

Bracknell Forest - The borough of opportunity for everyone



Bracknell Forest Council

‘All of Us’
Equality Scheme 2017-20

March 2017
www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk

Table of Contents

Foreword by the Leader and Chief Executive	3
1. Introduction.....	4
2. Developing the Equality Scheme.....	7
3. Diversity within Bracknell Forest.....	8
3.1 Bracknell Forest as a place	8
3.2 Community Cohesion and Integration	8
3.3 Deprivation	8
3.4 Age	9
3.5 Race	9
3.6 Religion or Belief	9
3.7 Gender.....	10
3.8 Disability	10
3.9 Sexual Orientation	10
3.10 Marriage and civil partnership.....	11
3.11 Gender reassignment	11
3.12 Pregnancy and maternity.....	11
3.13 Armed Forces	11
3.14 Carers.....	12
3.15 People on low incomes.....	12
4. Delivering fair and accessible services.....	14
4.1 Delivering on equalities	14
4.2 Embedding equalities	14
4.3 Progress in delivering the 2012-2016 Equality Action Plan	15
4.4 Local Government Equality Framework.....	16
5. Equality Objectives 2017-20.....	17
5.1 The council's vision	17
5.2 Equality Objectives 2017-20.....	17
5.3 Resources	18
5.4 Setting challenging but realistic targets	19
5.6 Working in partnership – one borough, many communities.....	19
5.7 Reviewing progress	19
Annex 1 - Equality Scheme 2017-20 Consultation Plan.....	20

Foreword by the Leader and Chief Executive

Our long term vision for the borough is to make Bracknell Forest a place where all people can thrive – living, learning and working in a clean, safe and healthy environment. Although Bracknell Forest is a relatively affluent borough with a dynamic economy we recognise that there are pockets of deprivation and need in the borough.

We will have significantly less to spend over the coming years. What we do ourselves we will do well, but we will have to stop doing some things that we can no longer afford and prioritise to live within our means. This will mean focusing our resources on people and areas with the greatest need as well as early help and prevention so that struggling or vulnerable people can maximise their opportunities to become independent. We will seek to minimise the effect of the decisions we make about future service provision and consider the needs of all communities in the borough. Consultation with all of our residents and partners is a key element of this. We are committed to consulting with residents and service users on all major changes and assessing how those changes will impact on communities.

We recognise that to continue to provide good customer service we need to ensure we regularly review the changing needs of our communities and provide fair and appropriate access to services that are tailored to meet the individual needs of our residents and diverse communities. Further we are committed to being an employer who provides a flexible and supportive working environment, and ensures our workforce reflects the community we serve. We are producing this updated scheme, which replaces our 'All of Us' Equality Scheme 2012-16 to respond to the changing needs of people in Bracknell Forest and to ensure we are getting our priorities right.

The council has adopted the Local Government Equality Framework and was assessed independently and recognised as an 'Achieving' authority in 2014 by Local Government Improvement and Development. We are proud of the progress and service improvements we have made as a result of the delivery of our previous equality schemes. However, there is no room for complacency and we continue our journey of improvement in reducing inequalities and maintaining high levels of cohesion through the implementation of this scheme with the aim of working towards 'Excellent' level status of the Equality Framework in the longer term.



Paul Bettison

Cllr. Paul Bettison
Leader of the council



Timothy Wheaden

Timothy Wheaden
Chief Executive

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Bracknell Forest is a thriving, welcoming and inclusive community. Bracknell Forest Council works closely with partners to support and engage our different communities, groups and organisations. As our community grows and changes, we are committed to ensuring that no-one is left behind, isolated or disadvantaged. We take great pride in our support for vulnerable groups and individuals. Elected members and staff are committed to ensuring that Bracknell Forest is a borough of opportunity for everyone. Our public statements, services and employment practices will reflect this commitment. We will promote this policy and expect respect for it from citizens, users of council services, partner agencies, elected members, council employees and our contractors.
- 1.2 The council is however going through a significant change which will potentially impact on staff and communities through a transformation programme designed to take account of the current financial situation. Over the past four years Bracknell Forest Council has made savings of over £18m whilst continuing to provide effective services for Bracknell's residents, businesses and communities. Our finances will remain under significant pressure with further savings of around £23m predicted to be needed over the next three years. To meet the challenges ahead the council needs a clear and focused approach that will address the financial challenge. Our approach is explained by a new narrative for the organisation that we believe is right for the challenges we face:
- Bracknell Forest is a good place to live with a mainly affluent, well educated and independent population.
 - The council will provide leadership and work with others to keep the borough a place where all residents can thrive and benefit from effective core services. What we do ourselves we aim to do well, but we must prioritise to live within our means.
 - In targeting our services, we will prioritise people and areas with the greatest need, early help and prevention so struggling or vulnerable people can maximise their opportunities to become independent.
- 1.3 We will seek to minimise the effect of the decisions we make about future service provision and consider all protected characteristics taking into account the Equality Act 2010.
- 1.4 The Equality Act 2010 replaced and consolidated previous equality legislation, including the Disability Discrimination Act 2005, The Equal Pay Act 1970 and The Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000. The Equality Act 2010 places a duty on Bracknell Forest Council in the exercise of its functions to ensure equality for all and sets out the different ways in which it is unlawful to treat someone. At its heart are provisions to outlaw direct and indirect discrimination, harassment and victimisation with regard to nine protected characteristics.
- 1.5 The Act offers protection to people possessing a minimum of one of these nine characteristics. Everyone has a combination of these characteristics, whether or not they perceive themselves to be part of a protected or minority group. The Equality Act 2010 makes it unlawful to discriminate on the grounds of:
- Age
 - Disability
 - Gender reassignment

- Marriage and civil partnership (only to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation on these grounds)
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Race
- Religion or belief
- Sex (Gender)
- Sexual orientation

In addition to the nine protected characteristics which are specified under the Equality Act 2010, we recognise that other groups may face discrimination or difficult circumstances, and may need special consideration - this would include armed forces and ex armed forces personnel, those on low incomes, and carers.

1.6 Specific duties, set out in regulations to the Equality Act, help public bodies to meet the general duty and require them to:

- Publish information to demonstrate compliance with the public sector Equality Duty, annually. The information must be published in such a manner that it is accessible to the public, either in a separate document or within another published document.
- Prepare and publish equality objectives at least every four years. All such objectives must be specific and measurable.

Bracknell Forest Council has taken these duties on board with enthusiasm and commitment and developed a new scheme which outlines its objectives for reducing inequalities in the borough for the period 2017-20.

1.7 The Equality Scheme 2017-20 (which replaces the 'All of Us' Equality Scheme 2012-2016) sets out the council's objectives and commitment to the legislation which seeks to

- Eliminate unfair discrimination, harassment and victimisation
- Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not
- Foster good relationships between those with a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not.

1.8 Our vision for equality and diversity is to represent, serve and employ people as equals, valuing the diversity of their contributions and aspirations, no matter who they are or what their circumstances. We believe that tackling inequalities provides a strong foundation for cohesive and confident communities. We believe that all citizens have a right to equal access to life opportunities, including representation, services and employment. To achieve this we are working towards removing barriers to opportunities and to narrowing the gap between the most disadvantaged and others.

1.9 We understand that people may suffer discrimination because of their age, health, race, ethnic origin, religion, gender, sexuality or because they have a disability, they are pregnant or on maternity leave, they have undertaken gender reassignment, they are married or they are in civil partnerships. We also recognise that some people may experience more than one type of inequality at the same time due to a combination of more than one relevant protected characteristic.

1.10 Consideration will be given with regards to staff working in the council. While there is a job to be done, the council will strive to make recruitment, selection, progression

and retention processes fair, inclusive and transparent, so that the workforce becomes more representative of the communities that are served, within all occupations and grades.

- 1.11 Section 5 of this equality scheme outlines the council's equality objectives. Actions have been identified and performance indicators chosen to deliver on these objectives linked to the departmental service plans.

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2. Developing the Equality Scheme

- 2.1 Under the specific duties, there is no legal requirement to produce or publish an 'equality scheme' as such; however, we have found this a useful tool for presenting our equality objectives and for communicating with stakeholders.
- 2.2 This scheme has been produced following guidance from the Equality and Human Rights Commission on developing equality objectives. The equality objectives have been identified following a review of evidence and existing strategies which highlight the key equality issues facing the borough, as well as consideration of the strategic themes and the key measures of success that the council has set in the Council Plan 2015-19.
- 2.3 The research and strategies considered in forming the equality objectives, such as the council's Older People's Strategy, Children and Young People's Plan and the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) were developed with extensive and recent consultation with our diverse community. The JSNA in particular is now the council's key document for assessing inequalities in the borough.
- 2.4 The council consulted on the draft equality scheme from 1 February 2017 for six weeks by means of meetings and a questionnaire which was sent to elected members, council staff, partners and voluntary and community groups and made available on the council's website. The draft scheme outlined the equality objectives and asked for feedback on these. The consultation plan is included as Annex 1.

3. Diversity within Bracknell Forest

3.1 Bracknell Forest as a place

- 3.1.1 Bracknell Forest lies 28 miles west of London, at the heart of the Thames Valley and within the county of Berkshire. The current estimate of the borough's population is 118,982 (mid-2015).¹ The population is relatively young with the median age being 38.5 years. Dividing the population into five year age groups shows the 45-49 year group as being the most prevalent.
- 3.1.2 Currently the annual population growth rate is 0.81% compared to 0.83% in the South East and 0.86% in England. By 2021, the population in Bracknell Forest is estimated to increase by almost 8,000 people from the mid-2015 estimate. The older population is expected to increase at the greatest rate followed by the younger adult population and the child population aged 5 to 14 years.
- 3.1.3 The health of people in Bracknell Forest is generally better than the England average. Life expectancy is increasing and currently stands at 81.4 years for men and 85.0 years for women. These figures are higher than the England averages of 79.4 years for men and 83.1 years for women.

3.2 Community Cohesion and Integration

- 3.2.1 Community cohesion is already high in Bracknell Forest, as reflected in our performance indicators. In the 2008 Place Survey 81% of the public surveyed agreed that Bracknell Forest was a place 'where people from different backgrounds get on well together'. This rose to 94% in the 2014 Residents Survey which demonstrates that a high level of community cohesion is being maintained despite the diversity of the borough increasing significantly. However if this is to be sustained in the long-term, we cannot afford to be complacent.

3.3 Deprivation

- 3.3.1 Bracknell Forest is one of the least deprived areas in England. The 2011 Census measured four aspects of deprivation, (employment, education, health and disability).² The results showed 47% of households in Bracknell Forest were deprived in one or more of these dimensions, (compared with 52% for South East and 57% in England). There were 144 households (0.3%) deprived in all four dimensions, (compared with 0.4% for the South East and 0.5% for England as a whole).
- 3.3.2 The Indices of Multiple Deprivation show an average rank of 287, (where 1 is the most deprived and 326 is the least deprived area of the country)³. Bracknell Forest as a whole is ranked number 52 out of all 56 unitary authorities. Over a third, (31%), of the 74 lower super output areas (LSOAs) in Bracknell Forest are in the top 10% of least deprived areas nationally and almost half (46%) are in the top 20%.
- 3.3.3 However, there are areas of Bracknell Forest that have relatively high levels of deprivation in comparison with the rest of the borough. The three most deprived wards are Wildridings & Central, Old Bracknell and Priestwood & Garth whilst the three least deprived wards are Warfield Harvest Ride, Ascot and Little Sandhurst &

¹ ONS Population Estimates Unit published tables (mid 2015)

² [Office for National Statistics, Neighbourhood Statistics](#), Table QS119EW

³ Indices of Multiple Deprivation 2014, Communities and Local Government

Wellington. Breaking this down further, in Bracknell Forest, none of the Lower Super Output Areas are among the 10% most deprived with 32% being in the 10% least deprived.

3.4 Age

- 3.4.1 The population of Bracknell Forest is relatively young (average age 37.4 years compared to the South East 40 years and England and Wales 39.4 years).⁴
- 3.4.2 As a share of the total population, there are slightly more young children aged 0 to 4 living in Bracknell Forest than the national average. A lower share of people in the 20-24 age category live in Bracknell compared to the national average. There is also a higher share of people of working age and a lower share of older people aged 65 and over. Only 12.5% of the population is aged 65+, compared to 16.6% nationally, although this is expected to grow significantly.⁵

3.5 Race

- 3.5.1 The 2001 census showed that 5% of the population classified themselves as belonging to black and minority ethnic groups, (excluding White Irish and White Other). The 2009 mid-year figures showed this had doubled to 10.4% and in the 2011 Census this figure has increased again to 15.1%. In the ONS Annual Population Survey 2015 the estimated population by ethnic group says 92.4% of people aged 16+ were white with 7.6% being from an ethnic minority.
- 3.5.2 Although the mid-2015 ethnicity is an estimated figure, data from Bracknell Forest schools is showing a similar trend. Data from Bracknell Forest School Census shows that the proportion of minority ethnic groups in schools is increasing. The percentage of pupils from minority ethnic groups has gone up from 16.1% in 2011 to 20.6% in 2016, an increase of 4.5 percentage points.⁶ Comparing similar figures, (excluding pupils who classified themselves as White Irish, White Other and Gypsy/Roma/ Traveller), 4% of the pupils were classified as from BME groups in 2001. This trebled to just over 12% in 2011 and increased again to 14.5% in 2016.
- 3.5.3 Data from the latest School Census, (January 2016), shows that 109 home languages are spoken in Bracknell Forest schools, with relatively small numbers of pupils speaking each language. 88% of pupils spoke English as their first language. The next most common language is Polish with 259 pupils (1.49%) having this as their first language, followed by Nepali, Tagalog/Filipino, Akan/Twi-Fante and Urdu. The significant Nepali community is due to Bracknell Forest being home to the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst whose soldiers include the Ghurkha Company (Sittang); many Nepali veterans and their families live in the borough.

3.6 Religion or Belief

- 3.6.1 In the 2011 Census 64.8% of Bracknell Forest residents said their religion/belief was 'Christian' (down from 78% in the 2001 Census) with just over 30% saying they had no religion/belief (up from 20% in the 2001 Census). The remaining 5.2% were spread across a number of religions with Hinduism being the second largest non-

⁴ ONS – Mid-2015 population estimates

⁵ ONS – Estimated resident population by ethnic group and age, mid-2009 (experimental statistics)

⁶ [2015 School Census, Department for Education](#), January 2015

Christian faith group at 1.7% which is similar to the overall figure for England and Wales of 1.5%.⁷

- 3.6.2 Across England and Wales as a whole the percentage of people who said their religion/belief was anything other than 'Christian' was higher than those in Bracknell Forest at 8.4%, with the second largest group being Muslim at 4.8%. In Bracknell Forest the percentage of people saying they were Muslim is only a quarter of that at 1.2%. Apart from Hinduism the only other religion more common in Bracknell Forest than across England and Wales is Buddhism at 0.8% against an average of 0.4%.
- 3.6.4 It is likely that these statistics will have changed since the 2011 Census as reflected in data from the Bracknell Forest Schools Census 2015. This shows a higher proportion of pupils belonging to Hindu and Muslim faiths than in the 2011 Census at 2.3% and 1.7% respectively. There are also a much lower proportion of pupils classified as 'Christian', (50.9% against 64.8% in the 2011 census).

3.7 Gender

The latest figures, (mid-2015)⁸, show the population of Bracknell Forest is 49.5% male and 50.5% female. These figures have remained consistent over recent years.

3.8 Disability

- 3.8.1 The 2011 national census showed 13,897 people (12.3%) living in Bracknell Forest, (all ages), categorized themselves as having a limiting long term illness. There are also an estimated 6,668 people (41%) aged 65+ who have a limiting long term illness, (which may include other health problems such as mental health and learning disabilities).⁹
- 3.8.2 Figures from the Institute of Public Care (2015)¹⁰ estimated there would be around 5,806 people living in Bracknell Forest aged 18 to 64 with a moderate or severe physical disability in 2015. This is 7.8% of the population in that age range. There are variations across the age groups with 4.2% of 18 to 24 year olds having a moderate or severe physical disability increasing to almost 15.4% of those aged 55 to 64. Some also have other disabilities/health problems, such as learning disabilities, mental health problems.
- 3.9.3 An estimated 2,158 people aged 18+ (1.8%) have learning disabilities; 109 of whom have severe disability. Nearly 12,016 people (10.2%) aged 18 - 64 are estimated to have some type of mental health problem. There are also an estimated 1,006 people, (6.3%), aged 65+ estimated to have dementia and 1,421 (8.9%) estimated to have depression, with 451 being categorized as severe depression¹¹.

3.9 Sexual Orientation

- 3.9.1 The ONS Annual Population Survey produced Sexual Identity Estimates for 2015 which indicate that 1.8% of the population are lesbian, gay or bisexual people, (LGB).¹² For Bracknell Forest this would equate to 1,710 people aged over 16.

⁷ <https://www.ons.gov.uk/census/2011census>

⁸ <https://www.ons.gov.uk/census/2011census>

⁹ <https://www.ons.gov.uk/census/2011census>

¹⁰ Institute of Public Care PANSI database – 2015 data

¹¹ Institute for Public Care, POPPI database – 2015 data

¹² ONS Annual Population Survey 2015

Figures from the 2015 Annual Population Survey highlighted that 3.3% of young people aged 16 to 24 year defined themselves as LGB, dropping to 0.6% for people aged over 65.

- 3.9.2 The Office of National Statistics has stated that the estimate of the population being Lesbian, Gay or Bisexual (LGB) is "...broadly consistent with other comparable surveys in the UK, which suggests it provides a reliable benchmark".¹³ However this figure is disputed by a number of LGB national charities whose estimates are that one in ten people are LGB. Based on the higher estimates of one in ten people would give Bracknell Forest an LGB estimated population of 9,413.

3.10 Marriage and civil partnership

- 3.10.1 The 2011 Census showed that within Bracknell Forest 49.7% of people are married, 12.3% cohabit with a member of the opposite sex, 0.8% live with a partner of the same sex, 22.2% are single and have never married or been in a registered same sex partnership, 8.8% are separated or divorced.¹⁴

- 2.10.2 Note: Marriage and civil partnership is a protected characteristic only with respect to having due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation on these grounds.

3.11 Gender reassignment

- 3.11.1 The Census does not gather data on gender reassignment. Although there has been some work to estimate the number of transgender people in the UK population, estimates vary enormously from 1 in 200 to 1 in 1,000 and there is no publicly available statistical data on which to make reliable estimates.¹⁵

3.12 Pregnancy and maternity

- 3.12.1 There are no detailed statistics relating to pregnancy and maternity in Bracknell Forest, however figures from the ONS say that in 2015 there were 1,488 live births in the borough.¹⁶

3.13 Armed Forces

- 3.13.1 Partner organisations within Bracknell Forest have signed up to the Armed Forces Community Covenant which is a voluntary statement of mutual support between a civilian community and its local Armed Forces Community. Its purpose is to encourage support for the Armed Forces community working and living in the borough and to recognise and remember the sacrifices made by members of this Armed Forces Community, particularly those who have given the most. This includes in-service and ex-service personnel, their families and widow/widowers. It aims to encourage all parties within a community to offer support to the local Armed Forces community and make it easier for Service personnel, families and veterans to access the help and support available from the MOD, from statutory providers and from the charitable and voluntary sector.

¹³ Measuring Sexual Identity: An Evaluation Report, Office for National Statistics, September 2010

¹⁴ www.ons.gov.uk/census/2011census

¹⁵ www.ons.gov.uk/ons/guide-method/measuring.../trans-data-position-paper.pdf

¹⁶ www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/birthsdeathsandmarriages/livebirths/2015

3.13.2 In terms of statistics, as of January 2014 there were 1,140 Ministry of Defence personnel living in Bracknell Forest. Of these 910 were military with 630 being Officers and 280 holding other ranks. As of 31 March 2015 there were 885 individuals in Bracknell Forest in receipt of an occupational pension under the Armed Forces Pension Scheme, an ongoing pension under the War Pensions Scheme, and those that have been awarded compensation under the Armed Forces Compensation Scheme. Of these 885, 770 are veterans.¹⁷

3.14 Carers

3.14.1 The national Census in 2011 showed that in Bracknell Forest 9,601 people (8.5% of the population) were unpaid carers.¹⁸ The ward with the highest number of carers is Binfield with Warfield (739) and the one with the lowest is Central Sandhurst (412). The ward with the highest proportion of unpaid carers is Winkfield and Cranbourne (10.7%). The one with the lowest is Warfield Harvest Ride (6.2%).¹⁹

3.14.2 The majority of unpaid carers are aged between 25 and 64 years. The highest proportion of unpaid carers is the 50 to 64 year old age group with 18% of the people in this age group being unpaid carers. 28% of carers in the 25 to 64 year old age group are spending 20+ hours a week in caring responsibilities. 17% are providing more than 50+ hours care a week which has an impact on their ability to take up paid employment.²⁰

3.14.3 The 2011 Census tells us there were 592 people up to 24 years of age providing unpaid care. There are estimated to be between 300 and 500 young carers up to the age of 18 in the Borough with the majority of young carers being between the ages of 10 and 17.

3.15 People on low incomes

3.15.1 In Bracknell Forest as a whole 8.2% of the population are income deprived according to the 2015 IMD data.²¹ This breaks down further into income affecting children and income affecting older people. The proportion of children in Bracknell Forest who live in families that are income deprived (i.e. those who are in receipt of Income Support, income-based Jobseeker's Allowance, Pension Credit Guarantee or Child Tax Credit below a given threshold) was 11%. Bracknell Forest is ranked 51 out of the 56 All English unitary authorities and 261 out of all 326 authorities in England for Income Deprivation Affecting Children. For Income Deprivation Affecting Older People Index the proportion of the population aged 60 and over who is income deprived is 11.8%. Bracknell Forest is ranked 45 out of All English unitary authorities and 216 out of all 326 authorities in England.

3.15.2 More recent figures from the DWP in May 2016 for benefit claimants (working age client group) show that Bracknell Forest has relatively low numbers of people living on low incomes and means-tested benefits, with 6.6% claiming key out-of-work benefits, (against 9.0% in the South East and 11.6% in England)²². Similarly, the proportion of children aged 0 – 15 living in families in receipt of out of work benefits

¹⁷ www.gov.uk/government - Location of Armed Forces Pension and Compensation Recipients March 16

¹⁸ www.ons.gov.uk/census/2011census

¹⁹ www.ons.gov.uk/census/2011census

²⁰ www.ons.gov.uk/census/2011census

²¹ Indices of Multiple Deprivation 2014, Communities and Local Government

²² [DWP benefit claimants - working age client group](#), May 2016

shows Bracknell Forest had 7.7% of children living in poverty by this definition, compared to an average of 10.6% for the South East unitary authorities and 19.3% in England²³.

3.15.3 Figures for free school meals show Bracknell Forest having 8.5% eligible (including nursery and sixth form pupils). Figures vary across the wards with 14.8% being eligible in Great Hollands North to 3.0% in Little Sandhurst and Wellington.²⁴ In nursery/ primary schools specifically 8.1% of pupils are eligible free school meals, against an average of 10.2% in the South East and 14.5% nationally. In secondary schools the figures are 7.2% in Bracknell Forest, 8.6% in the South East and 13.2% nationally.²⁵

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²³ [Department for Work and Pensions](#), May 2015

²⁴ [2015 School Census, Department for Education](#),

²⁵ [2015 School Census, Department for Education](#), (Tables 8a and 8b), January 2015

4. Delivering fair and accessible services

4.1 Delivering on equalities

The leader of the council is the portfolio holder for council strategy, community cohesion, equalities and community engagement, leading our action to address inequalities with the executive who have overall responsibility for equality and diversity. The council's director of corporate services leads the council's equalities, community cohesion and engagement agenda and chairs the Equality Sub Group made up of managers from across the council. Directorate management teams are responsible for leading departmental action to improve our performance in tackling inequalities.

The Equality Sub Group, led by the council and reporting to the Community Cohesion and Engagement Partnership champions work to address inequalities in the borough, with representation from the police, fire service, CCG, parish and town councils, Bracknell Forest Homes and the voluntary sector. This Equality Scheme has been developed with engagement with our partners as a number of the actions which will help to meet the objectives will be delivered in partnership.

4.2 Embedding equalities

Many of the objectives within the council's previous Equality Schemes have now become a part of the day to day work of the council and do not therefore feature as specific objectives within this scheme. Equalities have become increasingly embedded within our working practices, although we recognise there is room for improvement on this.

Examples of objectives from previous equality schemes that are now part of the day to day way in which we work include:

4.2.1 Workforce monitoring and policies

The council has in place a comprehensive programme of workforce monitoring across six of the nine equality act protected characteristics and publishes its workforce monitoring information annually to ensure that the council is advancing equality and eliminating any potential discrimination. This data is broken down by the council's departments and between schools and non schools staff.

Our previous equality schemes have also contributed to the update of policies to ensure that our staff are appropriately supported to give of their best, and that the council attracts the widest range of talent. These include policies on requesting flexible working, fair treatment and policies which give time off to those who care for dependents. The council has also conducted gender pay gap analyses, reviewed part time and job share practices and introduced improved harassment reporting systems, uses job evaluation to ensure fair pay and has introduced a low pay supplement.

4.2.2 Development of elected Members and officers

A comprehensive programme of elected member and staff equality and diversity training and development is provided by the council and taken up on an ongoing basis to increase the equality and diversity knowledge, skills and confidence. This

training and development is evaluated to enable the council to measure its impact and to identify further training and development needs.

The council has achieved Charter Plus accreditation for Elected Member Development. The Charter, which is externally assessed, is a commitment to developing the necessary strategy and processes to support effective member development. Charter Plus is a further assessment which demonstrates the progress the council has made. Bracknell Forest is one of only nine authorities to hold the Charter Plus accreditation.

4.2.3 Procurement and Commissioning

The council uses its position as a major purchaser in the area to advance equality of opportunity. The council conducts equality impact assessments on all procurement exercises over £100k or where equalities clearly has a strong link into the service provision regardless of value, and has developed an equality procurement guide and training for staff. We aim to lead by example and have also produced a good practice guide for small to medium sized enterprises and third sector organisations on equality and diversity issues.

Social Value is now also considered as part of any Procurement Plan on all exercises over £100k. This has enabled us to ensure that key services such as Health Visiting & our Drugs and Alcohol service incorporate Social Value as a core part of the specification.

4.2.4 Equality Impact Assessments

We ensure that the decisions that our elected members and senior officers make are informed by knowledge of the impact of any proposed changes will have on the communities of Bracknell Forest. In the current period of financial austerity this is more important than ever. Impact Assessments are produced on all relevant budget and transformation programme proposals.

4.2.5 Equality monitoring and information

The council continually works to improve its equality monitoring to ensure we know who is taking up our services and enabling us to question why certain groups may not be. The council welcomes its duty to publish equality information annually from as this increases transparency and enables Bracknell Forest communities to challenge our performance in meeting our equality duties. The council's equality information reports are published on the Community Cohesion and Equality pages of the council website.

4.3 Progress in delivering the 2012-2016 Equality Action Plan

A great deal of progress has been made in meeting the objectives and associated actions in the 2012-2016 Equality Scheme, however we recognise that there is still more to do.

Examples of actions from the Equality Scheme 2012 - 2016 which have been completed include:

- Development of an Adult Safeguarding Board Empowerment Strategy Implementation Plan to support vulnerable groups.

- Delivery of a schools based Ministry of Defence (MOD) Community Covenant funded project to support integration of the Armed Forces Service and Nepali communities in Sandhurst.
- The Bracknell Forest Partnership developed and delivered the ‘One Community - Stop Hate Crime Now’ campaign, which highlights the awareness of hate crime and signposts the public to relevant agencies for support.
- Establishment of Energy Company Obligation (ECO) measures for fuel poor households in partnership with Green Deal Providers,
- Improvements to Bracknell town centre bus station to ensure it is accessible for all and continued with the installation of raised kerbs at bus stops to provide level access to lower floor buses.

4.4 Local Government Equality Framework

- 4.4.1 In 2010 and 2014 Bracknell Forest Council was recognised as an ‘Achieving’ authority on the Equalities Framework for Local Government, validated by a Local Government Association Peer Review. The peer reviewers highlighted that the council has a good understanding of its communities, including the extent of inequality and disadvantage. It understands how the diversity of its residents has changed in recent years and is still changing and has prioritised its activities accordingly. An example of this was the work done with the Nepalese community including the development of Nepali Health Trainers, a project financed by the European Integration Fund.
- 4.4.2 In addition the peer reviewers noted that senior leaders within the council provide strong and visible leadership on equality; there are many opportunities for formal and informal community engagement between the council, residents, tenants, voluntary and community groups and representatives; and that the council was able to demonstrate real outcomes that have improved equality in its services.
- 4.4.3 The council is committed to working towards the ‘Excellent’ level of the Equalities Framework for Local Government and making a real difference to Bracknell Forest’s communities in the following five key areas:
- Knowing our communities
 - Community engagement and satisfaction
 - Place shaping, leadership, partnership and organisational commitment
 - Responsive services and customer care
 - A modern and diverse workforce.

5. Equality Objectives 2017-20

5.1 The council's vision

The council's vision for the future is summed by the narrative in the council Plan 2015 -19:

- Bracknell Forest is a good place to live with a mainly affluent, well educated and independent population.
- The council will provide leadership and work with others **to keep the borough a place where all residents can thrive and benefit from effective core services**. What we do ourselves we aim to do well, but we must prioritise and target our services to live within our means.
- In targeting our services, **we will prioritise people and areas with the greatest need, early help and prevention** so struggling or vulnerable people can maximise their opportunities to become independent.

The Council Plan has set six strategic themes with a number of associated key measures of success which are reflected in this scheme. The themes are:

- 1: Value for money
- 2: A strong and resilient economy
- 3: People have the life skills and education opportunities they need to thrive
- 4: People live active and healthy lifestyles
- 5: A clean, green, growing and sustainable place
- 6: Strong, safe, supportive and self-reliant communities

This scheme sets out our three year programme to continue to ensure that Bracknell Forest is the borough of opportunity for everyone. The programme seeks to reduce inequalities, demonstrate how we meet our equalities duties and further embed equalities throughout the council.

5.2 Equality Objectives 2017-20

The equality objectives are rooted in the council's vision. They were identified following a review of council strategies and the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment, an analysis of current equalities monitoring reports from the service areas current performance data.

These equality objectives apply over the duration of this scheme to all protected characteristics, except where stated otherwise.

1. Access to our information, services and facilities is fair and equitable for everyone (Strategic theme 1, 3, 4)

Our ambition is for all of our information, services and facilities to be accessible to everyone. We will consider the different needs of people in all aspects of the planning and delivery of our services, facilities and information, and for reasonable adjustments to be made for people who need them. We want information from all communities to influence decision making, planning and the delivery of services.

We will continue to collect and analyse data from communities and service users to develop our understanding and aim for information from and about communities to include data across all protected characteristics, communities of interest and communities of place where relevant.

2. High levels of community cohesion are maintained (Strategic theme 6)

We aim to promote good relations between and within communities and for diversity to be respected and celebrated. We intend to maintain and build on our relationships with our diverse communities and collaborate across sectors to promote greater awareness and understanding.

Our goal is to eliminate victimisation, discrimination, harassment, abuse and hate crime. We want everyone to have the confidence to report any incidents of victimisation, discrimination, harassment, abuse and hate crime, and to be confident that they will be dealt with robustly. This includes ensuring that all of our safeguarding procedures are effective.

3. Gaps in outcomes for citizens are narrowed (Strategic themes 2, 3, 4, 5, 6)

We are aiming to narrow the gaps and diminish the differences between communities and individuals in terms of poverty, employment, health and well being, educational attainment and housing. Our goal is that all of our communities have an equal opportunity to achieve their potential.

We aim to support the most vulnerable people in the borough through prevention and self-care which is tailored to different segments of the local community and their needs.

4. A positive, diverse and inclusive workforce is ensured and promoted (Strategic theme 1)

We are committed to having workforce policies and practices that do not discriminate. We provide equal opportunities for employees to progress and develop and are responsive to the needs of the workforce. We also ensure our workforce understands and supports our equality commitments.

We recognise that our employees are our most valuable asset and are committed to ensuring that all employees are treated with dignity and respect and that no form of intimidation, bullying or harassment is tolerated. We will make training, development and progression opportunities available to all staff and ensure that all of our employment policies and practices reflect our commitments to equality and fairness.

5.3 Resources

The council has to prioritise its limited resources and focus on issues where it can make a difference whilst at the same time not shying away from the most pressing equality issues in the borough.

We have consulted our staff, elected members, partners and community and voluntary groups representing the parts of our community protected by equalities legislation on the council's priority equality objectives for the period 2017-20 which are set out below.

5.4 Setting challenging but realistic targets

The equality objectives have been developed further as part of the council's service planning process during January and February 2017 producing actions and selecting the performance indicators it will use to demonstrate its progress annually on achieving the objectives. The actions are embedded within the service plans for each department but will be published separately in April 2017.

5.5 Organisational change and development and the Transformation programme

Bracknell Forest is currently conducting a thorough review of all its services. In conjunction with this, it is developing an approach to organisational development which defines what qualities the council needs in its employees, and how to ensure the council is responsive enough to meet both the fast changing future needs of the community and its financial challenges. Work continues to embed these qualities and values into HR processes such as appraisal and recruitment. One of the recurring themes of the change programme is to focus on what gives value to customers and communities and where possible to eliminate that which is not necessary or valuable. Enabling people to help themselves - through various aspects of self service, online access and use of ICT technology - is a theme that is also being emphasised to focus resources where there is the greatest need. Where staffing structures are reviewed and refocused on council priorities and on new methods of service delivery, the council will seek to minimise the impact on staff by seeking redeployment within the council wherever possible.

5.6 Working in partnership – one borough, many communities

The council will work in partnership with our public and voluntary, community and faith sector partners and representatives of our diverse communities to implement this equality scheme. Bracknell Forest has six parish and town councils and a thriving voluntary and community sector that make a very significant impact on quality of life in the borough; working in partnership with them to make the best use of limited resources will be vital to reducing inequalities and maintaining high levels of community cohesion in the borough.

5.7 Reviewing progress

The council will publish an annual review on our progress in meeting these objectives. The equality objectives may be revised as a part of this annual review to take account of issues raised by the annual publication of our equality monitoring information. The council's Equality Sub Group will be responsible for overseeing the implementation of this equality scheme, reporting to the council's executive and the Community Cohesion and Engagement Partnership annually.

Annex 1 - Equality Scheme 2017-20 Consultation Plan

1. Introduction

Bracknell Forest Council is required in the Equality Act 2010's public sector equality duties to publish equality objectives every four years and equality information annually. The 2017-20 scheme will replace the 'All of Us' Equality Scheme 2012-16 (which was extended for 2016-17 due to the development of the new Council Plan in 2015). The development of objectives will need to be closely linked to and fit in with the council's new strategic themes and linked to key measures of success and performance indicators as outlined in the [Council Plan 2015-2019](#).

The 'protected characteristics' within the Equality Act 2010 are:

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

2. Who and how will we consult?

We will consult the council's managers, staff, members, people in the community, partners, voluntary and community groups, particularly equality groups and those representing people protected by the Equality Act 2010, as well as our residents.

We will consult on the draft equality scheme which builds on the selected objectives through a questionnaire made available on the council's online consultation portal with the draft equality scheme from 2 February 2017 for six weeks.

3. Aims of the Consultation Plan

The overall aim of the consultation plan is to provide an opportunity for our staff, people in the community, partners and community groups to help shape the council's equality priorities over the next four years. During the development of the Equality Scheme 2017-20, our aims are to:

- a) involve the council's managers, staff, members, people in the community, partners, voluntary and community groups, especially equality groups in setting the equality objectives in the equality scheme.
- b) incorporate the results of the consultation into our decision making processes in an open and responsible way.

The main elements of the Consultation Plan include:

- a) publication of a draft equality scheme report and consultation on the council's website for six weeks starting on 2 February 2017.
- b) incorporating the views received into a report to the council's corporate management team on 15 March and the council's executive on 11 April 2017.

Consultation Timetable

Pre-consultation with DMTs on draft objectives		
Consultees	Method	Meeting Date
DMT – ASCHH	Meeting with the Director	6 December 2016
DMT – CYPL	Meeting with the Director	20 December 2016
DMT – CS	Meeting with the Director	8 December 2016
DMT – CXO	Meeting with ACE	20 December 2016
DMT – ECC	Meeting with the Director	6 December 2016

Consultation on Draft Equality Scheme 2 February – 16 March 2017		
Consultees	Method	Meeting Date
Elected members	Email & online questionnaire	N/A
Community groups – see below	Email & online questionnaire via <i>involve</i> (add to <i>involve</i> newsletter)	N/A
Council Staff	Email & online questionnaire	N/A
CCEP	Meeting & via email	9 March 2017
BF Partners (formerly the Partnership Board)	Meeting	14 March 2017
Partnerships Groups – see below	Email & online questionnaire	N/A
Parish & Town councils	Email & online questionnaire	
Residents	Questionnaire on the Council's website / Hard copy on request	N/A
Community Groups		
Faith or belief/BME groups	Email & online questionnaire	
Disability groups	Email & online questionnaire	
Sexual orientation	Email & online questionnaire	
Older people	Email & online questionnaire	
Gender related groups	Email & online questionnaire	
Partnership groups		
Children and Young People's Partnership Board	Via email	N/A
Learning Disability Partnership Board	Via email	N/A
Parish and Town Council Liaison Group	Via email	N/A
Bracknell Forest Access Group	Via email & meeting	N/A
Domestic Abuse Forum	Via email	N/A
Health and Well Being Board	Via email	N/A
Community Safety Partnership	Via email	N/A

Economic and Skills Partnership Board	Via email	N/A
Autism Partnership Board	Via email	N/A
Dementia Partnership Board	Via email	N/A
Mental Health Partnership Board	Via email	N/A
Carers Issue Strategy Group	Via email	N/A
Long Term Conditions & Sensory Needs Group	Via email	N/A

DRAFT

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Nepali

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