



EQUALITY SCHEME

2019 to 2023

Published: October 2019

Contents

EQUALITY SCHEME.....	1
2019 to 2023	1
Contents	2
Foreword	4
Section 1 – Introduction to our Equality Scheme.....	5
Our equality priorities	6
Promoting equality in our service delivery.....	6
Promoting equality in our working practices	6
Promoting equality in employment	7
We will:.....	7
Management team	22
Our statutory duties.....	22
Section 3 – How we developed our Equality Scheme	
.....	24
Our approach to meeting the equality duties	24
Our evidence base	24
Stakeholder involvement.....	25
Staff involvement.....	25
How we have used feedback from our engagement with stakeholders and staff	25
Section 4 – The Equality Scheme	27
Equality in our service delivery	27
Our customer service	27
Our website.....	27
We involve and consult	27
We procure goods and services	28
Equality in employment.....	28
Workforce diversity	28
Our gender pay gap	29
Flexible working patterns	29
Supporting our staff with disabilities	29
Workforce training	29
Workforce disciplinary and grievance.....	29
Workplace culture.....	30

Training our staff.....	30
Understanding Equality Information	30
Policy-making	32
Equality Impact Assessments (EqIAs) and monitoring.....	32
Quality assuring our EqIAs	33
Publication of our EqIA results, consultations and monitoring	33
Responsibility and accountability.....	33
Publication of our 2019-2023 Equality Scheme and progress reports	33
How to give us feedback.....	34
Section 5 – Our action plan.....	34
Equality Scheme – Action Plan.....	36
Public Health and Wellbeing.....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Environment.....	38
Transforming the Council.....	39
Efficient and Effective Customer Focused Services.....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
We publish and review our equality scheme.....	43

Foreword

This is our Third Equality Scheme which we have published to reflect the new statutory requirements and expectations contained in the Equality Act 2010 and Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties and Public Authorities) Regulations 2017. This Equality Scheme now replaces our separate Equality Schemes for disability, gender and race which we published under previous legislation and our previous Equality Schemes which covered the period 2010-2019.

The Council has made significant progress in developing and implementing its equality aims and objectives in recent years.

The Equality Standard for Local Government has now been replaced by the Equality Framework for Local Government 2018 and the Council needs to sustain and build on the achievements to date whilst recognising the need to review and refresh its approach having regard to the assessment framework and the equality legislation.

In preparing our Equality Scheme we have built on the work undertaken to date and we have been equally ambitious in what we are setting out to achieve in the future. In doing so, we have actively consulted and listened to the views of many different individuals and organisations and our own staff.

I believe that this Equality Scheme ensures that we place equality right at the core of our organisation, our employment practices, our working practices and the services that we deliver to our community. I am also confident that it will have a real impact on how we do things and what we can achieve.

I would personally like to thank all those involved in helping us to shape our Equality Scheme and for your ongoing commitment and support.



David Marchant
Chief Executive– Castle Point Borough Council

Section 1 – Introduction to our Equality Scheme

As a public authority, the Council has legal requirements to ensure equality in the areas of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation. In particular the Council should consider when implementing policies compliance with its general public sector equality duty and compliance with its specific duties.

Our Equality Scheme sets out how we will aim to meet those legal requirements. We call this our Equality Scheme 2019-2023.

This four-year Equality Scheme describes how the Council will fulfil its moral, social and legal obligations to put equality at the heart of everything we do. Covering the period 1 April 2019 to 31 March 2023, this Equality Scheme is closely linked to our Corporate Plan and to our other strategies, policies and plans.

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

In developing our four-year Equality Scheme we have engaged with stakeholders through extensive involvement and consultation.

Our approach to developing this Equality Scheme has been based on the work we do rather than how we are structured as an organisation. We thought about what we wanted to achieve ('outcomes') and what we thought we needed to do to make them happen ('actions').

Our equality priorities

Through working in partnership with stakeholders and reviewing a range of evidence we have identified the following key priorities for our four-year Equality Scheme.

We will use our service plans to focus on these priorities and provide clear accountability for their delivery.

Promoting equality in our service delivery

We will:

- provide easy and convenient access to local services for all residents
- develop a robust and accessible communications strategy
- continue to improve the accessibility of our website
- use available information about our customers to ensure that we are prioritising key equality areas in our work
- monitor the effectiveness of our service provision to ensure that we reach all groups

Promoting equality in our working practices

We will:

- implement a robust involvement strategy to engage and respond to our stakeholders with a stronger emphasis on working with partners
- consult and involve representative networks covering all equality groups to help inform our future activities
- strengthen our equality procurement framework so that suppliers can demonstrate their commitment to equality and explore training for suppliers as necessary

- ensure that we encourage supplier diversity during our procurement procedures
-

Promoting equality in employment

We will:

- maintain the diversity of our staff to reflect the community we serve across all the equality groups and we will continue to monitor our workforce profile
- collect monitoring information to include gender, race, disability, sexual orientation, age, and religion or belief
- develop a workplace environment where all our staff are treated with dignity and respect
- continue to improve accessibility in our working practices and to our buildings
- conduct regular equal pay reviews
- continue to promote awareness of our Domestic Abuse Policy and offer appropriate training
- review our Harassment Policy to ensure dignity at work for all
- promote opportunities for apprenticeships

Specific Duties

We shall:

- publish certain equality information about our employees and others affected by our policies and practices to demonstrate our compliance with our specific public sector equality duties
- prepare and publish on our website specific and measurable equality objectives in our Equality Scheme and at least every 4

years to demonstrate compliance with the Public Sector Equality Duty

- We have published our gender pay gap report for 2018 and will continue to publish this information by the 31 March each subsequent year

Section 2 – About the Council

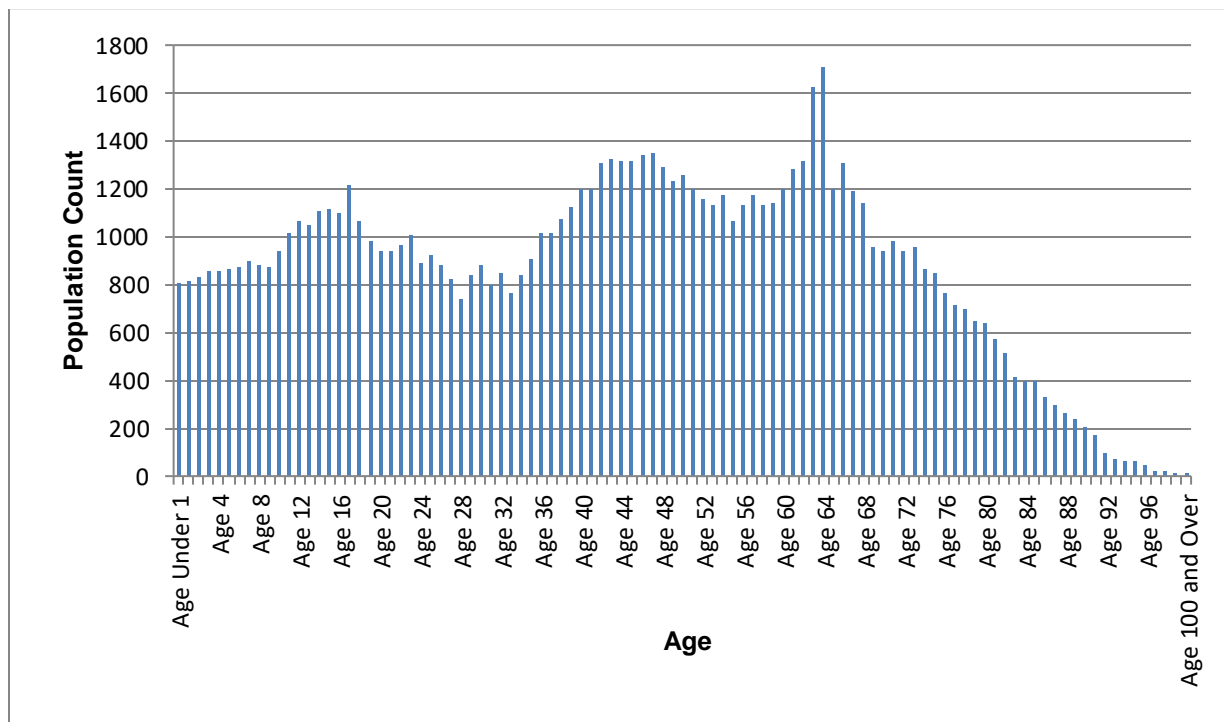
The Borough of Castle Point comprises the two urban areas of Canvey Island and the mainland towns of Benfleet, Hadleigh and Thundersley.

Each area has its own distinctively different landscape, built environment and social conditions which present a number of issues and opportunities. The following information on the borough's demographic profile and on the assessment of deprivation at a local level highlight the issues with equality that exist in Castle Point.

Demographic Profile

The ONS population 2017 estimate states Castle Point's population to be 89,800 people. The graph below (Fig. 1) shows the distribution of this population by age.

Figure 1: Distribution of Castle Point's population by age



Source: Census 2011

Figure 1 above provides an indication that the population of Castle Point includes a mix of people, but is dominated by:

- Families with older children indicated by the spikes in the teenage age groups and higher numbers of people in the aged 40 to 50 age group; and
- Older people including retirees, indicated by the spike in the aged 60 to 70 age group.

Figure 1 shows that the population distribution is lower for those aged 20 to 30, indicating that people move away from the borough during their early adulthood. This is subsequently reflected in the relatively lower numbers of young children compared to other age groups.

Older People

The Census 2011 indicates that people aged 65 and over currently make up 22% of Castle Point's population. Nationally, this figure stands at 16%. Meanwhile people aged 75 and over currently make up 10% of Castle Point's population. Nationally, this figure stands at 8%. This data indicates that Castle Point has a proportionally large population of older people, and therefore needs to tailor services accordingly.

The Greater Essex Demographic Forecasts indicate that the population of people in older age groups in Castle Point is likely to increase in the future. Those aged 65 and over are expected to make up 31% of the borough's population by 2021, and 35% by 2031. Meanwhile, those aged 75 and over are expected to make up 14% of the borough's population by 2021, and 18% by 2031.¹

It will therefore become increasingly necessary to tailor services to meet the needs of older people in order to ensure that they enjoy a good quality of life. Data from the Census 2011 indicates that there are currently 5,349 people aged 65 and over living alone in Castle Point. It is expected that this will increase in the future placing a particular pressure on service providers including, but not limited to, those in the social, health and housing sectors.

Young People

The Census 2011 indicates that children (aged 0-18 years) make up 20% of Castle Point's population. Nationally, this stands at 21%. This indicates that there are proportionally fewer children in the local population than would normally be expected, although the difference is marginal at present. By 2031, it is expected that the population of children will have reduced to 18% of the borough's population. This reduction in population may have implications for children and young people's services, potentially requiring shared service provision or multiple-use of facilities to ensure ongoing sustainability of services for this age group.

Health and Disability

The Census 2011 indicates that 4,982 people in Castle Point consider their general health to be bad or very bad. This is consistent with the national average.

The Census 2011 also asked people about the impact of long-term health issues and disabilities on undertaking day to day activities. 7,995 people indicated that a disability or long-term health issue limited their day to day activities a lot. A further 8,753 people indicated that a disability or long-

¹ Based on the RSS Scenario in the Phase 3 Report which assumes housing growth of 200 homes per annum

term health issue limited their day to day activities a little. The proportion of people experiencing such issues in Castle Point is slightly higher than the national average.

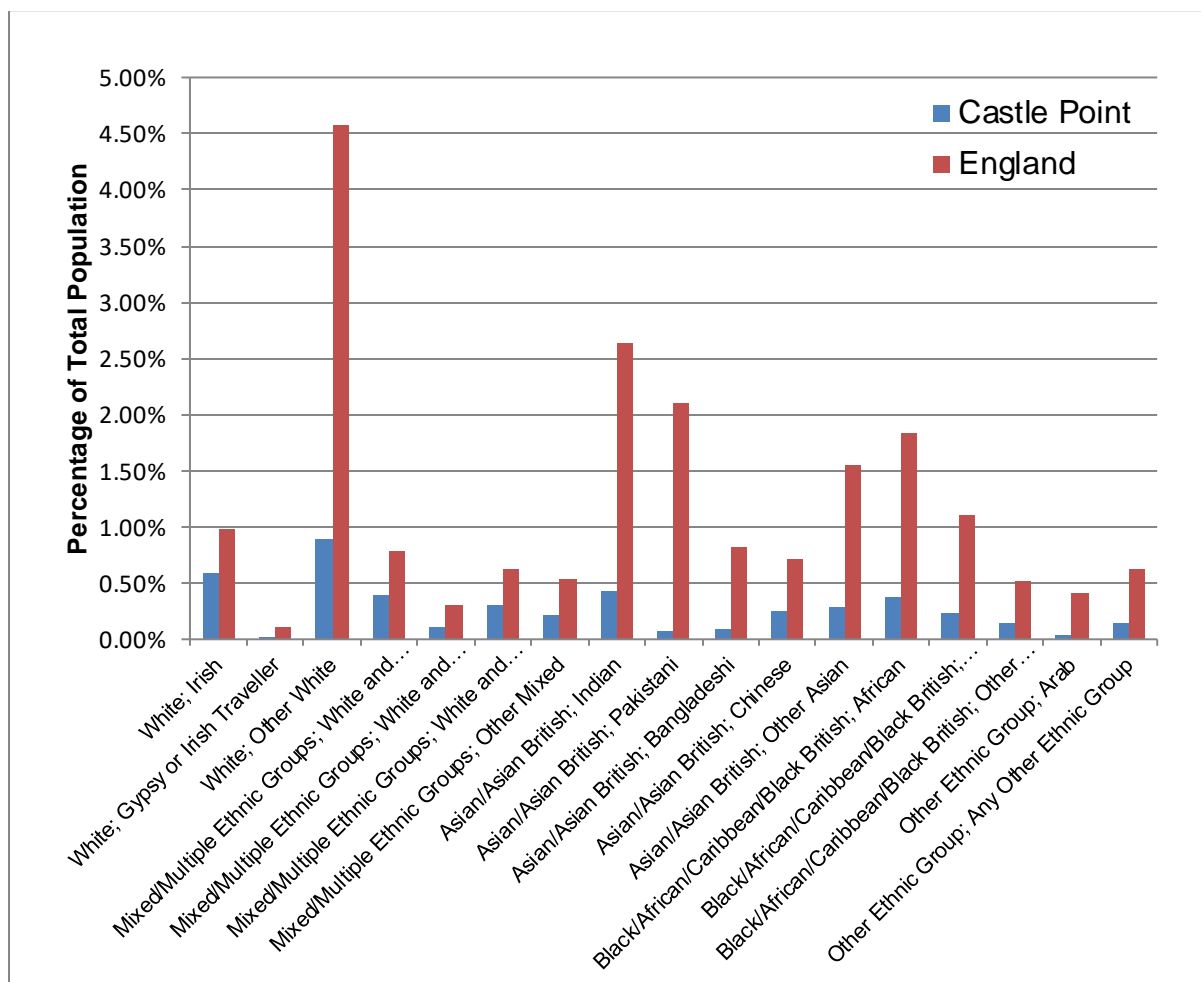
People in poor health, and with limiting long term health issues or disabilities may have increased requirements for community services and benefit support if they are unable to undertake paid employment. They may also have difficulty in accessing services that the Council provides.

Race and Ethnicity

Castle Point does not have significant populations of minority ethnic groups. Census 2011 data indicates that 95.4% of the borough's population are White British. The next highest ethnic group is Asian at about 1.7% of the population. There are no particular concentrations of ethnic population in districts within the Borough. A Haredi Jewish population has recently relocated to Canvey Island having purchased an old senior school site and established a synagogue, community centre and school. Plans for the near future include a significant increase in the number of families buying properties and moving to the Island.

In terms of minority ethnic groups within Castle Point, the following groups are represented within the population. When compared with the England average, all minority ethnic groups make up a smaller proportion of the local population than can be seen generally across England.

Figure 2: Proportion of Minority Ethnic Groups within the Castle Point and England Populations

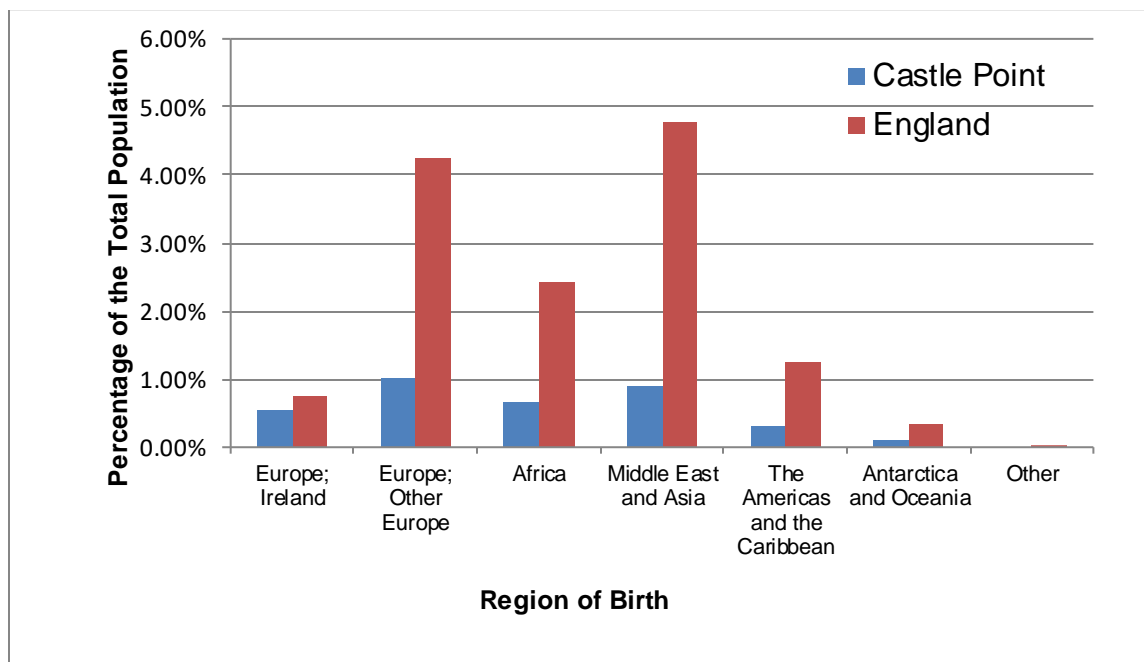


Source: Census 2011

Of those residents of Castle Point not born in the UK (3,147), 75.8% had lived in the UK for more than 10 years. Just 760 residents of Castle Point had lived in the UK for less than 10 years. This represents 0.9% of the borough's population.

Figure 3 shows the place of birth for those residents born outside the UK. The proportion of residents born outside the UK is below the national average when considered against all regions. Europe, including Ireland, is the main region from which Castle Point residents not born in the UK originate.

Figure 3: Proportion of Castle Point and England Populations born outside the UK by Region



Source: Census 2011

This data indicates that there is unlikely to be a significant demand for specific services for minority ethnic groups within Castle Point, or indeed a need to adapt services significantly to accommodate the requirements and beliefs of different ethnic groups. There is however a need to be mindful that there are a small number of people from ethnic minority backgrounds who may need assistance in understanding what services are available from the council and accessing these services.

Deprivation

Castle Point has relatively low levels of deprivation compared to other local authority areas in the UK. The 2015 Indices of Multiple Deprivation ranked Castle Point as the 187 least deprived local authority area out of 326 local authority areas.

The Census 2011 also considered the prevalence of deprivation in an area using 'dimensions of deprivation'. The dimensions of deprivation are indicators based on the four selected household characteristics:

- Un-employment (any member of a household not a full-time student is either unemployed or long-term sick);

- Low educational attainment (no person in the household has at least level 2 education, and no person aged 16-18 is a full-time student);
- Issues with health and disability (any person in the household has general health 'bad or very bad' or has a long term health problem.); and
- Issues with housing (Household's accommodation is either overcrowded, with an occupancy rating -1 or less, or is in a shared dwelling, or has no central heating).

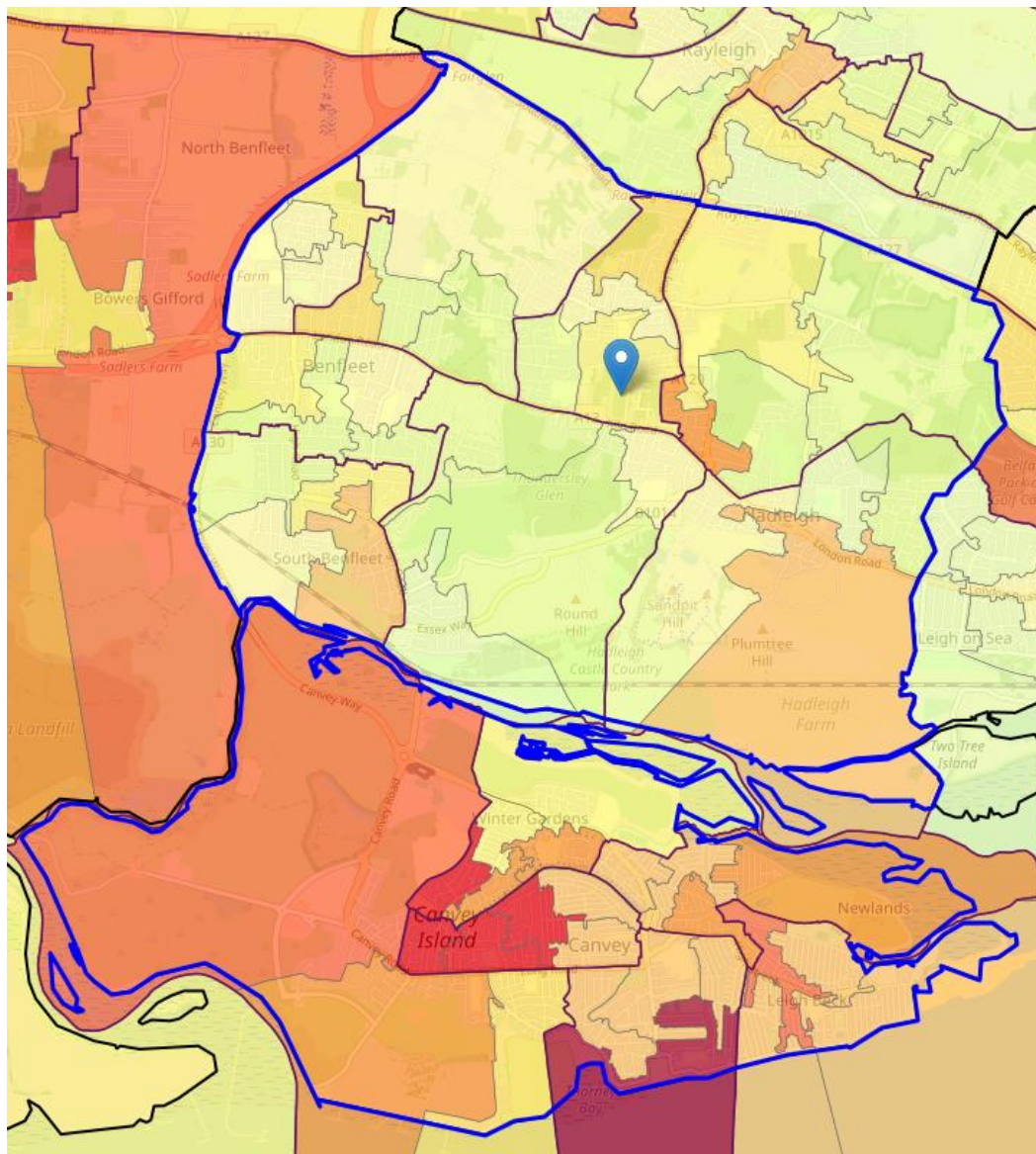
In Castle Point, 12,821 households were identified as experiencing one dimension of deprivation, a further 7,949 households were identified as experiencing two dimensions of deprivation, and a further 1,620 households were identified as experiencing 3 or more dimensions of deprivation.

Issues associated with deprivation can have impacts on service provision, and the demand for benefits, in both the short term and also in the long term, particularly where children are involved.

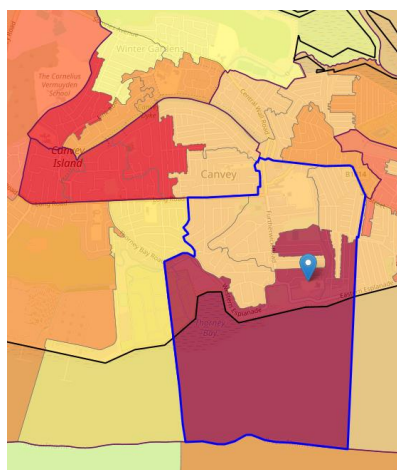
Spatial Inequalities

There are variations in the level of deprivation experienced across Castle Point. On Canvey Island, there are four neighbourhoods (Lower Super Output Area – LSOA) with levels of deprivation in the bottom 20% nationally and one neighbourhood with levels of deprivation in the bottom 10% nationally. Meanwhile, there are two neighbourhoods in Boyce and St. James wards that are within the 10% least deprived areas in the Country. Figure 4, shows the disparities related to deprivation in Castle Point.

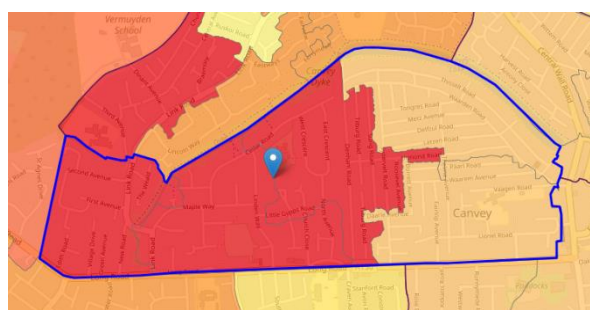
Figure 4: Castle Point – Rank of 2015 Indices of Multiple Deprivation Score



Canvey Island South Ward



Canvey Island Central Ward

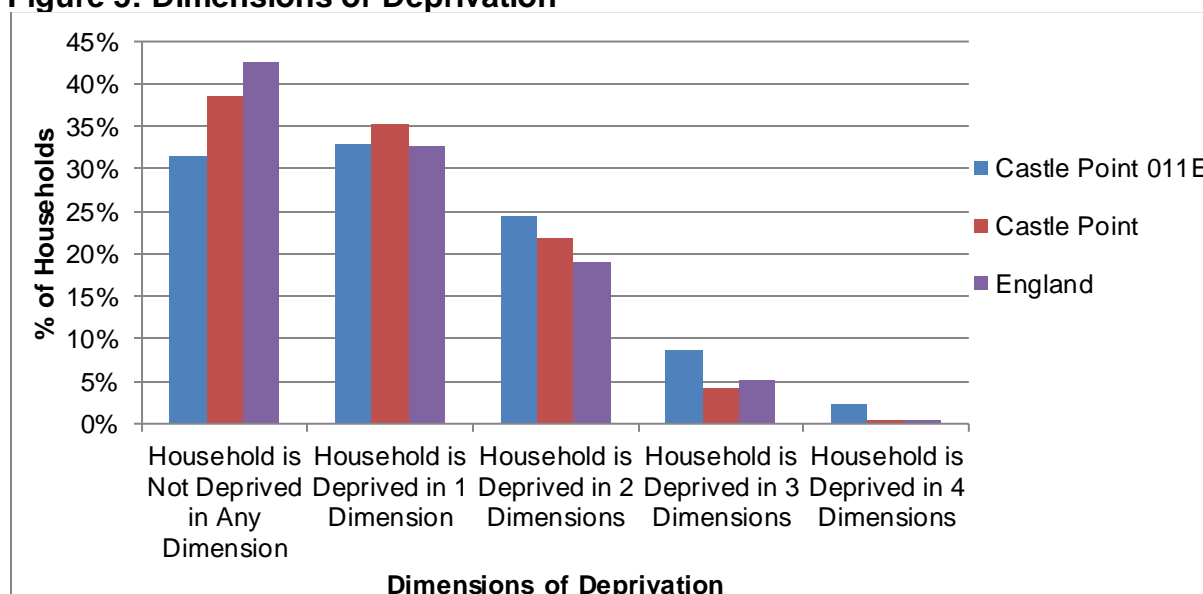


Thorney Bay Caravan Park

Caravans previously used as holiday accommodation at Thorney Bay Caravan Park are rented as residential accommodation. Due to the relatively low cost and ease of access to this accommodation it has proved attractive to those on low incomes. Additionally, it has attracted a wave of migrants from elsewhere in south Essex and east London. This has resulted in the rapid creation, since 2006, of a low income, vulnerable community including many families with children.

The Census 2011 reports on the dimensions of deprivation can be reported at the lower super output area level.

Figure 5: Dimensions of Deprivation



Source: Census 2011

For Lower Super Output Area 011E, which mainly covers the occupied part of the Thorney Bay Caravan Park site, the proportion of households experiencing 2 or more dimensions of deprivation is higher than elsewhere in Castle Point and the England average. Furthermore, the proportion of households experiencing no dimensions of deprivation is far lower than the Castle Point and England averages. It is therefore clear that this area, mainly incorporating Thorney Bay Caravan Park, is more deprived than elsewhere in Castle Point.

Particular issues of deprivation can be found with regard to unemployment, which at 9.5% is significantly above the Castle Point

average of 5.2%. There are also issues around housing with 14.6% of households in this area reporting that they have no central heating compared to 1.7% of households in Castle Point as a whole.

There are proposals to redevelop the caravan site for traditional housing, which whilst preferable to the residential use of caravans, will see residents of this vulnerable community displaced, and potentially made homeless as a consequence.

Welfare Reforms

In 2010 the Government announced changes to the welfare system and aims to simplify the benefits system through the implementation of **Universal Credit**. Key changes that impact on housing are summarised below:

Changes to the age threshold for the shared accommodation rate of Local Housing Allowance (LHA). These have been increased from 25 to 35.

This means that single claimants up to the age of 35 have their LHA based on a room in a shared property rather than a self-contained one-bedroom property. There will be exceptions for some disabled claimants, certain people who have previously been homeless, and ex-offenders who could pose a risk to the public.

Changes to Housing Benefit. Effective from April 2013, size criteria applies in the social rented sector (e.g. council and housing association properties) replicating the size criteria that applies to Housing Benefit claimants in the private rented sector under the Local Housing Allowance rules. This means that people living in houses larger than they need (under-occupiers) are required to move to somewhere smaller or make up the difference in rent because their Housing Benefit is reduced:

- 14% cut in Housing Benefit if you under-occupy by one bedroom
- 25% cut in Housing Benefit if you under-occupy by two or more bedrooms

Changes to Council tax benefit. Effective since April 2013: Council Tax Benefit was replaced by localised support for Council Tax. Local authorities set up new schemes to support people in their own areas within a 10% reduced budget. This affected people of working-age who previously received Council Tax Benefit.

Implementation of a Benefit Cap. As part of the Welfare Reform Act there is a cap on the amount of benefits a working-age household can receive, which is currently set to £20k per annum.

Universal Credit Full Service was implemented in Castle Point in July 2018. As part of the new arrangements, the payment of housing benefit is no longer paid direct to the landlord but to the claimant as part of the universal credit award. These changes are likely to lead to significant affordability issues and will result in a loss of rental payments for both the private and social sectors.

The implementation of welfare reforms has and will have significant impact on Council services. For example, following the introduction of the benefit cap, rent arrears increased significantly for those households affected. Universal Credit is expected to have a similar impact.

Local Council Tax Support

On 1st April 2013 Local Council Tax Support replaced Council Tax Benefit. Under the new legislation levels of support for Pension Age people were prescribed by Government such that in general terms most Pension Age people received similar levels of support to that received under Council Tax Benefit. Levels of support for Working Age people were not prescribed and this, combined with a reduction in the levels of Government Funding, meant that most Local Authorities had to reduce the levels of support available to Working Age people. Castle Point's reduction in funding equated to £1.1M. This has now been replaced by a general duty to provide a scheme and funding is not separately identified within the grants given to the Council.

Since the introduction of Local Council Tax Support, the overall scheme adopted by the Council has remained broadly the same, with only applicable amounts for Pension Age and Working Age people being up-rated annually in line with Central Government.

Modelling of various schemes was undertaken and case studies were completed to estimate the impact on different household types. A full EQIA assessment found that 46% of Council Tax Benefit claims were from working age households, all of which were affected by this change and of these, households with children (whether lone parents or families) made up the largest portion of the caseload.

All working age households (approximately 3500 in total) were impacted by this change. In regards to protected groups the following specific considerations were taken;

- It was agreed that Higher Rate Disability Benefits would continue to be disregarded thereby protecting those with specific long term conditions and people with disabilities would continue to receive additional premiums as part of the calculation of their award. This advances equality of opportunity for those who fall within the 'disability' characteristic group who would otherwise be disadvantaged.

- The Policy is compliant with the Government prescribed protections for Pension Age people. This advances equality of opportunity for those who fall within the 'age' characteristic group (specifically those of Pension age) who would otherwise be disadvantaged by the schemes fundamental incentives to work.
- Parents continue to receive a Dependent's Applicable Amount (limited to a maximum of two children in line with other Welfare Reforms) as part of the calculation of their award, which is consistent with the Council's duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.
- All working parents receive a disregard of their earnings to reflect childcare costs incurred. This advances equality of opportunity for those who fall within the 'age' characteristic group (specifically those aged 0 to 17, families and lone parents with children, pregnant women) who would otherwise be disadvantaged.
- The Local Authority implemented an Exceptional Hardship Policy to provide additional support to those in extreme hardship and those who are most vulnerable.
- The Local Authority completed a full and robust communication programme to ensure all residents were aware of the changes and conducted a 6-week public consultation exercise. The scheme is subject to annual approval by the Council regardless of whether there are changes or not, and a full Equality Impact Assessment. Any proposed changes are subject to a full consultation
- The Local Authority continues to work collaboratively with debt advice agencies, such as Peabody, CAB and Step Change, to ensure appropriate support is given to the most vulnerable.

Other Reforms

Other national Welfare Reform changes, outside of the Local Authorities direct responsibilities, but have or will impact on our residents include;

- Social Fund Reform which was introduced in April 2013. Under Social Fund Reform, Community Care Grants and Crisis Loans for general living expenses were abolished and replaced by new local provisions (Essential Living Fund) delivered by Southend Council on behalf of Essex County Council.
- Replacement of Disability Living Allowance which was introduced in April 2013. This entailed a roll out programme to replace Disability

Living Allowance with a new benefit called Personal Independence Payment (PIP) which is delivered by the DWP.

- Replacement of most mainstream means tested benefits (including Housing Benefit, Tax Credits, Income Support, and income-based Job Seekers and Employment Support Allowance) with one single Universal Credit or Housing Credit award delivered by DWP.

Castle Point Borough Council needs to ensure that its services are fully accessible, tailored and targeted such that there is no social inequality and all residents are supported appropriately

Key Equality Issues

Having regard to the local context and changes to the welfare system, the key equality issues for Castle Point are:

1. Supporting the needs and wellbeing of an ageing population, including an increasing population of elderly residents and an increasing population of older people living on their own.
2. Ensuring that the needs of young people continue to be met within the community as the size of the young population declines.
3. Assisting those with health issues and disabilities to access services and support, having regard to the impacts of welfare reforms.
4. Ensuring that staff and services are sufficiently respectful of the needs of individuals to cater for individuals of different ethnic origins.
5. Addressing issues of deprivation, which affect up to one-third of households in Castle Point, with a particular focus on areas of Canvey Island where the level of deprivation is highest, and at Thorney Bay Caravan Park where deprivation has become concentrated.
6. Supporting low income families in dealing with the impacts of the welfare reforms and the impacts these are having on household income and budgets, the levels of debt, and the health and wellbeing of adults and children.

Management team

The Executive Management Team led by our Chief Executive, David Marchant, is responsible for setting the strategic direction of the Council.

The Executive Management Team, supported by the Corporate Management Team, is accountable to the elected Councillors for making sure that we achieve our business aims and for advising on emerging strategic priorities.

Our statutory duties

The Equality Act 2010 brings together all of the different equality strands and refers to them as “protected characteristics”:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender reassignment
- Marriage and civil partnership
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Race
- Religion or belief
- Sex
- Sexual orientation

The Council is a “public body” and is subject to a General Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) which requires public bodies to have “due regard” to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Equality Act 2010;

- To advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it. This involves having due regard to the need to:
 - Remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by persons who share a relevant protected characteristic that are connected to that characteristic;
 - Take 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 and
 - Encourage 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
- The need to foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not share it. This includes having due regard to the need to tackle prejudice and to promote understanding.

The power to enact specific duties on public authorities with specific duties came into force on 31 March 2017 replacing the 2011 requirements.

The Home Office stated that the Specific Duties on public authorities is to help them perform the PSED better by:

“Requiring public bodies to be transparent about how they are responding to the Equality Duty - requiring them to publish relevant, proportionate information showing compliance with the Equality Duty, and to set equality objectives. The Government believes that public bodies should be accountable to their service users. Publishing information about decision-making and the equality data which underpins those decisions will open public bodies up to informed public scrutiny. It will give the public the information they need to challenge public bodies and hold them to account for their performance on equality. Moreover, knowing that such information will be published will help to focus the minds of decision-makers on giving proper consideration to equality issues”.

These Specific Duties Regulations require:

- Public authorities to publish equality informationⁱ to demonstrate their compliance with the general PSED by 30 March 2018 and at least annually after that. This information must include information

relating to persons who share a relevant protected characteristic who are:

- Its employeesⁱⁱ and
 - Other persons affected by its policies and practices
- Public authorities should publish certain specific and measurable equality objectives to demonstrate its compliance with PSED. These objectives must be published by 30 March 2018 and at least every 4 years from their date of publication
- Both equality information and the equality objectives to be published in a way that is accessible to the public
- Public authorities with over 250 employees to publish gender pay gap reporting information

Whilst the Specific Duties Regulations do not specify precisely what information we should disclose our Equality Scheme sets out the information that we shall disclose. We shall keep this under review on an annual basis.

Section 3 – How we developed our Equality Scheme

Our approach to meeting the equality duties

As a public authority, the Council has a legal requirement to advance equality in relation to age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.

The Equality Act 2010 has strengthened protection, advanced equality and simplified the law. The legislation has extended previous equality duties and, therefore, like other public bodies, the Council has elected to produce an Equality Scheme which will cover all the equality strands.

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.

We have also reflected on national data and specific research to inform our Equality Scheme and used benchmarks from other organisations to enable us to develop appropriate targets for improvement.

Stakeholder involvement

We have ensured that we listened to many different individuals, organisations and members of our staff in developing this four-year Equality Scheme.

We carried out a consultation exercise which asked interested stakeholders to provide us with their views on our approach to the Equality Scheme.

We also asked them to provide us with information on emerging challenges and priorities within their areas which we would need to consider making sure that the Council embraced equality within all the services it provides.

Staff involvement

We asked staff to reflect on what they saw as the priorities for action for our four-year Equality Scheme.

We worked with our staff and took into consideration comments received from our staff representatives through the work of our Equality Working Group.

The feedback we received in 2014 and how we used that feedback from our engagement with stakeholders and staff in relation to our 2014-2019 Equality Scheme

We listened to all of the responses we received and used these to inform the Equality Scheme and its action plan.

The key messages from our stakeholders were:

- You wanted us to develop a clear communications strategy reaching out to the most excluded groups within our society and utilising all forms of communication
- You wanted us to further enhance the accessibility of our website and helpline services
- You wanted us to tailor service delivery to meet differing needs
- You wanted us to ensure we did not favour any particular group or groups and to secure equal protection for all the equality groups as required by the Equality Act 2010
- You wanted us to ensure that all actions were balanced against needs and demands and financial and other resource implications
- You wanted us to ensure that our suppliers were as diverse as the communities we serve and that they could demonstrate a strong equality commitment to their workforce and service users

The key messages from our staff were:

- The culture and attitude within the organisation was important to you and you wanted to see us address this through specific training for all
- You wanted us to review and promote our flexible working options ensuring all staff had equitable access
- Improving the accessibility of our buildings was important and something you wanted a continued commitment to
- You wanted us to include equality issues within Personal Performance and Development Plans
- You wanted us to ensure that all services recognised where they could have an adverse impact on service users and take steps to prevent such situations

Section 4 – The Equality Scheme

Equality in our service delivery

The Council has a key role in helping individuals to access appropriate services and supporting them in that process where appropriate.

Our customer service

We offer our customers access to the services we provide through a number of channels as identified in our Customer First Communication Strategy. The Council's Customer Promise helps us to ensure that services are accessible to all, which is currently under review

Our First Contact advisers are trained to deal with a variety of calls, relating to most of the Council's services and will do their best to ensure that enquiries are dealt with at the first point of contact.

Each service provides a detailed Service Plan for their service. The actions plans supporting these documents outline the work that is being done to improve the service we provide to our customers to ensure services are fully accessible and responsive to the differing needs of service users.

Our website

We are continually improving the facilities and information available through our website, our website being currently under review.

We involve and consult

This refers to how we involve people in our work. By involving we mean engaging with a wide variety of people and organisations in different ways and through different mechanisms. This is an ongoing process and is outlined in our Consultation Strategy which is currently under review.

Individual Projects undertaken by the Council are subject to consultation which is tailored to meet the needs of the work or services being undertaken.

We procure goods and services

By procurement we mean how we acquire goods, works and services. We believe that it is essential that people and organisations who provide goods, works and services on our behalf share our values.

When procuring goods, works and services, we will ensure that we encourage supplier diversity.

Through getting a better understanding of potential customers needs we can ensure that goods and services procured are accessible to and meet the diverse needs of our customers and to ensure that no one group is disadvantaged in accessing public goods and services.

Equality in employment

We have a duty to make sure that those policies and practices that affect our staff are fair and promote equality of opportunity and 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 profiles, appraisals and related performance and monitoring systems and to give them support, development opportunities and training.

Workforce diversity

The Council is committed to tackling all forms of discrimination whether it is direct, indirect, intentional or unintentional and to promoting equality and diversity of opportunity both as an employer and service provider.

Our gender pay gap

As at March 2018, there were no significant variances between male and female pay. The percentage of the top 5% of earners that were women was 55%. The Council conducts equal pay reviews and this determines any pay differences that need to be addressed.

Flexible working patterns

Current national trends in data tell us the demand for flexible working patterns by both workers and employers will rise, placing a need for innovative approaches to achieving flexibility in the workplace, which is subject to review every 3 years.

Supporting our staff with disabilities

The Council is committed to creating a supportive and accessible working environment, based on mutual respect and trust, to enable all staff to carry out their roles. We are recognised as a Disability Confident Committed organisation. Reasonable adjustments are made where identified in consultation with our Occupational Health Service or the Access to Work Scheme.

Workforce training

The Council is committed to offering learning and development opportunities to all staff. This will ensure that we become a more efficient and effective Council providing good value for money services.

Workforce disciplinary and grievance

The Council has a disciplinary and grievance process and is committed to ensuring that processes are fairly applied.

Workplace culture

The Council recognises that the culture of an organisation is intrinsically linked to treating people fairly, eliminating inequalities and promoting shared values.

We have an established set of values which are shared throughout the organisation and we continually work to develop the culture of the organisation by building trust, openness and integrity with respect for diversity and equality as a core value.

We work to ensure flexibility in working practices, develop communication processes, increase accessibility through the effective use of IT and to involve all staff in the continuous development of culture within the Council.

Training our staff

Through our internal e-learning training programme we provide equality training for all staff when they join the organisation to ensure they understand their role and objectives under the equality duties and wider equality legislation.

We have developed an EqIA tool and guidance to help staff to carry out EqIAs in a systematic way.

We will continue to review our training provision as well as our overall EqIA process to ensure that it is fit for purpose and is updated to reflect feedback from staff and stakeholders.

Understanding Equality Information

In policy development equality monitoring can help us to understand:

- Whether the policy is likely to have the intended effect
- How proposed policies might affect particular groups

- How we can amend policies to eliminate discrimination and promote equality

In service delivery, equality monitoring can help us to understand:

- The needs of service users
- Which groups are using our services
- Which groups are not using our services
- How to reach under-represented groups
- How satisfied different groups are with our services
- Differences in service outcomes
- How to use our resources better

In employment, equality monitoring can help us to:

- Measure the make-up of our workforce and compare it to national data
- Analyse personnel practices and procedures to see how they affect different groups of employees
- Understand the causes of any pay gap by group

We collect our employment data about recruitment, retention, promotion, development, disability type, performance appraisal, grievances, disciplinary action, leavers, staff in post, training and part-time working.

We analyse this data to reflect the protected characteristics defined in the Equality Act 2010.

Policy-making

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.

EqlAs help us to consider any potential adverse impacts 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.

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

Carrying out an EqlA 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.

In this section, we use the term 'policy' as a shorthand term to cover policies, practices, functions, decisions and strategies.

Equality Impact Assessments (EqlAs) and monitoring

Embedding equality into our policies, procedures and practices is essential to enable us to ensure we treat all people fairly.

We have therefore incorporated equality issues in the development of our policies and during our service planning process through EqlAs, developing actions plans to ensure we do not discriminate against a

particular group(s) and that we promote equality in accordance with our statutory equality duties.

Quality assuring our EqlAs

Heads of Service will be responsible for signing off EqlAs relevant to their function. The Equality Working Group will continue to monitor the EqlAs and also the action plan included within this Equality Scheme and include quality assuring a sample of our EqlAs and monitoring and reviewing our overall process. Progress will be reported regularly to the Corporate Management Team.

Publication of our EqlA results, consultations and monitoring

We are committed to publishing the results of our EqlAs, consultations and monitoring on our website.

Responsibility and accountability

Our Chief Executive, David Marchant, has overall responsibility for making sure that we carry out the actions in this Equality Scheme. Actions have been allocated to the relevant Heads of Service across the Council and they are responsible for carrying these out and reporting on progress. We have identified responsible post holders for each target outcome in the action plan. Our Equality Working Group will monitor progress.

Publication of our 2019-2023 Equality Scheme and progress reports

The 2019-2023 Equality Scheme is available on our website. The Equality Scheme will be reviewed annually. Progress reports will be published annually on our website shortly after the completion of each review process.

Our Equality Scheme and progress reports can be made available in another language or format (such as Braille, audio CD, data CD, “easy

read” or large print). Please visit our website or contact us using the details below.

How to give us feedback

We welcome feedback on our Equality Scheme so that we can continue to improve. You can do this by contacting us using the information below:

Equalities
Castle Point Borough Council
Council Offices
Kiln Road
Benfleet
Essex SS7 1TF

Telephone: 01268 882200

Email: equalities@castlepoint.gov.uk

Section 5 – Our action plan

The actions set out in this plan relate to what we do as an organisation. We promote and enforce equality legislation on age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.

These are our main functions:

- We provide statutory Council services
- We have a duty to consult citizens and encourage citizen participation in local decisions
- We continually develop and improve partnership working to the benefit of our citizens

To help us carry out our functions, we:

- Employ people
- Involve and consult people
- Procure goods, works and services
- Screen and impact assess how we work and how we provide services
- Publish and review our Equality Scheme

Equality Scheme – Action Plan

Health and Community Safety

Outcome	Action	Meeting our Equality Duties	Timescale	Lead Responsibility
Assisting people to remain in their own home	Promotion of Disability Facilities Grants (DFGs)	Advancing equality of opportunity between persons who share a “protected characteristic” & those who do not by developing services for older people including a wider range of community services to help deal with issues related to living alone and health issues such as dementia	Annually	Simon Llewellyn
	Increased take up of DFGs and Better Care fund			Mel Harris
	Developing public health initiatives within the borough focusing on areas of healthy lifestyles particularly aimed at those living alone		Subject to separate action plan	
	Refreshing the Castle Point & Rochford Health & Wellbeing Strategy identifying priorities in relation to overweight and obesity, improving mental health & wellbeing, supporting people to lead independent lives to stay in their own homes for as long as possible			
	Working with Castle Point & Rochford Dementia Action Alliance			

Outcome	Action	Meeting our Equality Duties	Timescale	Lead Responsibility
Increase in diverse usage of our leisure/recreational facilities & community halls and parks and open spaces	<p>Promoting our leisure/recreational facilities, community halls and parks and opens spaces to encourage inclusivity and more diverse usage by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To increase disabled usage by working in partnership with the Sport for Confidence Group at Waterside and Runnymede Leisure Centres to increase disabled usage by 10%; • Implement activities and offerings to increase by at least 200 the number of older people participating in leisure and social activities • Publication of activities to promote use of parks, open spaces, seafront and woodland walks involving those from voluntary groups to promote guided walks measured by the number of participants increasing year on year 	<p>Eliminating discrimination, harassment and victimisation</p> <p>Advancement of equality of opportunity</p> <p>Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not</p>	31/3/2023	Shane Williams

Environment

Outcome	Action	Meeting our Equality Duties	Timescale	Lead Responsibility
A new Paddocks which offers access to the whole community	Consideration of options for delivery of a new Paddocks which is fully DDA compliant and offers a full range of events and opportunities for use by all the community	Eliminate discrimination Advance equality of opportunity	31/3/2023	Trudie Bragg
Master planning of Canvey Island Seafront ensuring accessibility improvements for those with disabilities	Consideration of options for Canvey Island Seafront that improves the accessibility for those with disabilities	Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation Advance equality of opportunity Foster good relations Increasing and improving accessibility to the	31/3/2023	Trudie Bragg/Ian Butt

Outcome	Action	Meeting our Equality Duties	Timescale	Lead Responsibility
		seafront at Canvey Island		
Safety of residents during times of emergency affecting the whole or part of the community	Emergency Planning and rest centre arrangements are reviewed on a regular basis to ensure meet diverse needs of the community	Eliminate discrimination	31/3/2023	Andrew Smith

Housing and Regeneration

Outcome	Action	Meeting our Equality Duties	Timescale	Lead Responsibility
Provision of good quality housing in the Borough including affordable housing, market housing and social housing	Developing a strategic approach to dealing with homelessness to include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Developing a Housing Strategy ➤ Development of tenancy sustainment advice for tenants in the private sector ➤ Expansion of access to private sector housing provision 	Eliminating discrimination by providing affordable housing for everybody in the Borough	31/3/2023	Craig Watts

Outcome	Action	Meeting our Equality Duties	Timescale	Lead Responsibility
	<p>Ongoing engagement with developers and other housing providers to maximise delivery of affordable housing and homes for those with disabilities</p> <p>Continue construction and acquisition of new affordable housing stock</p>			
Addressing deprivation and poverty	<p>Annual Review development of Local Council Support Scheme</p> <p>Undertake Debt Recovery Policy Review</p> <p>Addressing outcomes of Welfare Reforms by providing advice to residents in managing their finances</p>	<p>Advancement of equality opportunity between persons who share a protected characteristic and those who do not</p> <p>Eliminate discrimination harassment & victimisation</p>	<p>31 March each year</p> <p>Ongoing</p>	Craig Watts/Eddie Mosuro/Gary Burns
Meeting the housing and employment needs for the Borough	Adoption of new Local Plan in accordance with milestones set out in the Local Development Scheme (LDS)	Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation	Milestones set in LDS	Ian Butt

Outcome	Action	Meeting our Equality Duties	Timescale	Lead Responsibility
		Advance equality opportunity Foster good relations		

A Commercial and Democratically Accountable Council

Outcome	Action	Links to Improvement Programme	Timescale	Lead Responsibility
Annual gender pay reporting	Analysing pay data across the Council by gender.	Eliminate discrimination	By 31 March each year	Barbara Cree
Improve access to services	Redesign the Council's website to ensure it meets access guidelines Maintaining pass mark for Accessibility Guidelines (AA and AAA standard from Web Accessibility guidelines (WAG) currently 65/100	Eliminate discrimination Advance equality of opportunity	31/3/2020 Subject to separate action plan	Barrie Delf/Stuart Jarvis

Outcome	Action	Links to Improvement Programme	Timescale	Lead Responsibility
Disability Confident Scheme The working environment is accessible for all staff	<p>Contact all disabled employees annually to offer review of workplace adjustments and support</p> <p>Maintain annual accreditation as a Disability Confident Committed Organisation</p>	<p>Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation</p> <p>Advance equality of opportunity</p> <p>Foster good relations</p>	<p>Oct 2019</p> <p>Nov 2019</p>	Barbara Cree

We publish and review our equality scheme

Outcome	Action	Meeting our Equality Duties	Timescale	Lead Responsibility
Implementation of our equality scheme. Monitoring our equality scheme Report findings	Review and report annually to the corporate management team. Produce and publish an annual progress report.		31 March Annually Annually	Fiona Wilson
The PSED is imbedded within the organisation	E learning on equality is utilised across the organisation Awareness of equality issues are raised through CMT and OMT Review of Equality training for all staff		Annually & new joiners Half yearly or more frequently as required	Barbara Cree/Fiona Wilson

ⁱ “The information that you hold (or will collect) about people with protected characteristics and the impact of your decisions and policies on them”

ⁱⁱ EHRC guidance suggests it would usually expect publication of employee information: race, general disability and age distribution of employees at different grades, recruitment & promotion; numbers of part time and full time staff; pay and remuneration; training; return to work of women on material leave; return to work of disabled employees following sick leave relating to their disability; appraisals; grievances; disciplinary action etc