

Swale Borough Council Equality Scheme 2011 – 2015 – Summary of progress

Introduction

The Council's previous Equality Scheme was published to cover the period 1 April 2011 to 31 March 2015. It was the first scheme the Council had published since the provisions of the Equality Act 2011 had come into force, and we published a year ahead of the date all public authorities were required to publish equality objectives.

The Council was part way through a major programme of improvement when the last scheme was published, which meant that most of the objectives and actions were focused on Council activities rather than the communities and residents of Swale.

The scheme contained three equality objectives:

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

Each objective contained a number of areas for improvement, and a summary of what progress we made against these is set out below.

Build equality in how we commission, procure and deliver services

We completed all eleven actions under this objective including:

- strengthening our equality procurement framework so that suppliers could demonstrate their commitment to equality;
- identifying the equality profile of organisations that supply service for us; and
- continuing to improve the accessibility of our services, including the usability of our website.

Promoting equality as a local employer

We completed all 16 actions under this objective including:

- identifying gaps in our knowledge base to ensure that we were prioritising key equality areas in our work, and enhanced our monitoring and analysis systems to improve data collection;
- encouraging the diversity of our staff to reflect the communities we serve, and continued to monitor our workforce profile;
- continuing to improve accessibility of our working practices and buildings; and
- continuing to provide our staff and councillors with relevant ongoing training and development on equality and diversity issues.

Improving local engagement

We completed 15 actions under this objective including:

- developing a robust and accessible communications strategy;
- quality assuring sample publications with brand guidelines; and
- running training sessions for Councillors on the Public Sector Duty.

One action was cancelled and further progress still needs to be made on another five actions.