

Subject:	Annual Equality Report 2018/19	Status:	For Publication
Report to:	Overview and Scrutiny Committee	Date:	16 th September 2019
Report of:	HR Manager	Portfolio Holder:	Corporate Services
Key Decision:	<input type="checkbox"/> Forward Plan <input type="checkbox"/>	General Exception	<input type="checkbox"/> Special Urgency <input type="checkbox"/>
Equality Impact Assessment:	Required: No	Attached:	N/A
Biodiversity Impact Assessment	Required: No	Attached:	N/A
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1.	RECOMMENDATION(S)
1.1	That Overview and Scrutiny considers the content of the Council's Annual Equality Report for 2018/19 attached at Appendix 1, and agree any specific actions or issues that need to be taken forward arising from the content of this report.
1.2	That Overview and Scrutiny continues to monitor the Council's progress on equality and sufficient publication of equality information in line with current legislative and best practice requirements to ensure that the Council is operating fairly and equitably.

2. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 2.1 The purpose of this report is to present the Council's Annual Equality Report to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
- 2.2 It is important to note that the Council's achievements and progress in relation to equality as an employer and service provider and its equality data as presented in this annual report are open to public scrutiny and challenge.
- Appendix 1 – Annual Equality Report 2018/19

3. CORPORATE PRIORITIES

- 3.1 The matters discussed in this report impact directly on the following corporate priorities:
- **A clean and green Rossendale:** our priority is to keep Rossendale clean and green for all of Rossendale's residents and visitors, and to take available opportunities to recycle and use energy from renewable sources more efficiently.
 - **A connected and successful Rossendale that welcomes sustainable growth.** This priority is to ensure that we are well connected to our residents, key partners and stakeholder. We want to make the most of every pound we spend and we are always looking for new and innovative ways to make the resources we do have, and work harder for us.
 - **A proud, healthy and vibrant Rossendale:** our priority is to ensure that we are creating and maintaining a healthy and vibrant place for people to live and visit

4. RISK ASSESSMENT IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 All the issues raised and the recommendation(s) in this report involve risk considerations as set out below:
- Non-compliance with the Equality Act 2010 and associated Equality Duties. This includes potential legal challenge and possible associated financial and reputational costs if equality duties are not complied with.
 - Possible investigation by the Equality and Human Rights Commission if equality information published is not considered sufficient.

5. BACKGROUND AND OPTIONS

- 5.1 Rossendale Borough Council is committed to ensuring that it is operating fairly and equitably in both its employment practices and service delivery, in line with, current legislation and codes of practice.
- 5.2 The Council is required to publish equality information on at least an annual basis. The Annual Equality Report set out in Appendix 1 provides an overview of the Council's key actions and achievements during 2018/19 in relation to equality and diversity. It also presents the Council's key equality data. Below is a summary of some headline messages from this data.
- 5.3 From a qualitative perspective the Annual Equality Report highlights that despite some difficult financial challenges and changes, the Council has been able to continue to support a range of projects and support services within the community, with some real positive results. Although the Council will continue to ensure it is compliant with its required duties, it should be noted that as financial challenges and changes within the Council continue, this could have an impact on the extent of the Council's involvement in this agenda in future years.
- 5.4 Taking an appropriate and proportionate approach, we continue to carry out 'About You' equality monitoring for employee, Councillors and some services where appropriate, across all protected characteristics as recognised by the Equality Act 2010. This is undertaken on a voluntary basis and participants have an option to make an informed choice not to answer any or some of the questions asked. Gathering and analysis of employee intelligence will enable the Council to identify possible issues of inequality and take appropriate action.
- 5.5 Gathering and analysis of customer intelligence enables the Council to identify any issues of inequality and possible service improvements. In terms of collection and analysis of equality data and customer satisfaction data across service areas this is dependent on the nature of the service provided and appropriateness and relevance of undertaking such activity.
- 5.6 Due to the Council's size, much of the data we actively collect in relation to our workforce relates to small numbers of people, particularly when disaggregated by protected characteristic.
- 5.7 There is a requirement for officers to consult and undertake an Equality Impact Assessments to provide an evidence base to support any council decisions or change of policy; equality impact assessments are published with the relevant Council or Committee reports.
- 5.8 Following the recommendation of the Equality Task and Finish Group (2017) the Council's Equality Policy was refreshed and agreed at Cabinet July 2018.

COMMENTS FROM STATUTORY OFFICERS:

6. SECTION 151 OFFICER

- 6.1 As noted in the report, the progress made in this area assists the Council in mitigating the risk of legal challenge and therefore the associated financial risks.

7. MONITORING OFFICER

- 7.1 No additional comments to be made in relation to this report.

8. POLICY IMPLICATIONS AND CONSULTATION CARRIED OUT

- 8.1 The Equality Act 2010 requires the Council to have due regard in the exercising of its functions in relation to the three aims of the Equality Duty, for the need to:
- Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Act.
 - Advanced equality of opportunity between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and people who do not share it.
 - Foster good relations between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not share it.
- 8.2 The amount of regard that is “due” is set out in the Act and will depend on the circumstances of the case. Under the general equality duty there is a requirement to engage with people with protected characteristics and to have an adequate evidence base for Council decision-making. The duty to inform, consult or involve requires that the council must involve communities and those directly affected at the most appropriate and proportionate level in ‘routine functions, in addition to one-off decisions.’ The Council is required to consult representatives of a wide range of local people; this should include local voluntary and community organisations and small businesses in such consultation.
- 8.3 Consultation has been undertaken with Management Team, Portfolio Holder and Member Equalities Champion in relation to Annual Equality Report.

9. CONCLUSION

- 9.1 The Council continues to ensure it is working to achieve positive outcomes for its communities and has maintained strong and clear leadership on the importance of equality as a core part of Council business, reflected in its the decision making processes, progress and activity across the Council.

Background Papers

Document	Place of Inspection
Annual Equality Report 2018/19	Attached as Appendix 1