; marriage and civil partnership; pregnancy and maternity; race; religion or belief; sex; and sexual orientation, BCP Council also considers the impact of its decisions on the locally recognised characteristics of the armed forces community; caring responsibility, socio-economic status plus human rights in the EIA process.

The EFLG is also supportive of the Equality and Human Rights Commission's six selected domains of equality measurement which it has identified as the areas of life that are important to people and that enable them to flourish. They are:

1. Education
2. Work
3. Living standards
4. Health
5. Justice
6. Personal security, and participation.

The council will achieve these aspirations objective by embedding the characteristics of an excellent authority as defined within the principles of the Equality Framework for Local Government 2020. The council remains committed to achieving the EFLG 'Excellent' level in the way that it runs the business, develops, and delivers its services, recruits, retains and supports its staff.



Key actions to improve equality outcomes include:

- Equality monitoring forms are reflective of all nine protected characteristics of EA2010
- Strategic equality must be in place and delivering equality outcomes at service level
- Strong and consistent communications from senior leaders showing commitment to equality and a strong stance on anti-discriminatory practices
- Smart measures are in place for BCP Council's Equality Objectives
- The scrutiny function and process must be effective and constructively challenge decisions (and set to work in the same way as a parliamentary select committee)
- Have a clear and effective positive action strategy/initiatives in place
- Have strong and effective equality monitoring processes in place showing improvements in data collection for employees and service users
- Processes that identify how staff promote equality and diversity during their work as part of the staff appraisals
- Processes to record and report prejudice incidents
- Have a strong and effective process to manage complaints of bullying and harassment
- Show we are using grants and service level agreements to develop to build community capacity with clear equality outcomes
- Performance monitoring of contracts with commercial partners including the measurement of equality outcomes
- Improve the forms for publishing workforce equality monitoring data
- We need to have an effective consultation and engagement strategy in place
- Improve outcomes for rough sleepers
- We have reduced the inequality of the impact of covid among vulnerable groups.

The current roadmap to achieving the excellent accreditation is set out in Appendix 1.

7.Characteristics of an excellent local authority

To demonstrate it is an excellent authority the council will need to:

- ensure that equality issues, relevant to our communities, are embedded and discernible in key strategies and plans such as our communication; engagement and people strategy, strategic plans such the transformation agenda and smarter structures, and local area agreements and local delivery plans.
- work with all strategic partners and the voluntary and community sector and act as advocates to achieve defined and tangible equality outcomes.
- secure good evidence of the equalities profile of the communities we serve.
- evidence we are measuring progress on equality outcomes by delivering the actions set out within our Equality Action Plan and disaggregating data on relevant performance indicators demonstrate outcomes that have improved equality in access to services and within areas of employment, recruitment, retention, and progression.
- show we understand the changing nature of our communities and their expectations and show we prioritise our activities and explain our decisions
- demonstrate good customer care by ensuring that services are provided by knowledgeable and well-trained staff who understand the needs of their communities.
- show satisfaction and perception indicators from all sections of the community and staff are improving.
- increase the diversity of representatives of all characteristics are integrally involved in community engagement programmes.
- show that we have forums for all equality stakeholders to share experiences and evaluate our progress.
- show tangible progress towards achieving outcomes which address persistent inequalities and that gaps are narrowing.
- increase the diversity of our workforce where there is underrepresentation, and improve flexible working, access to training and development and promote an inclusive working culture that is based on respect and evident in our values.
- routinely review our equality strategy and seek innovative ways to improve and address challenges as they are identified.

Through its achievements, the council will be able to show it is an exemplar of good practice for other local authorities and agencies and work with others to share best practice.

Appendix 1 Roadmap to Excellence

- 1. ■ Understanding and Working with our Communities
- 2. ■ Leadership and Organisational Commitment
- 3. ■ Responsive Services and Customer Care
- 4. ■ Diverse and Engaged Workforce

