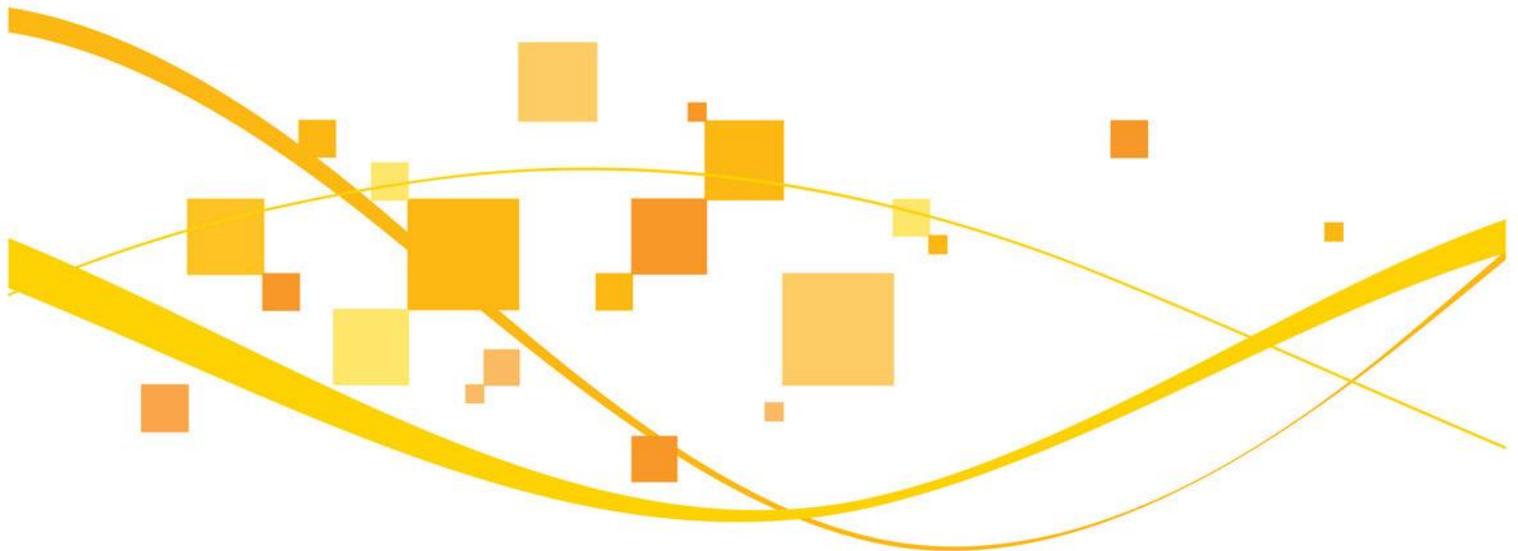


BASILDON COUNCIL INCLUSION & DIVERSITY POLICY (2016 – 2020)

Inclusion & Diversity January 2016

Prepared by Ndunge Kivuitu (Manager of Inclusion & Diversity)



Key Information (To correspond with Covalent)

Author:	Ndunge Kivuitu
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Content

	Page/s
1. Introduction	4
2. Executive Summary	4
3. Policy Statement and Objectives	5
4. Context	5
5. What we mean by Community Leader and advocate	7
6. Responsibilities	10
7. Monitoring and Measuring Success	10
8. Mapping to Corporate Plan	11
9. Core Principles and Emerging Promises	11
10. Outcomes and Priorities	12
11. Links to other Corporate Policies or Partner Documents	12

1. Introduction

The borough of Basildon is becoming increasingly diverse. The Council recognises and values the diversity of all people and communities in the borough and in our workforce, and is committed to providing efficient, effective and relevant services to our residents and to ensuring that we are a good employer.

True equality is more than simply identifying the different communities that are represented in Basildon. It is about ensuring we understand the needs of our residents from a range of diverse backgrounds and enable our diverse community to thrive. In doing this we will not only meet our legal equalities requirements but work towards the Council's vision for the borough:

“Basildon Borough Council is committed to improving the lives of our residents and creating opportunity and prosperity for local people and businesses.”

The Council recognises that to achieve its vision it needs to provide services that are relevant and responsive to our customers. This means ensuring access to council services and fair treatment for all our residents. The Council also recognises, respects and values diversity within its workforce as an asset and key resource in enhancing and maximising performance to effectively meet the diverse needs of its service users.

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 wider society. It is underpinned by the public sector Equality Duty, which supports good decision-making by ensuring public bodies (and others providing public services) consider how different people will be affected by their activities, helping them to deliver policies and services which are efficient and effective, accessible to all and which meet different people's needs.

This policy will be implemented through a strategy which will be monitored year on year. The strategy will be a live document which will take into account other strategies as listed in section 11 of this policy document. The flexibility will also allow for relevant national or local emerging issues to be reflected. The strategy will be monitored through the Council's performance management framework.

2. Executive Summary

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

- Objectives for 2016-2010
- Commitment to addressing inclusion, diversity, community cohesion and Human Rights
- Corporate vision for driving inclusion, diversity, community cohesion and Human Rights
- Policy statement

It also sets out the Council's role:

- As a leader and advocate

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

3. Policy Statement and Objectives (2016-2020)

“Basildon Council is actively committed to promoting inclusion and diversity as a community leader and advocate, as a service provider and as an employer. The Council will actively promote inclusion and diversity through its core business and work to ensure that no person or group of people living, working or visiting the Borough will be directly or indirectly discriminated against.”

The Council is committed to promoting inclusion & diversity by:

Objective 1: Providing accessibility to Council services

Objective 2: Fostering good relations by working with partners to help build a strong sense of community belonging within neighbourhoods

Objective 3: Encouraging communities to play their part in contributing to the pride of the borough and encouraging civic responsibility, so that the contributions of individuals or groups to the community is properly valued

Objective 4:

Deal with discrimination, if and when it arises in the workplace, and promote equality of opportunity by ensuring that the Council treats people fairly and equally as an employer, so all staff have the opportunity to achieve their aspirations regardless of who they are.

4. Context

4.1 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

Publishing relevant equality information will make public bodies transparent about their decision-making processes, and accountable to their service users. It will give the public the information they need to hold public bodies to account for their performance on equality. As a local authority the Council will continue to collect this data and publish it as required by law.

4.2 Defining Diversity

Diversity involves more than just equalities legislation. It is about valuing the full range of differences between people in the workplace and the wider society.

Promoting diversity acknowledges that entry into the workplace, and an employee reaching their potential once there or a resident's ability to access council services can be impacted or influenced by a range of factors beyond the characteristics included within the legislation. For example social, economic and educational background, professional background, hierarchal level, working styles, personality profiles, etc.

Promoting diversity also involves an understanding of the perceptions and experiences of employees and residents, and the impact of the conscious and unconscious on these perceptions and experiences.

Diversity is 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 is about 'harnessing and valuing difference' and whilst the legislation remains an important element, the scope of diversity goes further than the 'legal minimum'. Diversity does not mean that in order to uplift one group, another must be pushed down. It is about seeing each other as equals but accepting each other's differences. It should therefore be

noted that diversity must be valued without (negatively) stereotyping difference so as to avoid perpetuating inequalities

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. If we are to continue to maintain cohesive communities then diversity must be respected within the context of those common factors that unite us all. We must be mindful of different needs and ensure that our services are sensitive and responsive to them. 'One size fits all' conceptions of service provision are not adequate and 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 to develop a representative workforce that is key in equipping us to respond to the diverse needs all sections of our community. To get the best out of such a workforce we must develop their full potential and proactively promote equality in training, learning and career progression.

Diversity allows us to develop better quality services, which are open and accessible to all. Inequality is detrimental to the well-being and cohesion of local communities. And the Council must commit to tackling it both as a major service provider and an employer. Only in this way can the positive advantages and energies that diversity brings realise its full potential and help create a better and more cohesive Basildon Borough.

4.3 Defining Inclusion

Inclusion within the equality and diversity context is:

- about including all people
- about the culture, environment and processes operated by the organisation
- measured by how people feel (results from how people are involved)
- about an individual's experience and the extent to which they feel valued and included.

Working to achieve inclusion involves effectively managing change and a continuous effort to maintain diversity.

5. What we mean by Community Leader and advocate

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 us inclusively representing the views of and leading local communities, as well as listening, acting as a 'go between' on different community views, making choices and taking actions. It is about how we design and promote an inclusive vision and strategy for the community and the future of the area and its diverse communities.

The following factors are all important in 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 if they want to influence something they are able to do that.

- Ensuring services are accessible, responsive and delivered to the agreed standards. This is achieved by bringing local partners together, 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 part of the role requires the council to extend its reach to influence issues and organisations beyond their direct sphere of control and responsibility. This is a key role to enable us to build ownership within and across the community.

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.

Understanding our Role

- *In engaging partners and stakeholders*

As a council we recognise that we cannot work in isolation. At a time when resources continue to be limited there is greater value in working with partners to maximise opportunities for the benefit of the community. We also recognise that partners such as the police and 'NHS family' have information regarding communities that enables us to better plan service provision. The Council also recognises that we have partners in the voluntary and community sector who can help us reach diverse communities and provide services. Similar 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.

- *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.

Through the Council's Strengthening Communities Policy, we aim to support local communities by:

- Seeking to build independence and resilience rather than creating dependency, utilising our services and those of our Partners as the platforms for change.
- Influencing and facilitate the conditions that nurture and support strong, confident, organised, cohesive and influential communities, thereby supporting current and future generations to realise their full potential.

Realising full potential is about equality of opportunity. In other words people having a fair and equal chance to excel and achieve their aspirations within the constraints of what can be realistically achieved.

- *As a service provider,*

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 to ensure our services are accessible to all. Services must use relevant information to align need to service delivery. Embedding diversity and promoting equality is important in our role as service provider to ensure the fullest inclusion possible.

- As an employer,

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 we must put in place appropriate training and development opportunities as well as use a range of processes, such as diversity/workforce monitoring. The Council also needs to put in place inclusive customer engagement to ensure employees have the tools to assist them in embedding diversity and inclusion as appropriate to their roles.

- In engaging with diverse communities (including the voluntary and community sector)

Basildon Council aims to provide efficient and effective services that are relevant and responsive to its service users. This commitment is set out in the Council's Consultation & Engagement Policy Statement and vision which states that,

“the Council is committed to developing a meaningful and effective consultation and engagement process with the community, voluntary groups, stakeholders, local businesses and partners in order that views can be considered and used to inform decision making, policy development and service design.”

The key reason for community engagement and involvement is to help the Council to understand how our policies affect (or will affect) people who use our services. Engagement enables councils, and people with an interest in how councils work, to pool their knowledge and experience of eliminating discrimination, advancing equality of opportunity and fostering good relations. 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 particular there is emphasis on the need to involve disabled people when designing policies, services, projects, etc. As a local authority we will involve communities in service/policy planning and design.

6. 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 and a lead Cabinet Member who will work 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)
- Involve communities in service planning and design
- Work with our partners to promote inclusion, diversity and community cohesion

7 Monitoring and measuring success

The focus of our equality duty is likely to fall increasingly on local transparency and accountability, making the quality and use of information relating to equalities ever more important. The Council will need to continue to show due regard has been given to

equalities' consideration in our decisions, service provision and employment practices, as currently, as per wider equalities legislation.

This policy will be accompanied by a strategy to ensure that the Council meets its requirements under the Equality Act 2010, and positions itself as effectively as possible to meet the needs of groups with protected characteristics in our communities wherever feasible. Progress against the strategy, which will set out the actions being taken, will be managed through the council's performance management processes. The strategy will be reviewed annually to make sure that it remains relevant.

The Council will also use the Equality Framework for Local Government (EFLG) as a performance and improvement tool to enable us to continue embedding and mainstream equalities across the organisation.

8. Mapping to the Corporate Plan

Having reviewed the Inclusion & Diversity Policy and objectives a need has been identified to put in place a focused but simplified framework which maps the Inclusion & Diversity Policy and its accompanying strategy to the Corporate Plan. The Inclusion & Diversity strategy will also be linked to other corporate strategies and delivery plans as listed in section 11 of this policy document.

9. Core Principles and Promises

Core Principles

Core Principles	Levels of Impact			
	High	Medium	Low	None
Get the basics right	•			
Strong Governance and Value for Money	•			
Working with others	•			

Emerging Promises

Emerging Promises	Levels of Impact			
	High	Medium	Low	None
Support local communities to be resilient and to fulfill their own potential	•			
Enhance the local environment			•	
Support an attractive and sustainable urban development (with associated infrastructure)			•	
Maintain and grow the local economy		•		
Enable our communities to be safe and healthy	•			

10. Outcomes

Outcome –

A strong, vibrant and cohesive community, where the Council:

- provides services that are responsive and accessible to the community that we serve
- is considered as an authority that treats people fairly
- is seen to be a good employer of choice that provides staff with the skills, knowledge and opportunity to fulfil their aspirations in the workplace

11. Links to other Corporate Policies or Partner documents

Having reviewed the policy and inclusion & diversity objectives, the Council will ensure that the accompanying strategy helps to deliver against the Corporate Plan (and its accompanying Outcomes Framework). This policy also has links to the following policies and strategies:

- Strengthening Communities Policy
- The Community Strategy
- Housing Strategy
- Consultation and Engagement Policy
- Voluntary Sector Strategy