

**Policy and Resources Committee
Monday, 13 November 2023**

PART I

**Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy 2023-26
(ADSPH)**

1 Summary

- 1.1 This report presents the final Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Policy (Appendix I), taking into consideration feedback from the Equalities Sub-committee and public consultation.
- 1.2 This report summarises feedback from the public consultation.

2 Details

- 2.1 The Equality Act 2010 introduced a number of responsibilities for councils, including a public sector equality duty and a requirement to promote equality of opportunity between those with “protected characteristics” and others.
- 2.2 The public sector equality duty requires that the council, in the exercise of it’s functions, have due regard to:
 - 2.2.1 Eliminating unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation, and other conduct prohibited by the act.
 - 2.2.2 Advancing equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
 - 2.2.3 Fostering good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- 2.3 The nine legally protected characteristics are: disability, age, ethnicity, sexual orientation, religion or belief, sex, gender reassignment, marriage & civil partnership and pregnancy & maternity.
- 2.4 In 2021 a comprehensive review was conducted with all services to gather evidence of how they have achieved the 2016-20 objectives to which they had committed. Some highlights and achievements are noted below.

Objective	Achievement
Promoting Community leadership and community cohesion	Creating and promoting a “Prejudice and Discrimination” survey to capture the experiences of residents in relation to hate crime, hate incidents, prejudice, discrimination and microaggressions.
	Communication to all partners and Councillors relating to changing provision, support available and new initiatives through the Partnership Bulletin.
	Hosting a regular Homelessness Forum with partnership organisations to be aware of current trends, share information on

	rough sleepers and projects and explore funding opportunities. This streamlines the referral process and creates pathways for those with complex needs threatened with homelessness.
Consultation / Community Engagement and Communication	All customer surveys include questions on the respondents demographic information. This allows staff to make comparisons to local data and ensure promotion to residents who are not represented in the results.
	Council meetings publish meetings and agendas and provide residents with Right To Speak. In addition, large print agenda's are made available and a hearing loop is available to attendee's with hearing difficulties.
	Pensioners' Forum and Council e-newsletters developed to encourage engagement and communicate projects and support to residents. Readership is increasing and positive feedback received.
Promoting Equality in Service Delivery	Three Rivers trialed an Adults with Complex Needs Pilot in order to provide targeted support to residents that were coming to frequent attention of public sector organisations
	Established the Community Support Service, providing whole systems support to residents with a mental wellbeing need. This service works in partnership with other organisations in order to provide intensive support and onward discharge to universal services.
	Follow Code for Crown Prosecutors and have assisted other departments in responses to the LGO, where no complaints have been upheld, as stated in the last LGO report. Continued to balance equalities advice/rights with the rights of Freedom of Speech and have strongly upheld both.
Promoting Equality of Opportunity in Employment and Training	Equality and Diversity e-learning module is provided to all staff and Councillors.
Evaluating the Success of Our Equalities Commitments	Adoption of Anti-Semitism and Islamophobia statements
	The Equalities Sub-Committee was established in 2020 and convenes bi-annually. It is a sub-committee of the Policy and Resources Committee and reports to Full Council.
	Undertook equalities audit in 2022, with recommendations relating to updated policy and objectives & mandatory requirement for equalities and diversity training.

2.5 In 2022, as part of the review of the current equality policy, the Equalities Sub-committee, March 2022, and Policy and Resources Committee, held on 18 July 2022, approved revised equality objectives for the period 2022-2026 which are:

2.5.1 To promote equality of opportunity in employment & training

- 2.5.2 To improve equality and access to services for all residents
- 2.5.3 To strengthen knowledge and understanding of all Three Rivers communities.
- 2.5.4 To celebrate diversity, promote inclusion and enhance community life in partnership with communities.
- 2.6 The policy presents aims in order to achieve these objectives, roles and responsibilities for council members, management and staff, and how this will be monitored.
- 2.7 The objectives listed above, public consultation and the findings of the 2023 Equality Duty Information Report informed the development of a new Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy 2023-26.
- 2.8 The policy also now reflects the new Corporate Framework and reflects the demographic profile of the district and updated objectives and actions relating to these from the 2021 Census.
- 2.9 A public consultation launched on 8 August until 31 August 2023 obtained views on the aims from people who live and work in Three Rivers.
 - 2.9.1 45 people completed the survey on the Have your say platform. 40% of respondents were residents and 78% worked for an organisation based within the District. 36% of respondents worked for a local organisation but did not live within Three Rivers. 24% did not respond to the question.
 - 2.9.2 Overall, respondents agreed with the proposed actions included within the policy. Some responses presented additional actions that should be considered to enhance the objectives. This included, improving awareness and understanding of different cultures, customs and traditions & taking into consideration neurodiversity in addition to autism.
 - 2.9.3 2% disagree with the council's aim to have a workforce that is representative of the communities we serve, with an equality profile that broadly reflects the economically active population within the district. However, their disagreement was in response to the "economically active population of the district".
 - 2.9.4 5% disagree with the council's aim to deliver services that are responsive to changes in the district and to individual need. Feedback included that the council should not be responsive to change and should only represent those living within the district.
 - 2.9.5 7% disagree with the council's aim to deliver services that adopt a social model of disability and difference. Feedback included that a medical model of disability would also be valid.
 - 2.9.6 98% agree with the council's aim to deliver services that continuously seek to improve customer experience.
 - 2.9.7 98% agree with the council's aim to use high quality evidence and insight to develop consultation and engagement mechanisms that increase the participation and needs assessment of under-represented, disadvantaged or socially excluded communities and individuals.

- 2.9.8 95% agree with the council's aim to encourage all our communities to play an active role in civil society across the district.
- 2.9.9 93% agree with the council's aim to Celebrate diversity and show solidarity with our communities through significant events, including but not limited to Black History month, LGBTQ+ Pride, Holocaust Memorial Day, Remembrance Sunday, International Women's Day and a wide range of religious festivals.
- 2.9.10 Demographic information of those completing the consultation – some respondents did not provide this information.
- 2.9.11 48% of respondents were born between 1980-2000, 23-43 year olds. This is not reflective of the population from the 2021 census. The most common age for Three Rivers adult population was aged between 40-59 at the time of the census, so assumed to be 42-61 today.
- 2.9.12 47% were women, 36% were men. 2021 Census shows that 51% of the population within Three Rivers are women & 49% are men.
- 2.9.13 76% were of White British ethnic background. 9% were from either Indian, Caribbean & African ethnic backgrounds. This is not reflective of residents from diverse ethnic backgrounds living in the district. The 2021 census showed that 15.2% of the population were from an Asian or British Asian ethnic background, and 2.4% from a Black or Black British background.

3 Next Steps

- 3.1 No significant changes are proposed to the policy as a result of the consultation, which showed overall support for the policy.
- 3.2 As part of the implementation the Strategy and Partnerships team will be organising engagement events with staff, such as awareness raising or question and answer session in order to communicate the aims of the policy and implementation.
- 3.3 The Partnerships team will work with individual teams to identify and develop their specific actions.
- 3.4 Online equality and diversity training which we implemented in 2022 will continue to be available to staff and councillors. Further training requirements will be reviewed and implemented by HR.
- 3.5 This policy and the objectives will be reviewed together in 2026.

4 Options and Reasons for Recommendations

- 4.1.1 Under the Equality Act (2010) the Council has a duty to have policies and procedures in place in relation to the achievement of its equalities objectives. It is good practise for the council to regularly review and as necessary refresh its policy documents.
- 4.1.2 No other options.

5 Policy/Budget Reference and Implications

- 5.1 The recommendations in this report are not within the Council's agreed policy and budgets. If progressed to approval this new policy will replace and override the 2018 policy.
- 5.2 The purpose of this proposed policy is to meet the requirements of the Council as stated in the Equality Act 2010.

Environmental, Customer Services Centre

None specific.

6 Financial Implications

- 6.1 No additional costs.

7 Legal Implications

- 7.1 Under the Equality Act (2010) the council has specific duties in relation to equalities. This policy provides an up to date framework under which the council can fulfil those duties.

8 Equal Opportunities Implications

- 8.1 Impact Assessment
- 8.2 The projects, work streams and policy contained within the report all contribute to the council positively fulfilling its duties and realising its ambitions under the Equality Act (2010) and related legislation as well as its own corporate framework.

9 Staffing Implications

- 9.1 No impact on staffing. Policy will impact on recruitment process and providing training for staff and members.

10 Community Safety Implications

- 10.1 A number of actions both supported and proposed within the revised policy exist to improve community safety (e.g. to prevent and address hate incidents and crime) for the districts residents.

11 Public Health implications

- 11.1 A number of actions both supported and proposed within the revised policy exist to improve overall health and wellbeing (e.g. to prevent and address health inequalities) of the districts residents.

12 Communications and Website Implications

- 12.1 A number of actions both supported and proposed within the revised policy will need to be communicated internally, with members and residents of Three Rivers. Promotion may be required for some public events held in relation to aims within the policy.

13 Risk and Health & Safety Implications

- 13.1 The Council has agreed its risk management strategy which can be found on the website at <http://www.threerivers.gov.uk>. In addition, the risks of the proposals in

the report have also been assessed against the Council's duties under Health and Safety legislation relating to employees, visitors and persons affected by our operations. The risk management implications of this report are detailed below.

- 13.2 The subject of this report is covered by within all service plans. Any risks resulting from this report will be included in the risk register and, if necessary, managed within this/these plan(s).

Nature of Risk	Consequence	Suggested Control Measures	Response <i>(tolerate, treat, terminate, transfer)</i>	Risk Rating <i>(combination of likelihood and impact)</i>
The council fails to reflect it's duties and practices under the Equality Act 2010.	<p>Complaints</p> <p>Damage to reputation</p> <p>Failure to identify and eradicate any form of discrimination, direct or indirect.</p> <p>Equality and Human Rights commission escalation</p>	Annual reporting within Equality Duty.	Tolerate	4

- 13.3 The above risks are scored using the matrix below. The Council has determined its aversion to risk and is prepared to tolerate risks where the combination of impact and likelihood scores 6 or less.

Very Likely Likelihood ▼	Low 4	High 8	Very High 12	Very High 16
	Low 3	Medium 6	High 9	Very High 12

	Low 2	Low 4	Medium 6	High 8
	Low 1	Low 2	Low 3	Low 4
Impact				
Low -----> Unacceptable				

Impact Score

4 (Catastrophic)

3 (Critical)

2 (Significant)

1 (Marginal)

Likelihood Score

4 (Very Likely (≥80%))

3 (Likely (21-79%))

2 (Unlikely (6-20%))

1 (Remote (≤5%))

13.4 In the officers' opinion none of the new risks above, were they to come about, would seriously prejudice the achievement of the Strategic Plan and are therefore operational risks. The effectiveness of the management of operational risks is reviewed by the Audit Committee annually.

14 Recommendation

14.1 **That:**

14.2 The Policy and Resources Committee recommend the policy to Council.

That public access to the report be immediate

That public access to the decision be immediate

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Data Quality

Data sources:

Census 2021

Data checked by:

Rebecca Young, Head of Strategy and Partnerships

Data rating:

1	Poor	
2	Sufficient	
3	High	x

Background Papers

Final Internal Audit Report 2021/22

APPENDICES / ATTACHMENTS

- I. Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy
- II. Consultation results