

Somerset West and Taunton Corporate Equality Action Plan (CEAP)

Approved by the Council's Executive Committee 23rd October 2019.

(Progress Status updated at 18/08/2020)

The Equality Act 2010 imposes the following General Duties on Local Authorities to:

(a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Equality Act 2010; (b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it; (c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

It covers people who share the 'protected characteristics' of age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation. Locally we also recognise the following characteristics: Carers, Military Status, Rurality and Low Income.

This Action Plan sets out the actions the council will take in order to deliver its agreed equality objectives, which in turn support one or more aims of the General Equality Duty. **Part A** are Somerset West and Taunton (SWT) specific actions. **Part B** relates to actions in relation to joint objectives across the members of the Somerset Equality Officers Group (SEOG) – this is a joint officer working group made up of County and District Councils, Somerset Clinical Commissioning Group, Taunton Musgrove and Yeovil Hospitals, Somerset Partnership and Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue

PART A

SWT Objective 1		Councillors and officers will fully consider the equality implications of all decisions they make.			
	Action	Action Lead	Output	Outcome	Progress
1.1	All SWT members to be aware of their responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010	SWT Governance Manager and Monitoring Officer	Attendance at corporate training events.	Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Equality Act 2010	Not yet progressed. No further action taken since Member Induction.
1.2	The Performance and Governance team to screen all reports submitted to committee or the Full Council to ensure they are accompanied by an Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA) or include clear reasoning why such an assessment is not required, to ensure that protected groups are not further disadvantaged by the policies, strategies, projects or schemes we adopt.	SWT Governance Manager and Monitoring Officer	All Council reports are screened to ensure that they include equality and diversity impact assessments or an explanation provided as to why they do not require one.	Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Equality Act 2010	Ongoing

1.3	Agreed sources of the socio economic profile of SWT area to be identified/created, promoted and available for all EIAs to ensure consistency.	SWT Business Intelligence and Performance Manager	There is good quality and consistent equality information available for managers to use for service and policy development.	Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Equality Act 2010	District profiles available. Need to be promoted. Intranet update will be catalyst.
1.4	Good practice regarding EIAs to be shared within the council.	SWT Strategy Specialist	Managers can confidently and robustly assess the equalities impacts of service/policy change, are able to identify mitigating actions where needed and are able to implement mitigating actions effectively	Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Equality Act 2010	Not started.
1.5	Review Learning Pool e-learning equalities and diversity module	SWT Strategy Specialist	Updated and intuitive and learning tool.	Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Equality Act 2010	Complete

SWT Objective 2		Those with protected characteristics feel empowered to contribute to the democratic process and any Council activity that affects them; their input is used to inform the planning and delivery of services.			
	Action	Action Lead	Output	Outcome	Status
2.1	Create a publicly available list of equality community and VCS groups in Somerset.	SEOG	Suggestions and concerns can be captured from a broad range of groups which represent people in our communities who share protected characteristics.	Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;	In progress. The list has been updated. An online database will be created to make sure information can be shared and updated with partners.
2.2	Introduce capability to allow for greater participation in council meetings (e.g. live stream meetings).	SWT Governance Manager and Monitoring Officer	More convenient ways for residents who may find attending council meetings (through e.g. through disability, low income, rurality) to participate in council business.	Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;	Complete. Live streaming and video recording in place

2.3	Draft and approve a Statement of Community Involvement for SWT, Stating how SWT will involve all of the community and stakeholders in the preparation, alteration and review of local planning policy and the consideration of planning applications within the Local Planning Authority area., to ensure the specific needs and concerns of particular groups and individuals are captured and considered. This is an important part of the Councils place making and place shaping role.	SWT Strategy Specialist	The views of groups that represent people in our communities who share protected characteristics are captured.	Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;	Complete. Approved and adopted.
2.4	Appoint one officer and one elected member as Disability Ambassadors.	SWT Governance & Democracy	Consideration of the particular requirements of our service users, who have a disability, is given prominence at both member and officer level in order to help shape policy and service provision.	Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;	In progress. To be expanded to a joint officer and member equality group, focusing on all of the protected characteristics and not simply that of disability.

SWT Objective 3		People with protected characteristics are able to access services in a reasonable and appropriate way.			
	Action	Action Lead	Output	Outcome	Status
3.1	Raise awareness amongst staff and members of our corporate translation service and how to access it.	SWT – Head of Customer	Frontline staff are aware how to access the translation and interpretation service.	Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;	Not yet progressed.
3.2	Make training available for additional SWT frontline staff (customer services, locality champions etc.) to be trained in deaf awareness.	SWT – HR Business Partner	An increased pool of frontline SWT staff able to effectively communicate face to face with customers who are deaf.	Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;	Not yet progressed. Impacted by Covid 19.
3.3	Increase the number of our services which are available to access online 24/7	SWT – Head of Performance and Governance	More online services available on the SWT website.	Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;	Ongoing
3.4	Publish an Accessibility Statement in accord with Public Sector Bodies (Websites and Mobile Applications) (No. 2) Accessibility Regulations 2018.	SWT Head of Communications and Engagement.	A published accessibility statement.	Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;	Complete Plan published on time. Action plan in place.

SWT Objective 4		Actions are taken to identify and reduce any inequalities faced by our staff or our potential employees.			
	Action	Action Lead	Output	Outcome	Status
4.1	Achieve at least Level 1: 'Disability Confident Committed'.	SWT – HR Specialist	Recognition of our commitment to having leading role in changing attitudes toward disability for the better.	Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;	Complete SWT registered for Disability Confident scheme Aug 20 and have achieved 'Committed' status
4.2	Capture staff equalities information on ITrent to enable workforce profiling by ethnic group, gender, disability, age, religion and sexual orientation, analyse implications of such profiling against community profiling, and publish the results.	SWT – HR Specialist	Allows the Council to understand and recognise our workforce. Align our workforce with the community profile.	Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;	Not yet progressed.
4.3	Provide recruitment training that includes avoiding unconscious bias for all staff who may shortlist or interview applicants for jobs at SWT.	SWT – HR Specialist	Fair and transparent recruitment and selection exercises. Understanding the importance of reaching a diverse audience when advertising and adjustments when selecting applicants.	Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Equality Act 2010;	Not yet progressed.

4.4	Review and sign up to the Somerset Equality Commitment	SWT – HR Specialist	Review and ensure complying with the commitment with relevant areas.	Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;	Not yet progressed.
4.5	Monitor dignity and behaviour in the workplace cases (bullying and harassment) against each of the protected characteristics to establish and trends.	SWT – HR Specialist	Equalities data collected on all casework.	Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Equality Act 2010;	Ongoing
4.6	Encourage the recruitment of apprentices and graduate scheme opportunities to include - to include roles at the depot and business administration.	SWT – HR Specialist & People Manager (EW)	Increase in younger staff within the workforce.	Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;	Not yet progressed
4.7	Mental health support	SWT – HR Specialist	HR representative at Learning and Wellbeing Steering Group. Provide employees with access to Mental Health First Aiders, an Employee Assistance Programme (CareFirst). Mental Health Awareness training.	Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.	In Progress. Lots done including Mental Health First Aiders, Wellbeing Champions, an Employee Assistance Programme (CareFirst), a weekly wellbeing bulletin as well as Resilience Workshops.

4.8	Equalities and diversity training for all staff / monitoring e-learning	SWT – HR Specialist & People Manager (EW)	Provision of e-learning to all employees, including mandatory courses such as Dignity at Work	Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Equality Act 2010;	In progress Mandatory e-learning underway.
4.9	Support SWT staff from the EU through Brexit (e.g. settled status awareness and registrations)	SWT – HR Specialist	Understand the numbers affected by Brexit and provide support.	Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;	Ongoing
4.10	Staff 'task and finish groups' – menopause, men's mental health etc	SWT – HR Specialist	Working groups considered for all HR policies. Policy development plan compiled	Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.	Ongoing
SWT Objective 5		Work with communities and voluntary sector groups to address inequalities experienced by low incomes families and individuals			
	Action	Action Lead	Output	Outcome	Status
5.1	Draft, approve and implement a Social Value policy to secure wider social, economic and environmental benefits as part of the council's procurement activity.		Consistent consideration of the social good that could come from the procurement of services in order to obtain meaningful Social Value generated from our suppliers	Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;	Not yet progressed

PART B

Joint SEOG Objective 1		Work with Communities to improve the opportunities for integration and cohesion.			
	Action	Action Lead	Output	Public Sector Equality Duty outcome	Status
6.1	Continue to support local groups hosting community events that are inclusive, such as 'Wacky Wednesday' in Wellington and 'Pride in Priorswood' in Taunton.	SWT – Community Engagement Leads	Free to attend inclusive events open to all groups within the community.	Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.	Ongoing although now impacted by Covid 19 restrictions on large public gatherings.
6.2	Continue to promote and mark special days such as Mental health awareness week, Pride week, Holocaust Memorial Day, Armed Forces Day that support groups and individuals who share protected characteristics	SWT – Communication and Engagement Specialist	Visible signs or support such as the raising of flags at our main offices, social media posts and /or public ceremonies.	Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.	Ongoing

6.3	Hold at least 2 meetings per year of the Taunton Deane Disability Discussion Group	SWT – Community Engagement Leads	Meetings held including items presented by SWT officers in particular relating to emerging policies: raising awareness of opportunities for the group to influence the development of SWT policies and plans.	Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.	Ongoing from Oct 2019
6.4	Work with the Lesbian, Gay Bisexual and Transgender community about support that is needed and opportunities that are available for better integration opportunities.	SEOG	Partnership to be in existence and way forward agreed	Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.	In progress A group of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender organisations have come together with the aim to work together. Funding is being identified and an organisation has been identified to work with the group.
6.5	Work with the Faith and Belief community about support that is needed and opportunities that are available for better integration opportunities	SEOG	A way forward will be agreed with the community	Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.	Not yet progressed. Will be restarted in 2021

6.6	Undertake county wide Faith Audit	SEOG	Identification of the various faith groups across Somerset.	Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.	Not yet progressed
6.7	Review how Somerset Authorities mark Holocaust Memorial Day (HMD). Work with partners to create a larger joint response.	SEOG	A consistent approach across Somerset to honour the experiences of people affected by the Holocaust and genocide.	Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.	Not yet progressed
6.8	Support the BME Community around creating a Multicultural Forum in Somerset.	SEOG	Greater insight of, and engagement with, the BME community.	Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.	Completed. Somerset Multi-Cultural Association has been created with representatives from BME groups in Somerset. Further work will need to be completed on Public Bodies relationship with the Forum

6.9	Work with ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) providers in Somerset to create a single website to identify all ESOL provision in Somerset	SEOG	The provision of information for residents, or for our staff on their behalf, identifying all ESOL resources locally.	Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;	In progress. A directory has been created.
Joint SEOG Objective 2		Improve understanding of mental health and access to support			
	Action	Action Lead	Output	Public Sector Equality Duty outcome	Status
7.1	Signpost sources of mental health support on our website and within our Tenant's Newsletters.	SWT – Communication and Engagement Specialist	The provision of Information to help people who are living with a mental health issue.	Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.	Not yet Commenced
7.2	Use Social Media and SWT staff/Member newsletters to promote <i>Mental Health Awareness Week</i> in May and <i>Time To Talk</i> in February	SWT – Communication and Engagement Specialist	Signposting of support for those affected by poor mental health.	Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.	In progress and ongoing

7.3	Deliver mental health awareness training to our front line staff	SWT – Strategy specialist	Greater awareness to enable staff to identify where a customer may be struggling with mental health issues and knowledge of support that is available.	Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Equality Act 2010;	Not yet commenced
7.4	SWT to undertake Council domestic violence self-assessment and implement an action plan.	SWT – Strategy specialist	An action plan to strengthen our awareness and responsiveness to domestic abuse within our communities.	Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.	Not yet commenced
Joint SEOG Objective 3		Work with the Gypsy and Traveller community to improve relationships and the provision of pitches			
	Action	Action Lead	Output	Public Sector Equality Duty outcome	Status
8.1	Include a positive policy within the emerging SWT Local Plan to support pitches in appropriate locations (criteria based) informed by the GTAA	SWT – Strategy Specialist	Local Plan Policy	Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;	In progress

8.2	Work across Somerset to identify pitch/plot provision for Gypsies and Travellers (including temporary and transit pitch provision)	SEOG	Pitch/plot provision for Gypsies and Travellers in SWT and the wider Somerset area.	Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;	In progress We are members of the Somerset Transient and Nomadic People Cell (Covid). The Cell has established temporary transit sites within Mendip and Sedgemoor. A site was identified within Taunton but access proved problematic, and the site was stood down. The search for a suitable alternative temporary site continues. Meanwhile, SWT has now established a working group to explore options for a permanent transit facility within our area.
8.3	Work with support services to create a companion document for the Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment (GTAA) focusing on services	SEOG	Companion document	Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;	Completed.

8.4	Work with the Community to create an informed Illegal encampments process for Somerset	SEOG	A consistent agreed process in place across Somerset.	Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;	Completed. A process has been created in Sedgemoor that could be used across other authorities.
8.5	Work with the Community to create briefing sheets for staff around understanding of the community in relation to service delivery	SEOG	Greater staff understanding of the community when delivering or planning service delivery.	Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;	Not yet progressed
8.6	Work to find suitable funding to create a Gypsy Liaison role for Somerset	SEOG	Identification of community champions and setting up of Somerset Gypsy and Traveller Forum.	Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it	Completed Funding has been agreed till October 2021. Further funding will need to be identified after this point.
8.7	Work with the community to create a functioning Gypsy and Traveller Forum	SEOG	A way for public agencies, charities, interested individuals/groups and Traveller communities, to talk to each other.	Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it	In progress This will be taken forward by the Gypsy and Traveller Liaison Roles.

8.8	Explore options at Otterford B site	SWT - Strategy Specialist	Additional pitches	Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;	The site is owned by SCC. The planning consent for G&T provision at Otterford B has lapsed. A new planning application would need to be submitted and secured. Any progression of a planning application will be delayed whilst we explore other potential options across our area (as described in 8.2 above). We shall review in early 2021.
8.9	Review the Gypsy, Traveller Accommodation Assessment for Somerset	Lead by SDC on behalf of the Somerset Strategic Planning Conference	A robust assessment of current and future need for Gypsy and Traveller accommodation in Somerset.	Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;	In Progress The Council has commissioned a review of its Gypsy & Traveller Accommodation Assessment (GTAA). This establishes the accommodation needs of our areas Travelling community, in the same way as we commission assessments for our settled community housing needs. The assessment helps

					inform the Councils Planning Policy and Housing work
Joint SEOG Objective 4		Create an Equality Working Group for Staff in the Public Sector in Somerset			
	Action	Action Lead	Output	Public Sector Equality Duty outcome	Status
9.1	SWT to promote to staff, the pilot staff equality working group made up of multiple public bodies that SCC aim to create.	HR Specialist	Networking with public sector across Somerset, build contacts, share experiences and good practice.	Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it	Cancelled. Group not going ahead as planned.