



***Achieving Accessibility, Equality and Diversity***

**Our Four Year Equality Scheme  
Swale Borough Council**

**1 April 2011 – 31 March 2015**

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## Foreword

Swale Borough Council's mission is to deliver, directly and in partnership with others, a variety of services to meet and champion the needs of the local community. We aim to be a performance led organisation that delivers excellent public services, good value for money and effective community leadership. In 2007 we published our first corporate plan and our first equality strategy. Both were developed by working closely with those with an interest in what we do, to ensure that our priorities and future work plans met the needs of our local society. Our strategy demonstrated our commitment to not only meeting but exceeding our legal duties to promote disability, gender and race equality and good relations in everything we do.

Looking back at what we set out to achieve it is clear that our plan was quite rightly ambitious and we have made some great progress. For example, we have conducted an equal pay audit, introduced a new pay and reward structure to address the inequalities identified, delivered equality and diversity training to all our front line staff, run briefing sessions for Councillors, introduced equality and diversity monitoring guidelines and reviewed our approach to conducting equality impact assessments.

Looking ahead this Equality Scheme sets out our aims to make Swale a fairer place – based on the issues you have told us about. We have listened to your comments and made sure this scheme sets out clear priorities, is easy to read and shows who is responsible for progress. The Borough of Swale is becoming an increasingly more diverse place and as a Council we need to be tailoring our services to meet those changing needs whilst providing value for money for local residents. We also need to take a leading role in making Swale a place where everyone has equal life chances – regardless of age, race, disability, sexual orientation, religion or belief, sex, marital status, gender identity, pregnancy or maternity leave rights.

Our equality scheme focuses on the key areas of our employment and working practices, and our service delivery and places equality right at the core of our organisation. Your ideas have been invaluable, often inspiring, and will have a real impact on how we do things. We know that the success of this scheme depends on the leadership from both elected members and managers throughout the Council and will demand a high level of commitment. We have put in place a corporate equalities group to drive through progress at a team and department level and help us *achieve accessibility, equality and diversity* in how we deliver services.

I would personally like to thank you for helping us to shape our equality scheme and for your ongoing involvement and support

**Cllr John Morris**  
**Lead Member for Equalities and Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Safer & Stronger Communities**

# Our Equalities Scheme 2011 - 2015

## Introducing Our Scheme

The Equalities Act 2010 introduced the Public Sector Equality Duty which applies to all public bodies and any private and voluntary bodies carrying out public functions. The Duty places a legal requirement on Swale Borough Council in carrying out its functions to:

- a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation
- b) advance equality of opportunity between different groups
- c) foster good relations between different groups

The Duty covers people with the following protected characteristics – age, race, disability, sexual orientation, religion or belief, sex (previously referred to as gender), gender reassignment and pregnancy and maternity. The eliminating discrimination aim also covers marriage and civil partnership.

Advancing equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and persons who do not includes

- removing or minimising disadvantage suffered by persons who share a relevant protected characteristic that are connected to that characteristic;
- taking steps to meet the needs of persons who share a relevant protected characteristic that are different from the needs of persons who do not share it;
- encouraging persons who share a relevant protected characteristic to participate in public life or in any other activity in which participation by such persons is disproportionately low.

Fostering good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not includes tackling prejudice, promoting understanding and may involve treating some persons more favourably than others.

Public bodies like councils need to move away from a 'one size fits all' approach and develop and deliver services that meet the needs of all service users. This should provide a strategic and systematic means of tackling major entrenched disadvantage and equality gaps in all public service areas including housing, planning, waste collection and local engagement, which in turn should lead to far more effective focusing of public funds and increased access to, and satisfaction with, public services. It should also increase accountability, as users of public services are more enabled to challenge public bodies about the action they are taking.

Our four year equality scheme sets out how we will meet those legal requirements. We call this our single equality scheme as it reflects the Council's full remit.

An equality scheme describes how an organisation will fulfil its moral, social and legal obligations to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation; advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations.

Swale Borough Council views equality, human rights and good relations between people as something that affects us all, regardless of our backgrounds, and we are committed to working closely with all those who are interested in, or affected by, our work. We see this as an ongoing process enabling individuals and organisations to influence and shape our work.

The provision of excellent customer care is very important to Swale Borough Council and something that we hope to improve further with your help. One of our priorities, stated in our Corporate Plan, is *“to become a high performing organisation”* and we have a specific performance priority action linked to this, *“improve our approach to customer care and work with our communities to make our services more responsive to local needs”*.

This scheme shows how we intend to achieve these aims. This relates not only to the front line staff, but service providers throughout the Council who have contact with members of our public who use our services, irrespective of the method of communication used, we aim to provide excellent and efficient services to everyone.

It demonstrates our commitment to providing a variety of ways in which our customers will be able to access our services; providing a realistic balance between customer requirements, enhanced service availability, more efficient service provision and the available resources.

This scheme sets out clear guidelines for staff, elected members and our customers showing how we aim to provide excellent customer service. It clarifies what customers can expect of us when accessing any of the Council's services we provide for them.

It also aims to focus the organisation as a whole in terms of its approach to customer contact and the provision of consistently high standards of customer service.

In summary, we will ensure that:

- Our services are delivered with our customers' needs in mind
- There is an appropriate and convenient choice of ways to access our services
- We have a clear knowledge and understanding of our customers' needs
- Our customers will, wherever possible, have to contact us only once and may easily track the progress of their enquiries
- We will deliver the services in an efficient and cost effective manner

## Political Composition

The Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007, requires councils to adopt one of two political management arrangements – a leader and cabinet (executive) model or a mayor and cabinet (executive) model.

Swale Borough Council's political leadership is based on the leader and cabinet (executive) model of 10 Members. The cabinet (executive) is responsible for: agreeing new policy and the budget; conducting strategic service reviews; promoting the council's interests in partnership and implementing decisions of the full council with the council's officers.

The political composition of the Council as at 31 January 2011.

Conservative	33
Labour	10
Liberal Democratic	3
Independent	1
Total number of Seats	47

The council decided to move to four yearly elections with effect from May 2011 and as part of this process we aim to improve the information we capture on the profile of our Councillors.

## Council Services

Swale Borough Council is one of 12 districts, which together with Kent County Council and Medway Unitary Authority comprise the local authorities within Kent. Local authorities are created by Acts of Parliament and their powers are determined by Parliament.

Councils provide three types of service to their communities:

- *statutory services* – these are services that councils must provide as set out in legislation such as refuse collection
- *regulatory services* – this is the name given to a group of services which exist to ensure public, consumer, environmental and worker protection and includes pub licensing
- *discretionary services* – these are services that councils may choose to provide such as tourism



## How We Developed the Scheme

We asked a range of voluntary organisations, citizens, public and community workers and our employees for their views. The groups we spoke to included organisations working on race, gender, disability, religion and belief, sexuality and age equality issues.

### What People Said

*Swale Youth Forum* told us that young people liked to be engaged through fun, interactive sessions using easy to understand language. People from groups representing *older people* told us they wanted to see an increase in sports activity provisions for all ages and improved public transport.

Disabled people told us

- Access doesn't start at first contact and should start before requiring services. Physical access isn't just to the building ... it's the journey to and from. Concerns re street furniture (A boards, parked vehicles, overhanging branches etc).
- Greater use of Easy Read and Plain English required.
- Greater involvement / consultation.

Public and community workers told us they would like to see better co-ordination of community engagement activity and the majority of those involved in the peer review were keen to be more involved in local engagement activity

People from groups representing *race*

### What we will endeavour to do

Be more creative in how we interact with young people

We will ensure that disabled and older peoples access to public transport will be considered as part of any future regeneration proposals.

We will endeavour to check more of our publications to ensure consistent definitions and easy to understand language (less public sector jargon)

We will also develop web information for definitions and contacts

Establish a LSP Stronger Community Group with a remit that includes co-ordinating community engagement activity and providing guidance and a link into diverse groups across the borough.

We will also endeavour to

- Improve feedback both to and from the council to residents
- Show what has changed as a result of engagement and empowerment Develop standards for response times to requests and questions from the public
- Develop ward based contact cards aligned to ward walks in priority neighbourhoods

We plan to makes some further

told us

- They experience a number of language barriers e.g. the website only translates the first page.
- We need to streamline Gypsy and Traveller planning issues / site provision

Other things people told us they want

- An increased promotion of the contribution from all minority groups.
- To include more positive equality messages in our work
- To increase input / offer more cultural diverse program
- Offer more funding for community projects.

changes to our website front page and do more to promote the availability of other formats.

In the current financial climate it is unlikely that we will be able to find funding to offer a wider range of sporting activities, a more culturally diverse programme of activities, provide more funding for community projects. We will however endeavour to have greater consideration of cultural diversity when commissioning new services. We will also strengthen our equality procurement framework so that suppliers can demonstrate their commitment to equality and explore training for suppliers as necessary.

## **Our evidence base**

In developing our four year equality scheme we have gathered evidence from a number of sources to determine how we are delivering equality within our employment practices, our service delivery and our working practices.

- Kent County Council Swale Area Profile
- Kent County Council Swale Equality & Diversity Profile
- Kent County Council Mosaic Origins Profile for Swale
- Swale Borough Council Workforce Profile
- Equality & Diversity Monitoring Data obtained through consultations

We will continue to gather information to establish:

- Which groups are not/using our services
- The needs of service users
- How to reach under-represented groups
- How satisfied different groups are with our services
- How to use our resources better
- The make-up of our workforce
- How personnel practices affect different groups



### *Key observations*

- Between 1991 and 2009 the resident population for Swale grew by 13.6% with the largest single increase being in the 45-59 age group.

### Age

- the 40-44 age group has the highest proportion of the population (8%)
- the 85+ age group has the smallest proportion of the population (1.8%)

### Sex

- 50.4% of the population in Swale are female and 49.6% is male

### Race

- Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) residents account for 4.8% of the population in Swale, which is below the average for the Kent County Council (KCC) area of 6.3% and the national average of 11.8%
- Indian is the biggest of the BME groups in Swale.
- In Swale the dominant Origins Group (excluding English, Celtic and Irish) is Western European. 2.28% of people aged 18+ are in this origins group, and compared to the KCC area Swale has a higher proportion of people who are Black Caribbean.

### Religion or Belief

- In Swale, as in the KCC area and England and Wales as a whole, the highest proportion of people (75.9%) state their religion as Christianity.
- A higher proportion of people in Swale say they are Christian or have no religion than the average for the KCC area
- In Swale males make up a higher proportion of Buddhists, Hindus, Jews, Muslims, Sikhs, than females
- Males are more likely to say that they have no religion.
- In Swale 17.8% of males say they have no religion as opposed to 13.1% of females.

### Disability

- 16.9% of residents in Swale have a limiting long term illness, this is above the KCC average (16.5%) and below the national average (17.6%)
- 8% of people claim a disability related benefit in Swale, this is above the KCC average (7.4%) and similar to the national average (8.2%)

### Marital Status

- 43% of residents in Swale are single
- 35% of residents are in a first marriage
- 7% of Swale residents are divorced
- 7% considered themselves to have remarried
- 6% are widowed
- 2% are separated but still legally married
- Civil partnerships Act 2004 came into force on 5 December 2005 and the annual count of civil partnerships across Kent shows 343 partnerships for 2006, 194 partnerships for 2007 and 167 partnerships for 2008.

Currently we no data relating to gender reassignment/transgender or sexual orientation is available at a local level.

## The Scheme

This four year equality scheme covers the period from 1 April 2011 to 31 March 2015 and be closely linked to our corporate plan and describes how Swale Borough Council will fulfil its moral, social and legal obligations to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation; advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations.

## Our Equality Priorities

Through working in partnership with stakeholders and reviewing a range of evidence sources we have identified the three key priorities for our single equalities scheme.

- 1) Build equality in how we commission, procure and deliver services
- 2) Promote equality as a local employer
- 3) Improve local engagement

We have developed an action plan to focus on these priorities and provide clear accountability for their delivery.

## Equality Objective 1: Build Equality into How We Commission, Procure and Deliver Services

### Commissioning and Procurement

By procurement we mean how we source goods, facilities and services from external suppliers. By commissioning we mean the detail of the agreements we enter into for those services. We believe that it is essential that people and organisations we sign contracts with to work on our behalf are accountable to us, and aspire to our vision and mission. We want them to abide by our equality and human rights obligations, including our duty to protect the human rights of those who use our services.

#### *Key observations*

- The Council spends around £19 million per annum in relation to its day-to-day operations as well as the delivery of the programme of works in relation to our key strategic priorities.
- The Council will procure the goods and services that it has determined to commission for the people of Swale, in a cost effective manner, in accordance with our Procurement Policy.

#### *Areas for improvement*

- We will strengthen our equality procurement framework so that suppliers can demonstrate their commitment to equality and explore training for suppliers as necessary.

- We will however endeavour to have greater consideration of cultural diversity when commissioning new services.
- We will identify the equality profile of organisations that supply services for us and set targets to ensure they reflect the communities we serve.
- We will engage with our customers and other stakeholders to determine that their service requirements are met through effective commissioning and value for money procurement

## **Delivering Services**

The Council is responsible for both commissioning and delivering services to the local people.

### *Key observations*

- 4 out of 5 people who have been in contact with local council services feel they have been treated with respect

### *Areas for improvement*

- We will provide our services through a variety of means; face to face, electronic, phone or written letter depending on customer need
- We will ensure that our services are accessible to all.
- We will continue to improve the accessibility of our services
- We will respond to our customers' needs in accordance with agreed service standards.
- We will aim to deliver high levels of customer satisfaction with our services
- We will treat all of our customers with respect by being polite, welcoming and courteous.
- We will monitor the effectiveness of the information, advice and guidance given by our front line services (such as housing services, housing benefits and planning) to ensure they reach community groups.
- We will monitor the effectiveness of our "do it online services" and ensure that they reach community groups.
- We will ensure that disabled and older peoples access to public transport will be considered as part of any future regeneration proposals.

## **Equality Objective 2: Promoting Equality as a Local Employer**

### **Workforce Diversity**

We have a duty to make sure that those policies and practices that affect our staff are fair and promote equality of outcome. Members of staff have rights in their capacity as employees. We want to enable all our staff to be fully involved in the Council's work, to protect them from unfair treatment, to uphold our obligations to provide job descriptions, work plans, appraisals and related performance and monitoring systems, and to give them support, development opportunities and training.

To inform our priority areas for improvement we have gathered evidence from our equality monitoring data, equality impact assessments and consultation with staff, including our staff survey.

#### *Key Observations*

- 68 per cent of the Swale Borough Council (SBC) workforce are female – much higher than the proportion of economically active women in the Swale workforce as a whole which is around 45 per cent.
- 2 per cent of our workforce describe themselves as having a disability, compared to 18 per cent of the resident population as a whole
- 1 per cent of our workforce are from ethnic minorities compared to 4 per cent in the Swale economically active population as a whole.
- Just under half of staff are aged 26 to 45, with the 8 per cent aged 17 to 25 and the remainder aged 46 or above. 1 per cent are over 65.
- We do not effectively currently capture information on our staff's religious belief or sexual orientation.

#### *Areas for Improvement*

- We will address gaps in our knowledge base to ensure that we are prioritising key equality areas in our work.
- We will enhance our monitoring and analysis systems to improve data collection, particularly around equality issues.
- We will encourage the diversity of our staff to reflect the communities we serve across all the equality areas and will continue to monitor our workforce profile
- We will promote a workplace environment where all our staff are treated with dignity and respect.
- We will continue to improve accessibility of our working practices and buildings.

### **Equal Pay Gap**

#### *Key Observations*

- During 2009 we undertook an equal pay audit and this identified a number of areas where there were potential equal pay issues. As a result we have implemented a new pay and reward structure for our staff which should address the equal pay issues identified.

#### *Areas for Improvement*

- We will continue to implement the proposed changes set out in the pay and reward strategy which address the issues identified in the equal pay audit.

## **Workforce training**

### *Key Observations*

- The Council is committed to offering learning and development opportunities to all staff, and will work in a targeted way to ensure all staff can access training and are able to use the skills required for their career progression. This will ensure opportunities exist to support the achievement of our pay gap target.

### *Areas for Improvement*

- We need to ensure that monitoring arrangements are in place to review access to and evaluation of training for each protected characteristic and identify whether there are any potential areas for action.
- We will continue to provide our staff with relevant on going training and development on equality and diversity issues.

## **Workforce disciplinary & grievance procedures**

Between April 2004 and May 2010, 19 people employed by Swale Borough Council were subject to disciplinary, grievance or capability procedures. 6 cases resulted in dismissal, 4 cases resulted in resignation, 1 in ill-health retirement, 4 in final written warning and 4 cases were resolved/no case to answer/decision was upheld by an employment tribunal. The Council has no disciplinary hearings that have progressed to formal action to report on.

### *Key observations*

- 52 per cent of grievances have been raised against male staff.
- 100 per cent of grievances have been raised against white staff.
- The proportion of male, and white staff who have a grievance raised against them is disproportionate to the overall numbers within the Council.
- We do not currently capture details of disability, religious belief or sexual orientation of the person against whom a grievance has been taken
- We do not currently capture profile details of who raised the grievance

### *Areas for improvement*

- We need to develop our monitoring systems to capture the protected characteristics of the individuals raising a grievance

## **Equality Objective 3: Improving Local Engagement**

All public sector bodies should have an embedded culture of engagement and empowerment which considers the possibilities for the provision of information to, consultation and engagement with and involvement of local people across all functions.



## **Marketing and Communications**

We produce publications, marketing material and run accessible and challenging media campaigns that take particular issues and highlight them in imaginative ways.

### *Key observations*

- Stakeholders found our residents' magazine was accessible and easy to read.
- Stakeholders were keen to see us use a range of approaches when we are launching our campaigns.

### *Areas for improvement*

- We will develop a robust and accessible communications strategy
- We will start to develop performance indicators at the start of each of our campaigns that clearly identifies the audiences we are trying to reach, recognising that different communication approaches are required to reach different groups.
- We will sample a selection of our publications and quality assure them against our branding guidelines, which make specific reference to positive images.
- We will endeavour to check more of our publications to ensure consistent definitions and easy to understand language (less public sector jargon)
- We will also do some further work to our website front page, develop web information for definitions and contacts and do more to promote the availability of other formats.

## **Customer Service Centre**

The Customer Service Centre is made up of a dedicated team of advisors who deal with telephone and email enquiries on council services.

### *Key observations*

- In 2009-10 our customer service centre dealt with 163,169 calls.
- The quality of monitoring data around the profile of callers to our customer services centre needs strengthening.

### *Areas for improvement*

- We will resolve as many enquiries as possible at the first contact, ensuring completion of those requests which are handed over to departments, partners or external contractors
- We will improve the quality of monitoring data around the profile of callers to our customer services centre.
- We also need to improve our monitoring systems for complaints to capture the protected characteristics of the individuals submitting a complaint, and whether the complaint is concerning an equality and diversity issue



- We need to explore the contact routes available to individuals, widening our reach to groups not benefiting from the information advice and guidance that our customer services centre
- We will monitor the effectiveness of the information, advice and guidance given by our customer service centre to ensure that they are reaching community groups.

## **Responding to customer feedback**

### *Key observations*

- We are grateful if our customers provide us with feedback about our services and anything relating to the Council, be it good or bad.

### *Areas for improvement*

- We promise to listen to comments and complaints about the services we provide and the way in which we deliver them to our customers and where possible continually improve our services to ensure they meet the needs of all residents.
- We also need to improve our monitoring systems for complaints to capture the protected characteristics of the individuals submitting a complaint, and whether the complaint is concerning an equality and diversity issue
- We will implement a robust involvement strategy to engage and respond to our stakeholders, with a stronger emphasis on working at a local level.
- We need to further develop our involvement and engagement strategy to reflect our commitment to working in a transparent manner with all of our stakeholders.
- We will consult, involve and engage representative networks covering all equality areas to help inform our future activities.
- We will value all customer feedback, whether positive or negative.
- We will respond to feedback in a fair, honest and timely manner

## **Our Approach to Engagement**

Engagement is a broad term, intended to cover the whole range of ways in which public authorities interact with their service users and their employees, over and above what they do in providing services or within a formal employment relationship.

Engagement may be one-off or repeated over a longer period of time. It may be formal or informal. It may be focused on a specific issue or on service delivery or workforce issues more broadly. Engagement in the context of the equality duty should initially be used to support equality information gathering, equality analysis, and objective setting. After this, engagement with stakeholders and service users is valuable for reviewing progress against objectives.

## *Key Observations*

During 2009/10 as part of a community empowerment peer review members of the public and front-line community workers were asked about their opinion on local services, awareness of how to get involved locally and the role of local Councillors in understanding and representing their issues.

From the questionnaire:

- 59% of public and front line community workers rated opportunities to get involved as poor.
- 68% of respondents were not aware of opportunities to get involved
- Only 14% thought that their Councillor understood and represented local issues 40% thought their Councillor did not and 46% did not know
- 51% did not know who their local Councillor was
- The majority of those involved in the peer review were keen to be more involved in local engagement activity
- public and front line community workers would like to see us develop standards for response times to requests and questions from the public
- public and front-line community workers would like to see improved feedback both to and from the council to residents showing what has changed as a result of engagement and empowerment

## *Areas for Improvement*

- We will encourage more people under the age of 25 to respond to future consultations where it is appropriate.
- We need to improve our knowledge and engagement with those classifying themselves as *other* in particular those originating from western Europe such as people with German, French, Polish and Italian ancestry
- We will continue to engage with people with disabilities to ensure their views are taken into consideration in designing and developing our services
- We will continue to engage with county-wide groups representing lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people to improve our understanding of issues
- We will continue to engage with people from differing faiths to improve our understanding of issues.
- We need to encourage a more even split of respondents from both males and females in future consultations
- We will refine our equality and diversity monitoring forms to include the protected characteristics of pregnancy & maternity and marriage and civil partnerships

## **Representing the Community**

Councillors are elected by the local community and are there to represent its views. Each councillor represents an area called a ward, The work of a councillor includes holding surgeries to help local people, supporting local organisations, campaigning on local issues, and developing links with all parts of the community.

Councillors are not paid a salary or wages, but they are entitled to allowances and expenses to cover some of the costs of carrying out their public duties. They are not council employees. The elected councillors provide the policies, and then paid employees (council officers) put them into practice.

### *Key Observations*

- The information we currently hold on the profile of our local Councillors members is not very comprehensive.
- Improving our understanding of the profile of local Councillors will help us understand gaps in local knowledge and better target our literature

### *Areas for Improvement*

- We aim to improve the information we capture on the profile of our Councillors through the May 2011 elections.
- We will be running training sessions for Councillors on the “Public Sector Duty” post May 2011 elections.

## **Community Impact Assessments (CIA)**

Community impact assessments are a major part of a wider approach to evidence-based policy-making, where the principles of monitoring, equality impact assessments and involvement lead to policies being developed that are user-focused and based on sound evidence.

As part of any effective policy development process, it is important to consider any potential risks to those who will be affected by the policy's aims or by its implementation and to consider only opportunities to actively promote equality that the policy presents.

Conducting a community impact assessment (CIA) helps us to consider any potential risk on different groups but it also offers an opportunity to consider how the policy may help to further develop equality, thereby ensuring that we have the best possible policy in place.

Carrying out an CIA at the start of the policy development process allows the policy holders to identify, at every step, what the consequences may be to different groups, and whether a policy should adopt a certain direction/approach/criterion or eligibility requirement or whether there are any opportunities to promote equality.

This fosters ownership and a real understanding and commitment to 'get it right'. Most importantly it will lead to a focus on the user and, with the right involvement, it reduces the risk of creating policies that can lead to indirect and/or direct discrimination.

Our approach to Community Impact Assessments (CIA) has been updated to reflect the new wider equality duty on public services, to give wider consideration of the need to build community cohesion and to encourage managers to focus on improved outcomes for people rather than the process of CIA.

Our step-by-step CIA toolkit and guidance is designed to help us identify possible negative impacts on different groups in an organised way. It also offers an opportunity to consider how our activities may help to further develop equality and good relations between groups. In addition, our process reduces the risk of indirect and/or direct discrimination.

CIA's are a major part of a wider approach to decision-making based on evidence. Monitoring impact and engagement leads to policies and services that are user-focused and based on sound evidence.

We have introduced continuous monitoring of CIA's and hope to demonstrate significant improvement in terms of outcomes and collecting information.

## **Responsibility and Accountability**

The Council is ultimately responsible for delivering the General and Specific Duties set out in the Equality Scheme, and a comprehensive equalities report on progress is produced yearly for the Cabinet.

Our Chief Executive has overall accountability for making sure that we carry out the actions in this scheme. However, actions have been allocated to the relevant Directors and Heads of Service across the council and they are responsible for carrying these out and reporting on progress. Further details will be set out in individual service plans.

Our Corporate Equality Group which is a cross directorate team will monitor progress of the Scheme and report regularly to the Strategic Management Team.

Progress will also be reported through the council's achievements measured against the Equality Framework for Local Government

## **Publication**

This 2011-2015 scheme will be available on our website and will be reviewed annually. The annual report will be made available on the council's website.

The Corporate Equalities Group will ensure that progress reports are made at key milestones and that the scheme is continually updated.

A summary of this document and copies of the annual reports will be made available in alternative formats on request.

## How to give us feedback about the Scheme

We welcome feedback on any aspect of our Equality Scheme and more generally on our approach to equality and inclusion. You can contact us at [policy@swale.gov.uk](mailto:policy@swale.gov.uk)

At Swale Borough Council we value what our customers think about us. We would therefore be very grateful if you would provide us with feedback about our services and in fact anything relating to the Council be it good or bad.

Members of the public who feel that they have experienced unlawful discrimination in the way they have been treated by the council may make a complaint through the corporate complaints procedure. The council promises to take all complaints seriously, and will not accept discrimination of any kind. The council will also monitor complaints to see whether we are meeting our equality duties.

The Members' Code of Conduct deals with complaints about the conduct of elected Members. Members who experience unlawful discrimination can alert the council through the grievance procedure.

If you feel the Council has not delivered its services to your satisfaction and would like to complain, there is a four step complaints process which is free to use and details can be found on the website at <http://www.swale.gov.uk/comment-complain-and-feedback>

We also have a how to comment complain and feedback leaflet that is available to download from the website <http://www.swale.gov.uk/assets/How-to-Comment-Complain-and-Feedback/t9CommentscomplimentscomplaintsForm09forweb-Sept09.pdf>

If you would like to provide us with your comment or feedback or for further information on any of the information mentioned on this page please contact our Customer Service Centre: via email: [csc@swale.gov.uk](mailto:csc@swale.gov.uk)

or by telephone: (01795) 417850

or write to us at: Swale Borough Council  
Swale House  
East Street  
Sittingbourne  
Kent, ME10