

## 1. Understanding and Working with your Communities

### Collecting and Sharing Information

- East Suffolk Council has worked with its partners in SODA (Suffolk Office of Data Analytics) to produce a Data Pack for East Suffolk and for each of the eight Community Partnership areas in the District
- We use Suffolk Observatory data (drawing upon both national and local data sets), including the ward profiles, to understand our communities
- We use different research methods to gather information, including online workshops using Google Jamboard, surveys, workshops, world café events etc.
- We publish information about those protected characteristics that we can access data about (see here)
- We are compliant with UK GDPR legislation, in terms of how we collect, analyse, store and use data and other information and use information sharing agreements and protocols to ensure data protection requirements are met and data is processed lawfully
- GDPR training is mandatory for all staff and each service area has a nominated Information Champion.
- We use local and national data to understand trends and emerging issues in the District
- We work with Health and Wellbeing Board and Integrated Care System partners to collect and share information about health inequalities and population health

### Analysing and Using Data and Information

- We are working to develop more sophisticated ways of capturing, managing and monitoring data, particularly in relation to delivery against our 'We Are East Suffolk' Strategic Plan
- We have purchased specific software (the Low Income Family Tracker) to support the identification of vulnerable individuals and families and development of targeted interventions
- Data is disaggregated by factors such as deprivation or rurality but we need to do more to disaggregate data on the basis of the protected characteristics
- We use data to inform our Equality Impact Assessments
- We contribute to Vulnerability Mapping led by SODA which identified people with clinical, financial and social vulnerabilities
- We are working with Ipswich and East Suffolk CCG to analyse data from our Connect for Health Social Prescribing programme to analyse trends and understand outcomes

## Effective Community Engagement

- ESC has a good relationship with key VCSE (Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise) organisations working in the District – both countywide organisations and local groups – and often work in partnership (e.g. through the Collaborative Communities Board) to engage to avoid the risk of overloading particular groups
- Through our Community Partnerships, we engage with a range of local organisations and they are involved in setting priorities and ongoing decision making
- We have three place -based partnerships - Felixstowe Forward, Leiston Together and Lowestoft Rising – which focus on some of our larger and more deprived communities and involve a wide range of public and voluntary sector partners focussing on key local priorities
- The partnerships include a feed of issues from groups such as Youth Voice and our Disability Forums
- We use a range of engagement methods and where possible co-produce solutions with representatives of protected characteristic groups, often in conjunction with other local and Suffolk partners e.g. Poverty Strategy, Volunteering Strategy
- We work in partnership wherever relevant, for example with the ‘What are we Missing?’ initiative led by health partners during the Covid-19 pandemic and are part of the Engaged Communities programme set up to reach specific minority groups and places during the pandemic
- We share the outcomes of engagement with partners and use it wherever possible to change policy and practice
- ESC has an Enabling Communities Strategy which outlines our approach to enabling communities to act rather than doing things to or for them
- Our Community Intervention Team has been working in partnership to reach those most at risk from the pandemic, including those self-isolating and vaccine hesitant – they focus on the ‘hard to reach’ individuals and groups
- Our Economic Development Team have built strong relationships with business organisations and businesses, lead targeted intervention in priority economic sectors and regularly engage and consult with stakeholders
- Our Planning Team take an inclusive approach to community engagement and consultation in preparing planning policy and guidance and in supporting neighbourhood planning groups to influence placemaking for their local areas
- We use our grant funding to support groups working with protected characteristic groups e.g. Hidden Needs grants to spinal injured, hard of hearing and visually impaired as well as two local disability advice organisations
- We offer documents in alternative formats and languages if requested
- We can evidence how decisions and services have changed as a result of this engagement

## Fostering Good Community Relations

- We work with Community Safety Partnership partners to monitor community tensions
- Our CSP Action Plan includes a range of actions around protecting vulnerable people including Prevent and Criminal Exploitation/County Lines work

- We have a statutory obligation to deal with anti-social behaviour (ASB), this includes incidences where hate crime is an element and we feed into the monitoring of hate crimes at a Suffolk level including through the Safer Stronger Communities Group
- Councillors and senior officers spend time gathering community intelligence and listening to the representatives of various protected characteristic groups
- We feed into initiatives such as ‘What are We Missing?’ which focusses on the needs of BAME communities in the Ipswich and East Suffolk CCG area
- We are working with Norfolk and Waveney CCG on a project to identify minority groups who have not yet accessed their Covid-19 vaccine, including Indian populations and specific MSOA’s in Lowestoft
- We work with a strong network of Covid-19 community response groups to ensure that we understand tensions and issues at grassroots level

### **Participation in Public Life**

- We are planning various campaigns to increase the diversity of Councillors, including members of under-represented groups
- For the last election we undertook a ‘Be a Councillor’ campaign with a programme of drop in sessions
- We promote opportunities for participation, for example school governors and trustee roles, through our communication channels, including social media
- We have worked with Community Action Suffolk and other Suffolk partners to develop a Volunteering Strategy and we funded them to run a specific volunteering campaign for the District to try to boost the number of volunteers, including from protected characteristic groups
- We work closely with the Suffolk Association of Local Councils to, for example, increase participation of Councillors in our eight Community Partnerships
- Our Community Partnerships provide an opportunity for District and County Councillors to work alongside Town and Parish Councils, voluntary sector organisations and community groups to tackle the issues that matter most to our local communities
- We are working with our leisure providers (Places Leisure and Everyone Active) and Active Suffolk in relation to healthy lifestyles and have provided each with some additional funding to encourage people to be more active post Covid-19
- Our community emergency response includes a network of rest centres (and the provision of essential items at these centres)
- We support an ongoing induction process for new Councillors and refresher training for existing Councillors.

## 2. Leadership and Organisational Commitment

### Leadership

- The Leader and Cabinet Members meet with under-represented groups and seek their views to feed into decision making
- The organisation has developed an Equality and Diversity Policy which sets out our ambitions and vision and sets out what is expected from staff in delivering services to the community
- Cabinet and Council decisions are informed by the outcomes of Equality Impact Assessments
- Our Communities Team has identified a champion for each protected characteristic group
- Equality Impact Assessments are an integral part of decision making at all formal levels in the organisation
- The Cabinet Member for Communities is the Member Champion for the Equalities Agenda
- Regular updates on Equality and Diversity, including from the Services for All group are considered by the Corporate Management Team
- The Member Development Steering Group recently agreed to provide a “suite” of Equality and Diversity related training for Councillors including: Unconscious Bias e-learning, Equality and Awareness training e-learning and a bespoke E&D training session
- Unconscious Bias training developed for Staff
- Through our online and printed communications, we actively counter negative stereotypes and myths
- We have developed a video which tackles some common myths about a range of equalities issues, including Black Lives Matter

### Priorities and Working in Partnership

- The Council’s ‘We Are East Suffolk’ Strategic Plan includes a range of priorities that related to equalities and the engagement of both communities of place and interest
- The Strategic Plan sets out a clear vision for East Suffolk based around the themes of Growing Our Economy, Enabling Communities, Maintaining Financial Sustainability, Delivering Digital Transformation and Caring for Our Environment
- Much of what we do is delivered in partnership with other public sector, voluntary and community sector and private sector organisations including through the Collaborative Communities Board which has an Engaged Communities workstream
- We hold the social prescribing contract for the south of the District with three VCSE organisations who host a network of Community Connectors through the Connect for Health programme. These Connectors take a person-centred approach to working with individuals to tackle a variety of issues
- We also support the Connected Communities mobile social prescribing programme which covers our four most rural Community Partnership areas and specifically targets older people
- Our Leisure Strategy clearly outlines our commitment to enabling all to access leisure facilities, including through community outreach

- Planning policy actively considers the impacts of developments on health and wellbeing, such as access to services
- Our Independent Living Service enabled a wide range of adaptations to enable vulnerable people to continue to live independently in their own home
- Warm Homes Healthy People support first time central heating, fuel payments, loan heaters, draught proofing for those on low income
- We provide a range of grant funding to enable voluntary organisations and community groups to support specific groups within our community – many of these target young or older people or those with disabilities. Grants include Hidden Needs, Community Partnership Small Grants, VCSE Bounce Back funding and our Councillor Enabling Communities Budgets
- We also provide grants to local businesses, these include a plethora of grants to support businesses impacted by the Covid-19 lockdown such as the Small Business Grant Fund, Local Authority Discretionary Grant Fund, Local Restrictions Support Grant, Christmas Support Payment, Additional Restrictions Grant and Restart Grant. We have also established a longer-term business support scheme ‘Plan for the Future’ and worked closely with Town/ Parish Councils on delivering the ‘Welcome Back Fund’ to safely encourage people back into our town centres. during the Covid-19 pandemic
- We try to ensure that we learn from working in partnership – for example our lessons learned report in relation to the Covid-19 response which was co-produced with Mutual Aid and Community Response groups across Suffolk

### **Assessing Equality Impact in Policy and Decision Making**

- We have reviewed and updated our approach to Equality Impact Assessments, including to provide more guidance and support to staff undertaking EqlAs and a renewed emphasis on implementing the findings of EqlAs
- All reports to Council bodies include a paragraph which summarising the findings of an Equality Impact Assessment (where relevant) – this identifies both positive impacts on one or more protected characteristic group, and negative impacts and proposed mitigation
- The Council has examples of how Equality Impact Assessments have informed decision making and improved outcomes
- Equality Impact Assessment forms an integral part of developing planning policies for the District
- New guidance has been produced and corporate training workshops developed to guide staff through the EqlA process
- The Council includes a tenth ‘protected characteristic’ which is Deprivation and Socio-Economic Disadvantage which reflects the challenges faced by communities in some parts of the District
- We have set up a Service for All Group with representatives from all Services to coordinate and challenge work around Equality and Diversity
- Staff are encouraged and supported to engage with protected characteristic groups in the development of their EqlAs, including Youth Voice and our two Disability Forums

## **Equality Objectives and Annual Reporting**

- We have defined four equality objectives within our Equality and Diversity Policy which are underpinned by a set of commitments that we make to our staff and communities
- Our Equality and Diversity Policy is published on our website alongside a range of other relevant information

## **Performance Monitoring and Scrutiny**

- The Services for All Group has oversight of the Equalities Agenda and feeds into the Cabinet Member for Communities, Leisure and Tourism
- A BAME Task and Finish Group was established to lead work around the race protected characteristic – this has now become a wider corporate Equalities Group
- Progress around the Equalities Agenda is fed into Corporate Management Team and the Leader/Deputy Leader
- The new corporate report template requires authors to identify the primary and secondary Strategic Plan priorities
- EqIAs are a mandatory part of the development and consideration of new projects and an essential part of writing reports to Council bodies.

### **3. Responsive Services and Customer Care**

#### **Commissioning and Procuring Services**

- East Suffolk Council has a Social Value policy which aims to ensure that money invested with our partners, contractors and suppliers contributes to the delivery of our Strategic Plan priorities and our Equality objectives
- As part of our tender evaluation criteria, suppliers are required to provide evidence that they have appropriate equal opportunity policies in place and are committed to implementing them
- Guidance is provided to potential suppliers on our equality requirements and relevant clauses are included in our contracts
- We work closely with our three biggest service providers (waste and leisure services) to monitor equality in their activities and ensure that staff are appropriately trained and that equality issues take appropriate level of priority

#### **Integration of Equality Objectives into Service Planning**

- We have undertaken a piece of work to strengthen the links between EqIAs and both the Strategic Plan and Service Plans
- Risk Register
- Customer Care policy

#### **Service Delivery**

- Service users are consulted about service development and delivery before services are developed
- Customer satisfaction information – Customer Experience Team (user satisfaction, complaints analysed by equality groups, trends in terms of customer satisfaction over time, examples of responses to customer experiences)
- Strategic Management Team holds quarterly meetings with the Town Clerks for the district. These cover a range of topics but, from time to time, the opportunity is taken to discuss potential service delivery changes with them in order to gauge their views e.g. the proposed changes to our car parking services and a number of services delivered by Norse such as grass cutting etc. (Norse officers attend for these items)
- We hold quarterly liaison meetings with Lowestoft Town Council (the largest town council in the District) where we have discussed with them our plans for future CCTV provision, the roll out of superfast broadband and progress of The Ness.
- ESC has worked with our two CCGs to support the establishment of Social Prescribing in East Suffolk through four VCSE provider organisations, including a rural outreach project targeting older people
- We are working with the CCG that covers the south of the County to develop a young person's social prescribing service and are supporting a High Intensity User pilot at Ipswich Hospital

- The Council has transferred a number of assets to community groups and Town/Parish Councils and listed more than 50 assets in East Suffolk Communities as Assets of Community Value under Right to Bid legislation
- There is a standing item on South Seafront Officers meeting to capture positive equalities discussions and thought e.g. prompting seeking guidance from Disability Forum, consultation with young people etc.
- We produce a quarterly magazine for all residents and the Autumn 2021 edition includes a residents survey which includes questions about priorities, loneliness and volunteering
- We undertake an annual budget consultation to seek views on priorities for spend
- We undertake annual consultations with taxi drivers on tariffs/fares
- Our Planning Service consult – above and beyond statutory requirements – on a range of planning documents, for example this year wide engagement has been undertaken on the Cycling and Walking Strategy and we have a Statement of Community Involvement
- For a number of years we have held an annual East Suffolk Partnership Forum which regularly attracted over 180 delegates, this has been replaced by our Community Partnerships annual forum which was virtual in 2020 but will hopefully be face to face in March 2022
- We hold quarterly liaison meetings with both Felixstowe Town Council and Lowestoft Town Council
- We produce a Tenants' Magazine which includes a wide range of information and advice for our tenants
- We hold a quarterly meeting between the Council's Strategic Management Team and the town clerks in the District.

## 4. Diverse and Engaged Workforce

### Workforce Diversity

- The Council understands the local labour market, and has mechanisms in place to monitor its workforce against protected characteristics.
- Succession plans and recruitment processes address under-representation
- Selection panels are trained in Unconscious Bias. *This includes senior recruitment panels where Members are involved.*
- The Council enables flexible working arrangements and career pathway initiatives which can address potential barriers and under representation

### Inclusive Strategies and Policies

- The Council has employment policies and practices in place to enhance workforce equality and diversity including reasonable adjustments, job evaluation, equal pay, flexible working and family friendly policies
- The equality aspects of the Council's People Strategy are being implemented and monitored
- Managers apply the Council's policies and practices in a consistent manner for all staff supported and encouraged by HR and underpinned by regular training
- The Council's Health and Safety Policy is currently being revised/re-issued. The policy is a legal requirement and does make reference to consideration of individual needs including Personal Emergency Evacuation Plans (PEEPs), the statutory requirement to carry out risk assessments for young people and pregnant/new parents at work.
- Staff are engaged positively in employment and service transformation and in developing new roles and ways of working
- Trade unions and partners are involved and consulted
- The training and development offer supports a wider equalities agenda for the organisation
- The Council has high satisfaction levels across all staff groups in respect of staff engagement

### Collecting, Analysing and Publishing Workforce Data

- The Council regularly monitors, analyses and publishes employment data in accordance with its statutory duties.
- The organisation reports annually on its Gender Pay Gap and an action plan is in place to ensure we are actively working on reducing the Gender Pay Gap.
- Data on applicants, people shortlisted and the composition of the workforce is systematically collected. This can be disaggregated by the protected characteristics.
- Staff are encouraged to provide their data and there are initiatives in place to increase the disclosure of equality information by staff.

- Diversity monitoring information is separated from recruitment decisions
- Workforce data is analysed and reported to senior managers via the Corporate Governance Theme Group
- We adhere to the Transparency Code
- We publish information about Member Allowances.

## **Learning and Development**

- Assessments are made as to what training and development for staff is required when training plans for individuals and teams are established, including equality related training
- A staff natural work team has identified five corporate values that the organisation works to
- The Corporate Learning and Development Plan takes into account equality issues and the corporate L&D required – and the Communities Theme Group is consulted in drawing that plan together.
- Equality issues are mainstreamed into all training, e.g. recruitment, management development
- Different methods are used to promote and instil learning across our organisation, e.g. e-learning modules, podcasts, webinars, traditional face to face courses
- Induction training for both officers and councillors includes equality training and information on community mapping
- Training and learning opportunities are both face to face and online and include ongoing development
- Our performance management process, MyConversation, ensures staff and managers are aware of their equality related responsibilities and accountabilities.

## **Health and wellbeing**

- We promote the health and wellbeing of staff in our workforce and have a dedicated area on the intranet with access to a variety of resources.
- We have trained our managers on mental health awareness and equip them to deal with staff issues
- We have a network of Mental Health First Aiders
- We have made mental health support available to staff through Care First
- Staff are engaged positively through natural work teams and team meetings in establishing service transformation and new ways of working
- Regular staff surveys are conducted to seek the views of staff across the organisation
- The HR team work very proactively with managers to provide reasonable adjustments in a timely fashion
- Regular reports are provided to Managers and CMT to track absence trends
- The Occupational Health Service works closely with the HR Team to provide relevant services

- We have a comprehensive Bullying and Harassment Policy to support managers to identify and deal with harassment and bullying at work.
- Clear outcomes focussing on wellbeing have been included in the recently revised People Strategy

