**Gosport Borough Council’s Corporate Equality Objectives 2019-2021**

Progress Achieved report December 2021

**Background**

The Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED), enacted in section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 has a general duty that requires public authorities to have due regard to the need to tackle discrimination and promote equality for the protected characteristics of race, disability, gender, gender reassignment, age, sexual orientation, religion or belief, and pregnancy and maternity, as well as encourage better relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

The specific duties were created through secondary legislation and are intended to help public authorities perform the general duty more effectively. Specific duties require public authorities in England, Scotland and Wales to publish information demonstrating their compliance with the PSED and to set organisational equality objectives (England and Wales) at least every four years.

The following two objectives were identified for 2019-21 to further the aims of the PSED:

**Objective 1: Maintain a diverse workforce whose staff feels valued and treated fairly and where equality and diversity are embedded within its service delivery and customer care.**

This objective sits within the Council’s strategic priority of “Deliver Effective Services” in its 2019 Corporate Plan by ensuring our workforce and is linked to our priority areas of:

* ensuring our services and initiatives are delivered efficiently
* take a customer focussed approach to how we work

**Evidence:**

The Council maintains its commitment to equality and diversity in both its employment practices and in its service delivery and customer care. A modern and diverse workforce who feels valued and treated fairly and is empowered to value and treat others fairly delivers on that commitment. A staff survey, as a follow up to the 2017 survey, will be carried out in 2019 to provide an opportunity for feedback on how people feel about working for the council and what the council could be doing better – or differently. Survey responses will feed into policy and practice development to support equality and diversity in staff and customer care.

**GBC Actions:**

* continue mandatory equality & diversity training for new staff and refresher training for all staff.

New and existing staff have continued to access equality & diversity training via the Portsmouth Learning Gateway online during the pandemic. 37 staff have taken the training since April 2020. The e-learning course is mandatory and is undertaken by new staff and all staff at least every 3 years. This training requirement and resources are promoted as part of staff induction and through ongong communciations.

The Council’s Equality & Diversity in Employment policy was updated in 2021.

* maintain equality impact assessments for all new policies and practices or when changes to existing ones are proposed to ensure fairness

Equality Impact Assessments have continued to be undertaken. In 2021 a new Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) incorporating Equality & Diversity and Climate Change considerations was implemented. Completion of IIAs across service areas is supported by the Equality and Diversity Lead officer and the Climate Change Officer and monitored.

* develop stronger links with voluntary and community groups supporting people with protected characteristics to help ensure Council premises and services are inclusive and accessible.

Good partnership working relationships are maintained between the Council with various groups through the Community Forum led by Gosport Voluntary Action which helps facilitate community group participation in planning and development consultations. The Gosport Access Group and Disability Forum, as one example, actively engage with the Council as needed to ensure its premises are inclusive and accessible.

* work towards level two of the Disability Confident Award Scheme in 2019

Due to the pandemic and the impact on resources, the Council has not progressed to level 2, but this will be reviewed.

* continue to develop as an armed forces friendly employer as a Silver Award Winner in the Defence Employer Recognition Scheme in 2019

 The Council refreshed its commitment to the Armed Forces Covenant in 2020

 and was successful in receiving the Gold Award in the Defence Employer

 Recognition Scheme in 2020.

* maintain the GBC Staff Armed Forces Forum to support staff with an armed forces connection and human resources policies and practices to support reservists.

The Forum has not met since the start of the pandemic due to working restrictions to limit exposure and spread of the coronavirus. Communications about information and services and supports relevant to staff with an Armed Forces connection have been posted on the Staff Infonet and on the Council’s dedicated Armed Forces Covenant webpage. A dedicated page of information for Reservists has been maintained on the Infonet.

**Objective 2: Improve public awareness of Domestic Abuse (DA) to help reduce the number of DA incidents and continue to work with partners to ensure local DA services are accessible and available to all who need them.**

This objective sits within the Council’s strategic priority of “Empower Our Residents” in its 2019 Corporate Plan and is linked to our priority area of addressing Vulnerability in our Community Safety Partnership Action plan for 2019.

**Evidence:**

In 2017/18 there were 987 offences. There is no comparable 2016/17 data but the Hampshire and Isle of Wight Constabulary Partnership Force Strategic Assessment 2017/18 shows a 5% increase across the county.

In 2020/2021 there were 1129 recorded offences in Gosport which show an increase of 1.3% from 2019/2020 (1114 offences). Hampshire-wide there was an increase of 4.6% (24,954 offences recorded in 2020/2021 compared to 23,849 offences recorded in 2019/2020).

In 2020/2021 Stop Domestic Abuse received 45% more adult referrals than in 2019/2020, this is partly due to a change in Hampshire Police’s referral process in Autumn 2019 and partly due to an increase during the Covid-19 pandemic.

The Hampshire Police procedure change resulted in 64% more referrals in Gosport (across Hampshire the increase was 58%). The Covid-19 pandemic resulted in 17% more referrals in Gosport (across Hampshire the increase was 15.5%).

**GBC Actions and or partnership initiatives:**

The Council communicates key messages about DA and promotes local DA services publicly with its partners in the Gosport Community Safety Partnership and across its own services. The Safer Community website is reviewed regularly and reflects any campaigns being undertaken nationally, by Hampshire Constabulary or led by the Hampshire Domestic Abuse Partnership. High risk cases are referred to the Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) process. Medium and low risk incidents are managed locally by the Neighbourhood Police Teams and are monitored through the Partnership Action Group (PAG) process if a PAG referral is made by relevant support services.

The DA guidance on the Infonet was updated in Sept 2021 to reflect changes in support services.

**The three priorities listed below remain in the CSP Strategic Plan 2021-2022**.

**Specific actions identified in CSP Strategic Plan for 2019:**

**• supporting partnership referrals to the Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) and High Risk Domestic Abuse meetings (HDRA) by promoting the use of the DASH (Domestic Abuse, Stalking and Honour-based violence) risk identification checklist, include via a training session**

From April 2020 – March 2021 102 MARAC referrals were made for Gosport residents. Hampshire has adopted the Safelives DASH risk indicator checklist and encourage, where possible, all agencies use this checklist with their clients particularly if they need to be referred to the MARAC or a HRDA meeting. Safelives have information and guidance on risk assessments for professionals. Consideration will be given to adding this information to the Infonet as an update on the homepage and tab on the Safeguarding page.

**• promoting and publicising the 16 days of action against Domestic Abuse to raise awareness of all types of Domestic Abuse**

Due to the Pandemic events highlighting White Ribbon Day and the 16 days of actions have not taken place in 2020 and 2021. Instead increased awareness raising has been done so via social media focusing on the Hampshire Domestic Abuse Advice Line and services available to support children and young people, older persons, BAME and LGBT+ communities.

• **support partnership referrals to DA services by promoting the Domestic Abuse Advice Line and the principle that for every victim there is a perpetrator.**

All social media messages during the 16 days of actions noted the Hampshire Domestic Abuse Advice Line telephone number.