

**23 January 2018**

**ITEM: 5**

## **Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

### **Single Equality Scheme and Corporate Equality Framework 2018 – 2022**

**Wards and communities affected:**

All

**Key Decision:**

Key

**Report of:** Natalie Warren, Strategic Lead Community Development and Equalities

**Accountable Assistant Director:** Les Billingham, Assistant Director Adult Social Care and Community Development

**Accountable Director:** Roger Harris, Corporate Director Adults, Housing and Health

**This report is** Public

#### **Executive Summary**

Thurrock Council has developed a consolidated Single Equality Scheme (hereon 'SES') and Corporate Equality Framework (hereon 'CEF') that sets out how the organisation will challenge discrimination and promote equal opportunity in all aspects of its work over the next four years.

The combined document demonstrates how the organisation will meet the aims of the Equality Duty and the requirement to prepare and publish one or more equalities objectives.

At the forefront is the Council's Equality and Diversity Statement that incorporates a commitment to eliminating anti-Semitism in line with the Government's formal adoption of the same in December 2016.

The SES presents the Council's four strategic objectives as follows to:

- improve access to services,
- reduce poverty,
- build cohesion and create welcoming communities, and,
- develop a workforce that is equipped with the skills and confidence to support and enable our changing organisation and communities

The new scheme incorporates the Council's Corporate Equality Framework whilst building on the achievements the Council has made in recent years to promote equality and opportunities for all within the organisation and wider communities.

It covers all the protected characteristics of Age, Disability, Gender Reassignment, Marriage and Civil Partnership, Pregnancy and Maternity, Race, Religion or Belief, Sex, and Sexual Orientation whilst celebrating some of the existing organisations that externally validate the Council's commitment to equality.

## 1. Recommendation(s)

### 1.1 That Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee comment on the draft Single Equality Scheme and Corporate Equality Framework 2018 – 2022.

## 2. Introduction and Background

2.1 In April 2011 the general Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) was implemented, which requires local authorities when they are exercising public functions to have due regard to the need to:

- eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation;
- advance equality of opportunity between those who share a protected characteristic and those who do not, and,
- foster good relations between those who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not.

2.2 The Equality Act 2010 also requires local authorities to:

- publish information annually to demonstrate how they meet the equality duty., and,
- prepare and publish one or more objectives to meet any of the aims of the Equality Duty at least every four years.

2.3 Each year we publish our Annual Workforce Equality Report, which provides information about the make-up of our workforce. To view the Council's most recent Annual Equality Report, please refer to:

<https://www.thurrock.gov.uk/equality-and-fairness/equality-duty>

2.4 Thurrock Council has chosen to develop a new combined Single Equality Scheme and Corporate Equality Framework for the period 2018-2022 with a supporting title '**Opportunity for all**'.

2.5 Although producing and publishing specific Equality Schemes no longer form part of our public duties under law, having a published Single Equality Scheme alongside the Corporate Equality Framework, will help the Council to ensure that it complies with the specific and general duties set out in the Equality Act 2010, assist in promoting community cohesion and improve its knowledge of equality and diversity issues.

## 3. Issues, Options and Analysis of Options

3.1 Thurrock has an ambitious growth strategy to create a significant number of new jobs by 2021. With our regeneration agenda that includes the world's

most modern port, major public realm improvement schemes and the transformation of Purfleet we must work with our partners, staff and communities to ensure that the future growth and opportunities for Thurrock are shaped and accessed by those that live and work in the borough.

- 3.2 The draft Single Equality Scheme and Corporate Equality Framework sets out our commitment to help to build pride, responsibility and respect with residents and employees until 2022. It sets out the Council's community leadership role and our commitment to championing equality and embracing the diversity of our communities as a central pillar to the functions and operation of the Council.
- 3.3 We will continue to build on the success of our recent workforce initiatives and feedback from our staff and independent reviews, and provide an environment where employees feel they are treated with dignity and fairness, and where skills and experience are valued as we move towards new and innovative means for service delivery across the organisation.
- 3.4 Our approach to developing this scheme is based on meeting our statutory responsibilities but also a wider and more pragmatic approach to making fairness and equality a reality for staff and residents. The scheme acts as a framework highlighting the range of work supported across the council to advance equality and tackle discrimination. The scheme is intended to be a live document and will be updated as necessary to reflect changes to existing strategies and future guidance. In addition, it will develop to reflect our growing and changing community profile.

#### **4. Reasons for Recommendation**

- 4.1 Whilst the publication of a Single Equality Scheme is no longer a requirement set out in legislation, a robust up to date Single Equality Scheme and supporting Corporate Equality Framework is an opportunity for the Council to set out its equality objectives and demonstrate how we are going to embed the principles of equality and diversity in our service provision and employment practice.
- 4.2 The Single Equality Scheme sets out key objectives over the four year period to 2022. The scheme recognises existing strategies and workstreams that already help achieve these objectives. Future service plans from across directorates will capture further work and achievements towards these objectives to highlight work across the council to advance equality and tackle discrimination.

#### **5. Consultation (including Overview and Scrutiny, if applicable)**

- 5.1 The equality objectives set out in the scheme are based on the consultation results from the Fairness Commission which reported to Cabinet in March 2016. Subsequent work with teams across council services has scoped the range of work supporting the objectives, the content of which is based on

specific consultation. Further comment is welcomed from Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

## **6. Impact on corporate policies, priorities, performance and community impact**

6.1 The Single Equality Scheme will have a significant positive impact on a number of corporate priorities in particular building pride, responsibility and respect in Thurrock's communities and its residents.

## **7. Implications**

### **7.1 Financial**

Implications verified by: **Jo Freeman**  
**Management Accountant Social Care & Commissioning**

There are no direct financial implications arising from this report. The costs relating to the implementation of the arrangements set out in the appended document will be funded from existing resources.

### **7.2 Legal**

Implications verified by: **David Lawson**  
**Assistant Director of Law & Governance and Monitoring Officer**

This combined Single Equality Scheme and Corporate Equality Framework provides a basis for compliance with equality legislation and the general duty to eliminate discrimination and promote equality of opportunity. It is imperative that the Council abides by legislation to avoid legal challenges.

### **7.3 Diversity and Equality**

Implications verified by: **Natalie Warren**  
**Strategic Lead, Community Development and Equalities**

The refreshed Single Equality Scheme and Corporate Equality Framework has the aim of improving equality outcomes across the Council and within the local community.

This combined Single Equality Scheme and Corporate Equality Framework will ensure the Council meets its obligations under the Equality Act 2010. It will also ensure measurable progress in tackling inequality and promoting

fairness for all. The document has implications for all services and protected characteristics.

7.4 **Other implications** (where significant) – i.e. Staff, Health, Sustainability, Crime and Disorder)

- None applicable

8. **Background papers used in preparing the report** (including their location on the Council's website or identification whether any are exempt or protected by copyright):

Thurrock Fairness Commission Report February 2016

[https://www.thurrock.gov.uk/sites/default/files/assets/documents/fairness\\_commission\\_report\\_201602\\_v01.pdf](https://www.thurrock.gov.uk/sites/default/files/assets/documents/fairness_commission_report_201602_v01.pdf)

9. **Appendices to the report**

- Appendix 1 – Draft Single Equality Scheme and Corporate Equality Framework for Thurrock Council (2018-2022)

**Report Author:**

Becky Price

Community Development Officer

Adult Social Care and Community Development, Community Development and Equalities Team