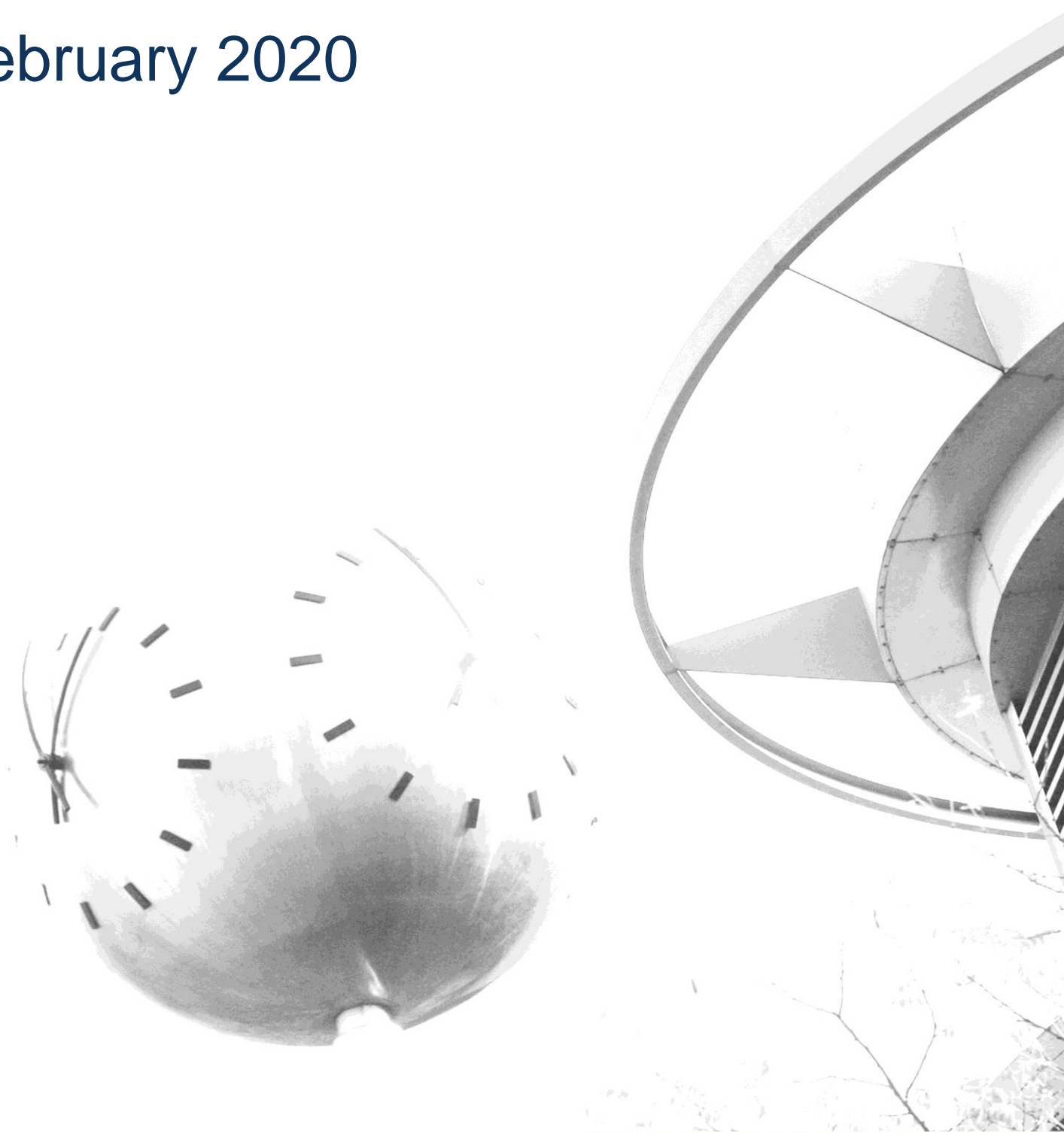


Inclusion and Diversity Policy (2020 – 2024)

February 2020



Key Information (To correspond with Covalent)

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Section/Directorate:	Housing and Communities
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1. Introduction

Basildon is five towns in one borough, with town centres in Billericay, Laindon, Pitsea and Wickford as well Basildon itself. Basildon is becoming increasingly diverse which is not only being driven by its close proximity to London, but also due to its good commuter access.

Basildon Council recognises and values the diversity of all people that live, work and visit the borough. The Council is committed to providing inclusive efficient, effective and relevant services to our residents and to ensuring that we are an inclusive employer.

Our Vision

“Basildon Council is committed to improving the lives of all residents across our five towns and creating opportunity and prosperity for local people and businesses.

With a population of almost 190,000, rising to over 200,000 inside the next ten years, we want the best town centres in the South East, with thriving market towns and busy high streets complementing good jobs across a range of sectors.”

To deliver this vision Basildon Council is committed to delivering the following promises:

1. A place for everyone to call home
2. A place where everyone prospers
3. A place to be proud of

As a public sector organisation, the Council has a statutory duty to ensure that equality, diversity and human rights are embedded into all its functions and activities as required by the Equality Act 2010 and the Human Rights Act 1998. The Equality Act legally protects people from discrimination in the workplace and in the community. It is underpinned by the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED), which supports good decision-making by ensuring public bodies (and others providing public services) consider how different people will be affected by their activities. The PSED also seeks to ensure that the Council is delivering accessible services which meet different people’s needs.

2. Executive Summary

This aim of this policy is to set out the Council’s

- The Council’s Inclusion & Diversity Policy statement
- Objectives for 2020-2024
- Commitment to addressing inclusion, diversity, community cohesion and Human Rights
- Corporate vision for driving inclusion, diversity, community cohesion and Human Rights

It also sets out the Council's role:

- As a leader
- As a service provider
- As an employer
- In engaging partners and stakeholders
- In engaging with diverse communities (including the voluntary/community sector)

3. Policy Statement / Vision

“Basildon Council is committed to actively promoting inclusion, community cohesion and celebrating diversity; as a community leader, as a service provider and as an employer. The Council will promote inclusion and diversity through its core business and work to tackle all forms of discrimination for those living, working in or visiting our Borough.”

The Council will achieve its vision by delivering against the following objectives:

Objective 1: Creating Inclusive Services and Environments for All

Objective 2: Working with communities, partners, businesses to promote community cohesion

Objective 3: Encouraging communities to play their part in contributing to the pride of the borough

Objective 4: Be an employer committed to promoting inclusion and diversity within our workforce; and ensuring our workforce is reflective of the community we serve

Objective 5: Eliminating discriminatory practice swiftly with a consistent approach that confidently reaffirms to all parties our organisations values

4. Outcomes and priorities

The following are the outcomes and priority areas for the years 2020-2024

a. Outcome: An Inclusive Service Provider

Priorities: The Council:

- *Provides inclusive services*
- *Creates opportunities to involve customers and service users in shaping our services*
- *Is considered as an authority that treats people fairly*

b. Outcome: An Inclusive Environment

Priorities: The Council

- *Designs, introduces and manages a borough wide Inclusive Basildon accreditation scheme.*

- *Helps shape and develop Basildon's inclusive built environment.*
- *Helps shape and develop Basildon's inclusive natural environment.*
- *Designs, introduces and supports the sustainable management of core inclusivity and accessibility principles for town planners and town regeneration.*

c. Outcome - An engaged, vibrant and cohesive community

Priorities: The Council

- *Engages with our diverse communities*
- *Encourages civic participation and works to promote civic pride*
- *Works with partners to create cohesive communities*
- *Works with key stakeholders to tackle all forms of discrimination*

d. Outcome – An inclusive employer

Priorities: The Council

- *Has a workforce that is reflective of the community we serve*
- *Is considered to be an inclusive employer where everyone has an opportunity to fulfil their full potential.*
- *Is Disability Confident Level 3*

5. Context

5.1 Defining Equality

Equality is about creating a fairer society where everyone can participate and has the same opportunity to fulfil their full potential. This means that everyone has a fair chance to achieve their aspirations and ambitions, whether that be at work or in their personal lives.

Equality is focused within a legislative framework, the main piece of legislation being the Equality Act 2010. The Act is designed to:

- Address unfair discrimination, harassment and victimisation
- Advance equality of opportunity and
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

There are nine protected characteristics: age, disability, gender reassignment (transgender), marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion and belief, sex (gender) and sexual orientation.

All local authorities are required to work within the legislative requirements of the Equality Act 2010 Public Sector Equality Duty. The Equality Duty is supported by general and specific duties.

The General duty requires local authorities to:

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

The specific duties require local authorities to:

- Collect data on service users and workforce and publish these annually and
- Set equalities objectives at least every four years and demonstrate how they plan to meet these objectives

The law is not delegable therefore the Council has a duty to ensure compliance with the Equality Act 2010 with regards to:

- Partnerships
- Contractors
- Shared services
- Hirers or those using council premises
- Grant recipients
- Those that we license

The Council must also ensure when working with partners it emphasise the need to comply with equalities legislation.

5.2 Defining Diversity

Diversity is about recognising and valuing the full range of differences between people in the workplace and the community. Diversity is about 'harnessing, valuing and celebrating difference'. Whilst the legislation remains an important element, the scope of diversity goes further than the 'legal minimum' to allow for the exploration of differences in a safe, positive and nurturing environment. It means understanding one another by surpassing tolerance so that people's differences are truly valued.

Diversity in the workplace

Promoting diversity in the workplace acknowledges that entry into the workplace, and an employee reaching their potential can be impacted or influenced by a range of factors beyond legislation. These include social, economic, educational backgrounds, professional background, hierarchal levels, working styles, personality profiles among other factors.

Diversity is also often used to describe the way an organisation looks and how well it serves its community. It paints a picture of different types of people at different levels in the organisation and how well different customer needs are met in service planning, commissioning and delivery.

Diversity in the community

Basildon Council recognises diversity in the community as something to be valued, celebrated and harnessed. However, the Council also recognises that diversity can also bring lack of familiarity and fear of change. It is therefore our role to understand this and address the perceptions and experiences that may promote fear and divisiveness within our communities.

Why does diversity matter?

Diversity matters because we live in an increasingly diverse and complex society in which identity and culture are far more multi-faceted and complex than they once were. We must be mindful of different needs brought about by changing communities and ensure that our services are sensitive and responsive to them. Diversity needs to be placed at the very centre of our planning and delivery of Council services. One vital pre-requisite for achieving this is the recruitment of a representative workforce that is key in equipping us to respond to the diverse needs all sections of our community.

5.3 Defining Inclusion

Inclusion within the equality and diversity context is about ensuring no one is excluded when providing services or when recruiting employees. It is about thinking a little harder about how the exclusion could happen and closing the gaps, so that all communities benefit. If communities are to be at the heart of what we do, inclusion must happen from the onset of designing services, developing policies, engaging communities, as well as when recruiting employees.

6. What we mean by Community Leader and advocate

Community Leaders have a shared responsibility in supporting their communities to thrive. Community leadership is the extra activity beyond our core service delivery. The community leader role is about both political leadership by elected members as well as managerial competency. It involves collaborating with people from all walks of life and inclusively representing their different views. It is also about how members and senior leadership promote an inclusive vision and strategy for borough and its diverse communities.

The following factors include our community leadership role:

- Inclusively engaging, empowering diverse communities and creating trust
- Building social capital, by creating an environment where people have a voice, and where they feel that they are able to influence.
- Ensuring services are inclusive, accessible, responsive and delivered to the agreed standards,
- Working to bring local partners together for the betterment of our community
- Holding partners to account and ensuring that services are joined up to make it easier for the community to access.
- Influencing a wider set of services – as community leader, the Council has the capacity to influence local partners and agencies acting to solve problems that may

arise. This requires the council to extend its reach to influence issues and organisations beyond their direct sphere of control and responsibility.

Inclusion and Diversity is core to the Council's role as community leader. Engaging inclusively with our different communities regardless of their diversity factors (including geographic location), is key to achieving improved outcomes for the area and community as a whole.

7. Other Inclusion Diversity & Cohesion Factors

- *Our role In engaging partners and stakeholders*

As a council we recognise that we cannot work in isolation. There is greater value in working with partners to maximise opportunities for the benefit of the community.

The Council also recognises the voluntary and community sector can help us reach diverse communities as well as provide services. Similarly working with the business sector allows us to jointly address education, employment and skills and therefore economic prosperity, all of which help to make Basildon borough a good place to live and work.

- *Our role in building resilient and cohesive communities*

Basildon Council aims to build resilient and cohesive communities. By 'resilient', we mean people and communities that are able to cope with changes in their lives and communities. By 'cohesive', we mean that people from different backgrounds will enjoy good relations and live and work comfortably together.

Nationally, the country has experienced an increase in Anti-Semitism and islamophobia. On 16 January 2020, Basildon Council adopted the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance's (IHRA) definition of Anti-Semitism and the All-Party Parliamentary Group's (APPG) definition of Islamophobia. The Council also reaffirmed its commitment to tackling all forms of discrimination through the following statement:

"This Council endorses and supports the UK Government's adopted definition of Anti-Semitism and the All-Party Parliamentary Group's definition of Islamophobia. This council reaffirms its policy of non-discrimination against anyone on grounds of sex, age, gender identity, sexual orientation, ethnicity or nationality, disability, religion or belief, marriage or civil partnership, pregnancy or maternity, by ensuring that we are an inclusive employer and by offering services and opportunities for the whole community based on their needs.

IHRA definition of Antisemitism

According to the IHRA "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."

APPG definition of “Islamophobia

According to the APPG “Islamophobia is rooted in racism and is a type of racism that targets expressions of Muslimness or perceived Muslimness.”

The Council recognises that changing demographic and the instant availability of social media can act as conduits to “increased fear”. The council will play a key role in understanding these factors in order to help maintain cohesive communities. This means utilising social media and other channels to reach communities, as well as addressing diversity as something to be respected within the context of those common factors that unite us all.

- *Our role as a service provider,*

The Council needs to ensure that the way services are designed and delivered, take account of the diverse needs and specific needs of our customers. Services must use relevant information to align need to service delivery.

- *Our role as an employer,*

The Council has a responsibility to meet the diverse needs of its employees, for example by making reasonable adjustments for disabled (and other) employees. It also has a role to ensure that the workforce is equipped to meet the Council’s commitment to promote equality, diversity and inclusion. To do this the relevant training and development opportunities must be put in place and diversity/workforce monitoring utilised to shape improvement where relevant.

- Our role in engaging with diverse communities (including the voluntary and community sector)

Basildon Borough Council’s consultation & Engagement Policy (2018) sets out the following council’s vision and commitment to promoting effective consultation and engagement:

“Basildon Borough Council is committed to enabling its community to have a voice and play an active role in influencing the decisions, policies and services that most affect them. It will use the insight gathered from consultation and engagement activities to better understand local need, whilst also maintaining a continued conversation with communities and businesses about the things that matter most.”

One of the key reasons for community engagement and involvement is to help the Council to understand how our services, policies and practices affect (or are likely to affect) those who use our services. This evidence can then be used to improve decision-making, for example, in policy and service development, and in identifying priorities for action. Examples of this include:

- Identifying particular needs, patterns of disadvantage, and poor relations between groups, and the reasons for these.
- Designing initiatives to meet needs and to overcome barriers.

- Identifying opportunities to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations.
- Understanding the relevance of functions to equality.
- Assessing the impact on equality of particular policies or proposals.
- Monitoring and evaluating initiatives, policies and programmes.
- Identifying ways to mitigate adverse impacts on certain groups.

In order to ensure that the views of diverse communities are captured, the Council has to consider the best ways to engage different communities and people. These include those communities that are seldom heard.

Engagement is not just about our communities. It is important to ensure that we are also capturing the diverse views of our employees as a way of understanding how we can continually improve the workplace.

- *Community Involvement*

‘Involvement’ is about working together. It covers a wide range of ways in which we encourage and support local people, community organisations, business and other partners to get involved in our work.

Under the Equalities legislation, local authorities are expected to involve people from all protected groups in decision making. In particular there is emphasis on the need to involve disabled people when designing policies, services, projects, etc. As such, we will involve communities in service/policy planning and design.

8. Responsibilities

All elected members, employees at all levels, union representatives, contractors and suppliers to the council have a role in ensuring they work to promote and embed diversity and inclusion to align with our vision and policy values. That involves paying due regard to equality, diversity and inclusion, working in a way that shows respect and consideration for others and challenging inappropriate behaviour/s or practice/s to remove barriers and avoid unfair disadvantage or discrimination.

Basildon Council will:

- Comply with Equality Act 2010 and any future equalities legislation.
- Adopt a proactive approach that includes a generic and innovative approach
- Ensure elected members, employees, union representatives, volunteers, contractors, suppliers (and others as relevant) are made fully aware of the council’s commitment to inclusion and diversity and how that affects their work;
- Monitor our policy, objectives, strategy and training regularly to ensure activity continues to be relevant to organisational need
- Provide training / development and updates as appropriate;
- Have a designated Inclusion & Diversity lead at senior management level who will work with elected members and council officers to drive the inclusion, diversity and community cohesion agenda

- Expect all employees to be responsible for their personal conduct and acceptable standards, mainstreaming diversity, inclusion & cohesion in their duties, participating in events and activities and improving equalities performance in their areas/functions.
- Ensure that services assess the impact of their policies, strategies, projects, etc. on equality and human rights via Service Impact Assessments (SIAs)
- Create opportunities for communities to get involved in service planning and design
- Work with our partners to promote inclusion, diversity and community cohesion

9. Monitoring and measuring success

This policy will be implemented through an Inclusion & Diversity Strategy (2020 – 2024) which will be monitored year on year. The strategy will be a live document which will take into account any national or local emerging issues. The strategy will be monitored through the Council’s performance management framework and will be reported to the Inclusion & Diversity Operational Group.

10. Council’s Promises

Corporate Promises	Levels of Impact			
	High	Medium	Low	None
1. A place for everyone to call home	<u>X</u>			
2. A place where everyone prospers	<u>X</u>			
3. A place to be proud of	<u>X</u>			

11. Links to other Corporate Policies or Partner documents

This policy also has links to the following plans, policies and strategies:

- Consultation and Engagement Policy
- Health & Wellbeing Policy
- Workforce Strategy
- Safer Basildon Strategy
- Strengthening Communities Policy
- ICT Strategy

The accompanying strategy will also be aligned to deliver against the Council’s Corporate Plan

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