

Meeting: Cabinet **Date:** 24 August 2021
 Council 30 September 2021

Wards affected: All Wards

Report Title: Equality Objectives 2021-2025

Cabinet Member Contact Details: Councillor Carter, Cabinet Member for Corporate and Community Services, christine.carter@torbay.gov.uk

Director/Assistant Director Contact Details: Kate Spencer, Head of Policy, Performance and Community Engagement, kate.spencer@torbay.gov.uk

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 The Public Sector Equality Duty, which came into force in April 2011, places a requirement on all public bodies to publish one or more objective(s) that they think they should achieve in order to meet the General Duty. The General Duty requires us to:
 - **Eliminate unlawful discrimination**, harassment, victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act
 - **Advance equality of opportunity** between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and people who do not share it, and
 - **Foster good relations** between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and people who do not share it.
- 1.2 We are required to publish our objectives every four years, with our current objectives running until March 2021 and therefore new objectives need to be agreed.
- 1.3 Torbay Council's draft Equality Objectives were published for consultation on 14 June 2021. The consultation period ran for six weeks until 25 July 2021.
- 1.4 The consultation sought to determine views on the proposed Equality Objectives.
- 1.5 This report provides the details of the consultation, the feedback received and make recommendations on the Equality Objective which should be put forward to Council for approval.

2. Reason for Proposal and its benefits

We want Torbay and its residents to thrive.

We want Torbay to be a place where we have turned the tide on poverty and tackled inequalities; where our children and older people will have high aspirations and where there are quality jobs, good pay and affordable housing for our residents.

We want Torbay to be the premier resort in the UK, with a vibrant arts and cultural offer for our residents and visitors to enjoy; where our built and natural environment is celebrated and where we play our part in addressing the climate change emergency.

- 2.1 The proposals in this report help us to deliver this ambition by ensuring a focus on the needs of all of residents across Torbay. Our Equality Objectives should form part of our business plan and be seen as supporting delivery of it. Our objectives should be an integral part of how we perform.
- 2.2 A set of Equality Objectives which we continually measure ourselves against will help support the organisation in becoming a Council fit for the future, in particularly as we look to our responsibilities as Corporate Parents and towards those with learning disabilities. They are also central to our work on tackling poverty, deprivation and vulnerability.
- 2.2 The reason for the decision is that it is a requirement of the Public Sector Equality Duty to publish one or more objective which we think we should achieve in order meet the General Duty as set out in 1.1 above. Our current Objectives expired in March 2021 and therefore a new set of Objectives needs to be agreed for the next four years.

3. Recommendation(s) / Proposed Decision

- 3.1 That the Council be recommended to agree the following Equality Objectives for 2021-2025:
 1. Ensure a wide range of voices are reached and heard in decision making and designing and delivering services.
 - Ensure all relevant groups are included in consultations, **providing support as appropriate.**
 - Improve the accessibility of our events, meetings, information and communications.
 - Strengthen our relationship with **our communities** and encourage participation.
 - **Ensure equality considerations are appropriately addressed within our procurement processes and contract management arrangements.**
 2. Reduce inequalities so Torbay and its residents thrive.
 - Deliver on our Community and Corporate Plan ambition we will work to:
 - Ensure that all children are given the best start in life and families are supported.
 - Tackle lifestyle and economic issues which lead to inequality and poor health.
 - Ensure that older people age well and are physically, mentally and socially active.
 3. Consider and if approved implement the recommendations from the Torbay Racism Review Panel.
 - Maintain a legacy of the review.
 - Strengthen engagement networks.
 4. Support the diverse needs of our workforce.

Our staff are one of our biggest assets and our employees come from a wide range of backgrounds with a variety of skills and knowledge. We are committed to supporting our staff and enabling them to provide the best possible service to our customers.

- Demonstrating our Core Values, we will always be approachable, calm and respectful.
- Create an environment where we act professionally and treat everyone with respect.
- Ensure that policies and initiatives are in place so our staff can feel safe at work and carry out their duties without feeling bullied or discriminated against.
- **Support staff to continue to improve their cultural competence and confidence to improve workforce inclusivity and engage with our diverse population and communities.**

3.2 That the Head of Policy, Performance and Community Engagement prepare and implement an Action Plan to ensure that the Equality Objectives are embedded across the Council.

3.3 That, as part of the Action Plan, an Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Reference Group be established to support the Council in embedding the Equality Objectives in its work.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Consultation Feedback – Draft Equality Objectives

Background Documents

None

Supporting Information

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Public Sector Equality Duty, which came into force in April 2011, places a requirement on all public bodies to publish one or more objective(s) that they think they should achieve in order to meet the General Duty. The General Duty requires us to:
- **Eliminate unlawful discrimination**, harassment, victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act
 - **Advance equality of opportunity** between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and people who do not share it, and
 - **Foster good relations** between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and people who do not share it.
- 1.2 We are required to publish our objectives every four years, with our current objectives running until March 2021. Therefore new objectives need to be agreed.

2. Options under consideration

- 2.1 Proportionality is a key principle underpinning the Public Sector Equality Duty and we should take a proportionate approach to setting equality objectives.
- 2.2 The Guidance from the Equality and Human Rights Commission says that our equality objectives should be part of our business plan and as supporting delivery of it. We are more likely to achieve the desired outcomes if our objectives are seen as an integral part of how we perform. In Torbay's case, the equality objectives are included within our Policy Framework as part of the Community and Corporate Plan.
- 2.3 As we move to refresh our Objectives, consideration needs to be given to our current position with a new Performance and Risk Strategy in place, business plans being prepared across the authority and the Torbay Racism Review underway.
- 2.4 The Guidance explains that, in order to inform the development of our objectives, we should have a clear understanding of the needs of our employees and service users and the issues they face related to their protected characteristics.
- 2.5 In drafting Objectives for Torbay Council research was carried out on the Equality Objectives of other local authorities and via equality leads at authorities including Devon County Council, Plymouth City Council, and Devon Clinical Commissioning Group. Data and key plans and strategies such as the Community and Corporate Plan, Joint Strategic Needs Assessment and Community Engagement and Empowerment Strategy, were reviewed to ensure consistency with the priorities of the organisation and identify equality challenges.
- 2.6 Three objectives were developed for Torbay, including a specific one to reflect the fact that the Torbay Racism Review is a local priority and implementing its recommendations is

therefore important. In addition, it was recognised that our previous objective of supporting the diverse needs of our workforce was still as relevant and important as before.

2.7 The following draft Equality Objectives were consulted on:

1. Ensure a wide range of voices are reached and heard in decision making and designing and delivering services.
 - Ensure all relevant groups are included in consultations.
 - Improve the accessibility of our events, meetings, information and communications.
 - Strengthen our relationship with the community and encourage participation.
2. Reduce inequalities so Torbay and its residents thrive.
 - Deliver on our Community and Corporate Plan ambition we will work to:
 - Ensure that all children are given the best start in life and families are supported.
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3. Consider and if approved implement the recommendations from the Torbay Racism Review Panel.
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- Ensure that policies and initiatives are in place so our staff can feel safe at work and carry out their duties without feeling bullied or discriminated against.

3. Financial Opportunities and Implications

3.1 There are no financial opportunities or implications as a result of the recommendations.

4. Legal Implications

- 4.1 The Public Sector Equality Duty, which came into force in April 2011, places a requirement on all public bodies to publish one or more objective(s) that they think they should achieve in order to meet the General Duty.
- 4.2 The Council is also required to demonstrate compliance with its objectives once a year, which we do through the publication on our website of our Equality Information.

5. Engagement and Consultation

- 5.1 The draft Equality Objectives were publicised on the Council's consultation web pages between 14 June and 25 July 2021. Members of the public were notified of the consultation through social media posts on Facebook and Twitter and via the One Torbay Newsletter.
- 5.2 Feedback was invited from organisations operating locally to support people with protected characteristics including: Ageing Well Torbay, Age UK, Disability Support Torbay/Living Options, Intercom Trust, Play Torbay and Churches Together in Devon.
- 5.3 Members were briefed about the consultation and the Torbay Racism Review Panel were asked to review the four proposed objectives and provide comments at the request of the Overview and Scrutiny Co-ordinator and Vice-Chairman (rather than the Overview and Scrutiny Board as they felt that the Panel were best placed to give their views in light of its work).
- 5.4 SLT were also briefed, and all staff notified about the consultation via staff news. The Equality Objectives were also discussed as part of the Managers' Forum and their responses are included in the tables of comments in this report.
- 5.5 In total 14 emails were received in response to the consultation from members of the public, organisations, members and staff.
- 5.6 The Chair of the Torbay Racism Review responded that the outcomes and recommendations of the Review should be implemented and included within the Equalities Objectives and that the objectives to be reviewed each year.
- 5.7 There were five main themes to the feedback received about the draft Equality Objectives. A selection of comments from emailed responses, Managers' Forum and social media engagement are shown under the category headings in the following tables.
 - The need to increase awareness of equality requirements and the objectives amongst staff
 - The need for appropriate monitoring of the implementation of the objectives
 - More could be done to support those with protected characteristics
 - There are further opportunities to build equality considerations into services
 - Disagreement with the focus on those with protected characteristics

- 5.8 As a result of the consultation feedback, some slight amendments were made to the wording of the proposed Objectives and further detail was included around ensuring our contractors address equality issues and supporting our staff in meeting our Equality Duty. The amendments are shown in **bold** within the recommendations.
- 5.9 Many of the comments were around how we measure the impact of the Objectives and make sure that they are embedded in our everyday practice. To this end, it is recommended that an Action Plan be developed in order to implement them appropriately and effectively across the Council.

6. Purchasing or Hiring of Goods and/or Services

- 6.1 Not applicable.

7. Tackling Climate Change

- 7.1 There will be no impact on tackling climate change as a result of the recommendations.

8. Associated Risks

- 8.1 If the Council does not agree a set of Equality Objectives, then it will not be meeting its Public Sector Equality Duty.
- 8.2 Once adopted, we need to ensure that we take action to implement the Objectives.

Equality Impacts

9. Identify the potential positive and negative impacts on specific groups

	Positive Impact	Negative Impact & Mitigating Actions	Neutral Impact
Older or younger people	The aim of the Equality Objectives is to ensure that services across the Council have a positive impact on all those with protected characteristics.		
People with caring Responsibilities			
People with a disability			
Women or men			
People who are black or from a minority ethnic background (BME) (Please note Gypsies /			

Roma are within this community)			
Religion or belief (including lack of belief)			
People who are lesbian, gay or bisexual			
People who are transgendered			
People who are in a marriage or civil partnership			
Women who are pregnant / on maternity leave			
Socio-economic impacts (Including impact on child poverty issues and deprivation)	Implementing our Equality Objectives will help to support the Council in improving the socio-economic environment in Torbay		
Public Health impacts (How will your proposal impact on the general health of the population of Torbay)	Implementing our Equality Objectives will help to support the Council in improving the public health in Torbay		

10. Cumulative Council Impact

10.1 By embedding the Equality Objectives within our Performance and Risk Framework, we can ensure that there are positive cumulative impacts across Council services.

11. Cumulative Community Impacts

11.1 By working with other public sector partners, who are required to meet the same Public Sector Equality Duty, we can work to have a positive cumulative community impact across Torbay.