

Equality Policy

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Section 1 - Welcome

Foreword

It is with great pleasure I provide the foreword for the council's Equality Policy.



This document represents a fresh approach to equality and inclusion for Thanet and places a strong emphasis on the rich diversity of the Thanet community and the many gifts and talents that brings.

Thanet has a different demographic make-up than the majority of Kent and those who suffer disadvantage can be affected more significantly by changes in the services they rely upon. Therefore, we will focus on dealing with social deprivation, health inequalities, unemployment and low level of education and skills that impact on the life chances of our residents.

As a community leader we must tackle these challenges head on, whether it be directly through council services, through effective joint working or indirectly by influencing others. Despite the current economic climate and our limited resources, we intend to improve our residents' lives and foster a strong and inclusive community through effective collaboration with our partners.

We also want to help our community to understand that to create a fairer society we need to recognise that:

- Equality is an issue for us all
- We don't all start from the same place
- To create a fairer society we need to recognise different needs¹

This is a meaningful and live document that will evolve as we progress. It will be a vital component and driver for realising our 2030 vision where Thanet is a place where individuals are able to reach their full potential, where there are opportunities for everyone in an environment that celebrates its natural beauty, rich diverse heritage and cultural backgrounds.

We are at the start of an exciting journey and everyone is invited to participate.

Councillor Michelle Fenner
Cabinet Member for Business, Corporate and Regulatory Services

¹ Equality Framework for Local Government definition of equality.

Introduction

The Council recognises and celebrates the diversity of our district; we acknowledge that it is part of what makes the area a great place to live, work and visit.

As a council our environment is constantly changing and continuous improvement is important for us to be able to deliver what our service users want in the way they want it.

We are working harder than ever to ensure everyone has the same opportunities by reducing inequalities in the area and improving life for all. To do this well, we must listen to our residents and understand the needs of our communities.

As a council we have to think about how we act as an employer and as a service provider to ensure our services and employment practices are fair and inclusive. We also need to think about how we empower our community and promote understanding to ensure that Thanet openly embraces and celebrates the rich diversity of its people.

This Equality Policy details the things we must do to comply with the Equality Act 2010 and the Public Sector Equality Duty. The policy will also tie in with equality considerations in other council documents, such as the Procurement Strategy and our employment policies.

This document replaces the former Comprehensive Equality Policy and supports the delivery of the Corporate Plan 2012-16 and Thanet 2030 vision, to ensure that our priorities are delivered in a fair and inclusive way and by highlighting specific equality issues to be addressed. The Equality Policy will also help guide and inform the design of departmental specific policies and strategies to ensure they meet the changing needs of our diverse community.

The detail of how we will achieve the aims of this policy is given within our Equality Objectives Action Plan, which will follow the 'Developing' level of the Equality Framework for Local Government; this is a nationally recognised quality standard and is an excellent method to inform and develop our practices.

We have a clear ambition to be the best that we can be. Our success will be measured by the difference we make, that's why we will integrate this document into every activity, it's not a bolt on or a means to 'box tick' but a mechanism by which we ensure our Corporate Plan priorities deliver our vision in an equal, fair and inclusive way.

Sue McGonigal
Chief Executive



Section 2 - Legal Context

The Equality Act came into force in October 2010, pulling together all previous equality legislation into one Act. The new legislation identifies a number of 'protected characteristics':

- | | | |
|-----------------------|----------------------------|--|
| 1. Age | 2. Disability | 3. Gender Reassignment |
| 4. Race | 5. Religion or belief | 6. Sex |
| 7. Sexual Orientation | 8. Pregnancy and maternity | 9. Marriage and civil partnership ¹ |

¹ only in respect of the requirement to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination.

The Act requires that a disabled person's disability be considered. The term disability covers many different physical, mental and emotional conditions. Every disability has different adaptations and support requirements and these should be considered for example, when making reasonable adjustments in the workplace.

Within section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 you will find the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED). This is the part of the Equality Act that places responsibility upon public bodies to lead, influence and shape policy and services around the communities they serve.

The Duty is divided into two parts, the General Duty and the Specific Duties.

The General Duty

The General Duty has three aims (also known as the three arms of the Duty). It requires public bodies, when exercising their functions, to have due regard to:

- 1 Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct prohibited by the Act
- 2 Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it by:
 - removing or minimising disadvantages suffered by people due to their protected characteristics;
 - meeting the needs of people with protected characteristics; and
 - encouraging people with protected characteristics to participate in public life or in other activities where their participation is low.
- 3 Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it by:
 - tackling prejudice and promoting understanding between people with a protected characteristic and others.

What does due regard mean? Having due regard means consciously thinking about the three aims of the Duty as part of the process of decision making. This means that equality issues must be considered (proportionately) as part of the decisions officers and Members make to satisfy the duty.

Examples would be:

- how we act as an employer
- how we develop, evaluate and review our policies
- how we design, deliver and evaluate our services
- how we commission and procure from others

The Specific Duties

The Specific Duties support the General Duty by helping the council comply. We need to set equality objectives to show how we plan to progress our equality agenda, to do this we need good quality data to base them on.

We must:

1. Publish information to demonstrate our compliance with the general equality duty by 31 January each year. The information we publish must include information relating to persons who share a relevant protected characteristic who are:
 - employees, and;
 - other persons affected by our policies and practices (e.g service users, residents and visitors)
2. Prepare and publish one or more objectives we should achieve, to deliver the aims of the general duty. The objectives must be published at least every four years and this requirement commenced 6 April 2012. Objectives must be specific and measurable.

Section 3

Thanet District Council Equality Policy

Policy Statement

Thanet District Council is proud of its diverse community; it's what makes this area a great place to live, work and visit.

The Policy seeks to promote and uphold the principles of equality, diversity, fairness and inclusion within our employment practices, service design and delivery, procurement and partnership working. The policy also sets out how we will comply with the Equality Act 2010 and Public Sector Equality Duty.

As a council we will not tolerate discrimination, harassment or victimisation and will strive to promote equality of opportunity, understanding and foster good relations within our organisation and our community.

1. Scope and Purpose

- 1.1 This policy sets out Thanet District Council's commitment to valuing diversity and promoting equality of opportunity in all of its activities.
- 1.2 This policy will apply to all Thanet District Council staff and Members. It will also set the standard by which we wish our partners and third party service providers to conduct themselves in the services they provide on our behalf.
- 1.3 This policy will set out how Thanet District Council will meet its legal responsibilities as defined within the Equality Act 2010 and Public Sector Equality Duty both as an employer and public service provider.

2. Monitoring, Analysis and Statutory Requirements

- 2.1 The council will undertake regular monitoring of its policies, procedures and services, proportionate to their relevance to the Duty and analyse them against the most up to date demographic, staff and service user data to ensure that they remain accessible, inclusive and effective.
- 2.2 We will collect and publish anonymous equality data on our staff and service users in accordance with statutory timescales.
- 2.3 All data will be collected, stored, analysed and published within the strict controls of the Data Protection Act 1998. Individuals will not be identified, nor will it be possible to deduce the identity of individuals within material that we publish.
- 2.4 We will prepare and publish one or more objectives we should achieve, to deliver the aims of the general duty within statutory timescales. Objectives will arise from:
 - Service plans
 - Corporate projects
 - Customer feedback
 - Results of public engagement

- Central Government initiatives
- Emerging best practice
- Outcomes of equality/service user impact analysis
- Ongoing service activity

2.5 We will have due regard for the aims of the Public Sector Equality Duty in the decisions that we make proportionate to their relevance to the Duty.

2.6 The action plan will be reported upon annually to enable Members and stakeholders to see how projects and actions are progressing. This approach will allow for greater Member and public scrutiny.

3. Conduct

3.1 Members and staff will conduct themselves in accordance with this policy. Each Member and employee has a responsibility to challenge and report inappropriate behaviour which may breach this policy.

3.2 Where not specifically stated in this document, any conduct which is prohibited by the Equality Act 2010 is regarded as a breach of this policy.

3.3 Detailed guidance on unlawful conduct under the Equality Act 2010 can be found in the Codes of Practice accompanying the Act.

4. Public Service Provision

4.1 We will ensure equal access, fair treatment and appropriate provision to the whole community regardless of service users' protected characteristics as defined within the Equality Act 2010. This includes making reasonable adjustments for disabled people.

4.2 We will deliver services without discriminating against, stigmatising or patronising people. Every service user will be treated in a professional manner, with courtesy, respect, dignity and confidentiality.

4.3 We will promote equal access to services, including producing clear information about how to access our services. Where necessary we will offer information in various accessible formats.

4.4 We will seek the views of our service users to inform the development of our policies, strategies and services to ensure we are continually improving.

4.5 We expect Members and officers to demonstrate due regard to the aims of the Public Sector Equality Duty in the decisions that they make, proportionate to their relevance to the Duty.

4.6 We will regularly quality check our services and policy documents to ensure they are relevant, inclusive and accessible.

4.7 We will provide clear information on how customers can comment upon or complain about the services they have received.

5. Partners and Third Party Service Providers

5.1 As an organisation we will always seek to promote equality throughout the district.

- 5.2 We will work with our partners and other organisations on equality issues that affect the district and to encourage equality and diversity policies and plans similar to our own are adopted and implemented more widely.
- 5.3 We will promote inclusion, fairness, equality and diversity within partnership working and our internal and external communications.
- 5.4 We will seek to ensure that any partners or bodies providing services on our behalf provide those services in compliance with the Equality Act 2010 and Public Sector Equality Duty.
- 5.5 We will encourage our partners and third party service providers to have policies and procedures in place to comply with the Equality Act 2010 and Public Sector Equality Duty on the services they provide on our behalf.

6. Commissioning and Procurement

- 6.1 We will seek to ensure that our procurement activity promotes equality of opportunity for all. The council expects suppliers, contractors and those delivering services on behalf of the Council to share these values.
- 6.2 Full details of equality arrangements and standards in our commissioning and procurement activities, are within our Procurement Strategy.

7. Recruitment and Employment

- 7.1 Thanet District Council is an equal opportunities employer and is committed to the principles of equality of opportunity within its employment practices.
- 7.2 All employees and applicants for employment will be treated fairly and not discriminated against based on any of the protected characteristics as defined within the Equality Act 2010 or any other reason which cannot be shown to be justified.
- 7.3 Full policy details on equality and diversity in relation to recruitment and employment can be found in the council's Recruitment and Selection Policy and Procedure and the Employment Stability Policy and Procedure.
- 7.4 Training and development opportunities will be made available according to business requirements and will be allocated fairly to staff. We will ensure that development and learning opportunities are inclusive in their own right and reasonable adjustments will be made according to individual need.
- 7.5 We will ensure the workplace is as accessible as possible. Reasonable adjustments will be made for any disabled Member or member of staff.

8. Corporate Responsibility

- 8.1 The Chief Executive has overall responsibility for the successful implementation of this policy. However all staff and Members and will be required to conduct themselves in accordance with the policy.
- 8.2 This policy will be overseen by Members and Senior Management Team who will be responsible for the achievement and effective monitoring of the policy in their services, supported by managers.

- 8.3 All reasonable steps will be taken to ensure the effective communication of this policy to all Members and officers.
- 8.4 It is a condition of employment that all employees adhere to this policy. Action under the Council's Disciplinary Policy and Procedure may be taken against any employee who breaches this policy. Each employee has a responsibility to challenge and report inappropriate behaviour which may breach this policy.
- 8.5 Action may be taken against an elected Member through the Members' Complaints Process if they do anything which causes the council to breach this policy. Each Member has a responsibility to challenge and report inappropriate behaviour which may cause the Council to breach this policy.
- 8.6 If a member of staff feels they have been treated unfairly in employment and wishes to make a complaint, this should be brought under the terms of the Grievance Policy and Procedure.
- 8.7 Members and staff will be offered skills training to enable them to meet the requirements of this policy. We will ensure that training in this regard is accessible and reasonable adjustments will be made according to individual need.
- 8.8 The Member Lead for Equality and Inclusion will report to the Cabinet Member responsible for Equality and Inclusion. The Member Lead for Equality and Inclusion will undertake duties as determined by the Cabinet Member and will champion the council's equality and inclusion agenda.

Section 4 - Links to Other Documents

Document	Comment
Asset Management Strategy	Sets out the way we will approach the management of assets to best meet the needs of the community and minimise costs to the tax-payer. It specifically explains how we will engage with residents to ensure that they can help inform decisions.
Corporate Plan 2012-2016	Sets the Council's priorities for the period 2012-2016.
Equality Objectives Action Plan	Details projects and actions that will translate the Equality Policy and Strategy into operational reality.
Growing the Garden of England: A strategy for environment & economy in Kent 2010 – 2030	Identifies priorities for improving the ecological footprint, tackling climate change issues and conserving the natural environment within Kent. A key aim is to maximise opportunities through the green economy in support of wider economic aims for Kent. Whilst principle ownership lies with Kent County Council, Thanet Council is a key partner for the Thanet area.

Document	Comment		
<p>Human Resources Policies</p>	<p>Conduct, Disciplinary and Grievance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Code of Conduct for Staff • Whistleblowing Code • Disciplinary Policy • Grievance Policy • Dignity at Work Policy (bullying & harassment) • Maximising Performance Policy <p>Health & Safety</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health & Safety Policy • Lone worker procedure 	<p>Hours, Leave and Absence</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flexi-time Policy • Annual Leave Entitlement • Time off for dependants procedure • Absence Management Policy <p>Pay, Benefits & Allowances</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pay Policy • Employee Council & Trade Unions Recognition Agreement • Learning & Development • Appraisal Process 	<p>Recruitment, Restructure & Termination</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recruitment Policy • Recruitment of Ex-offenders Policy • Probationary Periods Policy • Cross Organisational Vacancy Management Policy • Secondment Policy • Cross Organisational Redeployment Policy • Employment Stability Policy • Other Substantial Reason – Termination of Procedure • Flexible Retirement Policy
<p>Housing Strategy</p>	<p>Covers all aspects of housing including both the private and public sector. It will set out how we will work to improve the choice, supply, quality and accessibility of housing available to Thanet people.</p>		
<p>Local Plan Core Strategy</p>	<p>Will provide the "big picture" as to how Thanet and its constituent parts will change and develop under the national planning system and with regard to sustainable development. It will make the key decisions about where and how change should be accommodated, and identify sites whose development is of fundamental importance to realizing the strategy.</p> <p>N.B the Local Plan was formally known as the Local Development Framework</p>		

Document	Comment
Medium Term Financial Strategy	Sets out our strategic approach to the management of finances and presents indicative budgets and Council Tax levels for the medium term. This five-year strategy is reviewed annually.
Members' Code of Conduct	Sets out the conduct that is expected of Members and is based on the Seven Principles of Public life under section 28(1) of the Localism Act 2011. The Members' Code of Conduct is adopted under section 27(2) of the Localism Act 2011.
Parking Strategy	Sets out the framework for effective parking management acknowledging the complex and challenging connections between parking, environmental, economic and regeneration issues.
Procurement Strategy	The Procurement Strategy will sets out how the council will use procurement and commissioning activity to further its corporate and legislative objectives.
Ramsgate Port Master Plan	A long-term plan for future development of commercial opportunities at the port. It aims to ensure best use of port assets in the interests of stakeholders and wider regeneration of the area.
Regeneration Strategy	The Regeneration Strategy will set out how the council and its partners will work together to deliver regeneration across Thanet. The aim is to take a balanced and sustainable approach to growth and to well-being of communities through social, physical, economic and environmental improvements with specific attention being given to inward investment, business expansion, work and skills, the visitor economy and broadband connectivity. The strategy will be supported by a delivery plan with specific time-bound targets.
Service Plans	Set out key projects, actions and targets that individual council departments will work towards in support of the Corporate Plan. Plans are renewed annually during the first quarter of each year.
Sport & Active Recreation Strategy	Sets out how we aim to build active, healthy safe and successful communities in Thanet through increased participation in sport and active recreation.

APPENDIX A

Document	Comment
Tenancy Strategy	Will set out priorities for the management of our housing stock and advises other housing providers as to how they should manage their stock within Thanet. It will set out how fixed term tenancies will be implemented for new social housing tenants.
Thanet Community Safety Plan	Sets out the key priorities and supporting projects of the Community Safety Partnership (which includes Thanet District Council as a key member) for improving community safety within the district. A new plan is produced every year.
Thanet District Council Competency Framework	Details the behaviours and personal skills required from staff. These are based upon the SHL Universal Competency Framework.
Thanet District Council Data Protection Policy	This document details how we will collect, store and dispose of personal data relating to Members, staff and service users.
Transport Strategy	Sets out the strategy including transport policies and schemes for the life of the Local Plan helping to determine the scale of transportation improvements that will be required to support new developments. Whilst ownership lies with Kent County Council, Thanet Council is a key partner.
Vision 2030 2010 - 2030	Sets out the council's vision of what Thanet will look and be like in 2030.
Vision for Kent 2012 – 2022	Sets out three countywide ambitions which aim to guide the direction of public services in Kent over the next ten years. These are: to grow the economy, to tackle disadvantage, and to put citizens in control. The document is owned by the Kent Forum and has been adopted as the Sustainable Community Strategy by Thanet District Council.
Waste Strategy	Sets out how the Kent Waste Partnership (which includes Thanet District Council) will manage waste. Specific aims include increasing recycling levels, reducing waste produced by each household and reducing the amount of waste put into landfill.

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