

Hertsmere Borough Council's Response to the General Equality Duty 2024/25.

Introduction

This is the council's annual response to the General Equality Duty, setting out the achievements made in supporting equality, diversity and inclusion in Hertsmere during 2024/25. The report highlights key pieces of work undertaken by the council, and where relevant its partners and sets out the future direction in the provision of accessible, fair and inclusive services.

Progress is reported against the council's equalities objectives:

- We will value and understand the diversity of our communities, celebrating our heritage and identities
- We will consult with residents and our communities on matters which affect them, taking into account the diversity of the borough
- We will deliver fully accessible, fair and inclusive services
- We will provide equal opportunities to our employees and encourage a culture of equality within the workplace

Legislative Framework

As a public sector organisation, the council has statutory duties governed by the Public Sector Equality Duty in the Equality Act 2010 and related regulations. Under the Act, public sector organisations with over 150 employees are required to show that they have identified and considered the impact of their activities on people with "protected characteristics".

Protected characteristics are defined in legislation as Race; Age; Sexual Orientation; Disability; Sex; Religion or Belief; Gender reassignment; Marriage and Civil Partnership; Pregnancy and Maternity. In addition to considering the needs of those with protected characteristics.

The Equality Act 2010 also includes a general equality duty which requires the council to have due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation
- Advance equality of opportunity between different groups
- Foster good relations between different groups

Due regard involves:

- Removing or minimising disadvantages suffered by people due to their protected characteristics and;
- Taking steps to meet the needs of people from protected groups, where they are different from the needs of other people.

This general equality duty applies to the council as an employer as well as a provider and enabler of public services.

Hertsmere's Communities

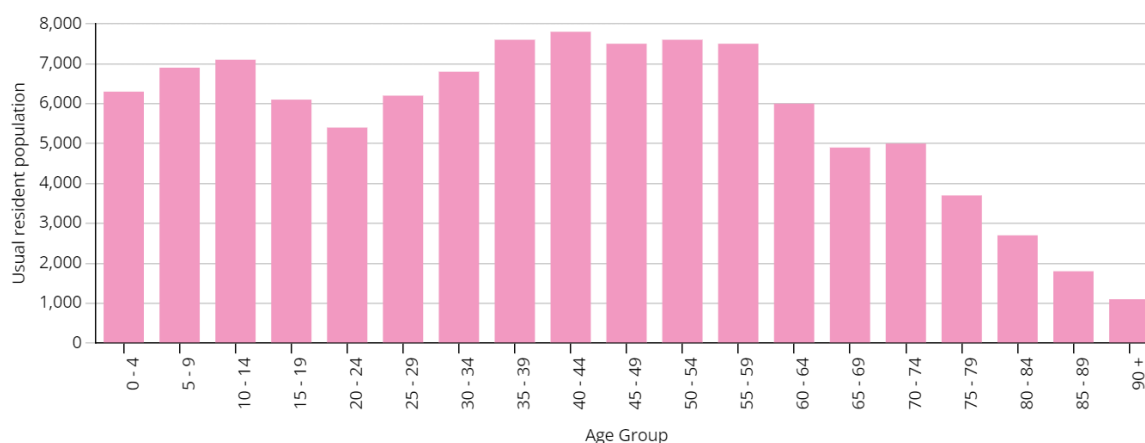
Hertsmere is a mixed rural and urban district to the north of greater London. It has a mixed population of 108,100 spread across the main settlements of Borehamwood, Bushey, Potters Bar, Radlett and the village of Shenley. Hertsmere is a relatively affluent area with low unemployment, good levels of education and a low crime rate. However, this hides significant inequalities between the wards.

Hertsmere Borough Council is committed to addressing equality and diversity, ensuring equality in all we do. Census 2021 data shows that Hertsmere's diverse communities are growing and that the borough is home to a wide range of ethnic groups. The borough is entre of Hertfordshire's Jewish community, who make up 17% of the population. Hertsmere also has a large Indian population and is home to the UK headquarters of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness, Bhaktivedanta Manor.

Population

- At the time of the 2011 Census, the usual resident population of Hertsmere was 100,031. In the 10 years to March 2021, this had risen to 107,800, an increase of 7.8%.
- The ONS states that the population increase in Hertsmere is higher than the overall increase in England where the population grew by 6.6% since 2011.
- Women continue to make up just over half of Hertsmere's population 51.9% being women, while men make up 48.1%. This is in line with the national picture, where women make up 51% of the overall population and men make up 49%.
- The number of households in the borough has risen from 39,778 in 2011 to 42,700 in 2021.

Age



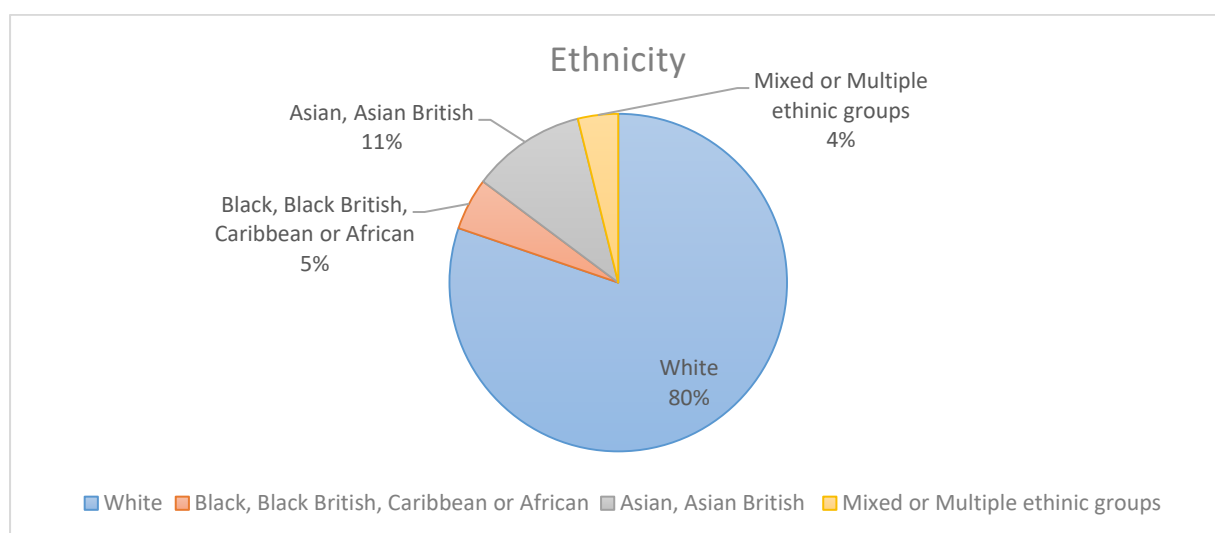
When comparing the age ranges of those in the borough to the 2011 Census, we can see that there has been a rise of 7.5% in those aged 0-15 years, 5.7% in those aged 15-64 years, and a 17.6% in people aged over 65 years. This is in line with the national picture, where there has been a rise in those in older age groups than ever before.

Ethnicity

The ethnicity data highlights the increasing diversity of Hertsmere. When compared to the 2011 Census:

- There has been a rise of 2.72% in those identifying as Asian, or Asian British: Indian, this group now make up 6.2% of Hertsmere's population.
- There has been a rise of 5.8% in those identifying as 'White: Other White' which accounts for people with a European background. These groups now make up 11.6% of Hertsmere's population.
- There has also been a rise of 2.8% in those identifying as 'any other ethnic group', these groups now make up 3.5% of Hertsmere's population.
- All other ethnic groups have seen smaller rises in those identifying with them.
- In line with the national picture, there has been a decline of 7.16% in those identifying as 'White, English, Scottish, Welsh, Northern Irish or British' in Hertsmere.

The chart below shows the ethnicity of the borough from the 2021 Census.

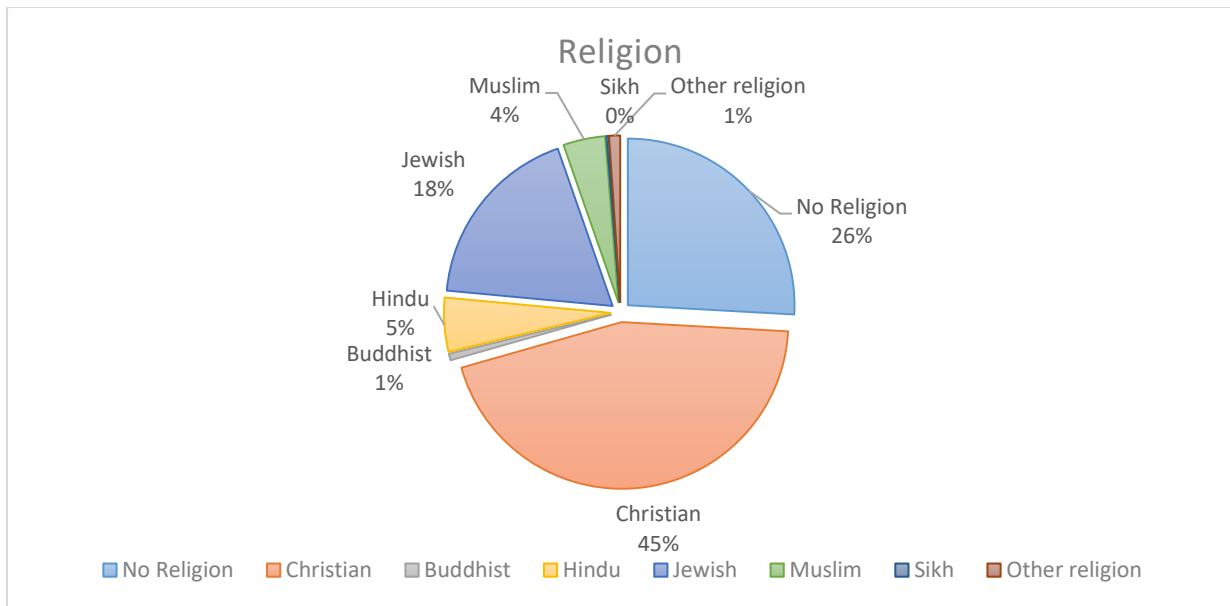


Religion

When compared to the 2011 Census there has been:

- A rise of 5.3% in those saying that they have no religion. Overall 24.2% of Hertsmere's population say that they have no religion.
- A decrease of 9.95% in those identifying as Christian. Overall 41.8% of Hertsmere's population say that they are Christian.
- A rise of 2.73% in those identifying as Jewish. Hertsmere's Jewish population make up 17% of Hertsmere residents.
- An increase of 1.37% in Hertsmere's Muslim population, which now makes up 3.8% of Hertsmere residents.
- An increase of 1.78% in Hertsmere's Hindu population, which now makes up 4.9% of Hertsmere residents.

This is summarised in the chart below.



Sexual Orientation

Census 2021 data show that:

- 90.42% of residents aged over the age of 16 identify as heterosexual
- 0.98% of residents over the age of 16 identify as gay or lesbian
- 0.82% of residents over the age of 16 bisexual
- 0.30% of residents over the age of 16 say that they have another sexual orientation
- 7.48% of residents did not answer the question

We note that this is the first time residents have been asked about LGBTQ+ status. As such, we will continue to use local insight and monitoring where possible to monitor any changes in these figures.

Gender Identity

Census 2021 data shows that:

- 93.69% of residents aged over the age of 16 have the same gender identity as their registered sex at birth
- 0.43% of residents aged over the age of 16 have a different gender identity than their registered sex at birth
- 5.88% of residents did not respond to the question

We note that this is the first time residents have been asked about gender identity. As such, we will continue to use local insight and monitoring where possible to monitor any changes in these figures.

Council Staff

Values and Behaviours

The Council is committed to demonstrating equality, diversity and inclusivity in all we do. In 2024/25 the Council adopted a new set of values that had been developed following the 2023 local elections. The Council's corporate vision, was revisited after these elections, to better fit with the priorities of the new Labour, Liberal Democrat partnership administration. As part of this refresh, a set of corporate values were established to articulate to our customers, partners and staff the beliefs, values and principles that guide our work and how we interact with them.

These are:

- Respect
 - We treat people fairly
 - We are approachable and act with compassion
 - We advocate for our communities
- Integrity
 - We act with honesty and from a position of trust
 - We are accountable for our actions
 - We listen and communicate openly
- Making a difference
 - We are customer focused
 - We work together
 - We are ambitious and open to new ideas

These values were developed by a joint panel of officers and elected Members and were based on results from the all staff survey.

Following the adoption of the values, we have worked to embed them within the organisation:

- Incorporated the values into our Hertsmere Vision document which acts as the Corporate Plan, was agreed at Cabinet and Council and is available for download from our website
- To ensure that staff are familiar with the values, a 'wordcloud' style wall decal has been installed in the communal areas on each floor as part of the office refurbishment scheme.
- The vision and values are the lock screen and screensaver for all staff laptops
- The updated staff award scheme 'Stars' uses the values as one of its criteria for a successful award
- The values have been used as the basis for HR policies as a way to establish acceptable and unacceptable behaviours

In addition to looking at improvements to services in the context of equality and diversity, this progress report also provides information about council staff. As part of the requirement to publish Equality Data, the council publishes undertakes regular monitoring of the workforce. A report is expected later in the year, detailing the composition of our staff compared to the background population of Hertsmere Borough.

The council's [gender pay report](#) is published separately at the end of each financial year.

Delivering Council Services

This section identifies service provisions, projects and improvements targeted for those with protected characteristics. Some of the projects, services or initiatives address a range of equalities issues and often relates to intersectionality (multiple protected characteristics).

These have been summarised for each objective:

OBJECTIVE 1: We will value and understand the diversity of our communities, celebrating our heritage and identities

Action	2024/25 Outputs
To promote community cohesion following the 7 October 2023 attack in Israel.	Hertsmere Borough Council has taken a proactive role in ensuring community cohesion following the 7 October 2023 attack in Israel. This work has involved working closely with our Jewish and Muslim communities to understand and respond to their concerns. To coincide with the first anniversary of the attack, the Civic Offices were lit in yellow as a symbol of solidarity with the remaining hostages. During the 2024/25 year, Josh Moont from Borehamwood and Elstree Synagogue and Amir Choudhury from Borehamwood Islamic Society were jointly awarded a Civic Award for their role in ensuring community cohesion. More information is available here: Civic Award - Joshua Moont and Amir Choudhury
Community Grants	Through our grants programme we have provided support to organisations, which reflect the growing diversity of the borough. This has included Spirit of Africa, which provided Black History Month workshops for children in Hertsmere, Diwali events. In addition to funding for the well-established Camp Unity, which brings together children from different religious and cultural backgrounds.
To celebrate Pride Month	Hertsmere Borough Council recognised Pride month with a Mayoral flag raising ceremony, with key community partners. In addition, the Pride Progress Flag was flown during LGBT History Month.
To sponsor and promote Herts Pride	Hertsmere Borough Council sponsored Herts Pride and officers attended the August 2024 event.

To celebrate key religious festivals	Hertsmere Borough Council Officers attended the Eid In the Park Celebration in June 2024, organised by Borehamwood Islamic Society to celebrate Eid-al-Adha. Hertsmere Borough Council also marked Hannukah with the lighting of a menorah.
To mark Black History Month	The Black History Month flag was flown during October 2024. Council Officers also attended the annual Diversity Festival in October 2024.
To mark Armed Forces Day	A Mayoral led flag raising took place in June 2024.
To mark Holocaust Memorial Day	A service to mark Holocaust Memorial Day was held in January 2025. This year, the event also marked the 80 th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz-Berkenau concentration camp.
Social Media posts on festivals/culturally significant dates	Hertsmere Borough Council has marked all key religious festivals for the borough's diverse communities. This has included (but is not limited to): • Ramadan and Eid • Easter • Ash Wednesday • Christmas • Diwali • Rosh Hashanah • Yom Kippur • Sukkot • Chinese New Year • Holocaust Memorial Day • Pride Month • Black History Month • Remembrance Day • International Women's Day
To mark the 16 Days of Activism	The 16 Days of Activism (25 November – 10 December) aims to raise awareness of Violence Against Women and Girls and asks us all to take a stand against gender-based violence. The start of the 16 Days is marked by White Ribbon Day where men are encouraged to hold themselves accountable to women, and to each other. The White Ribbon Flag flew outside the Hertsmere Civic Offices during the 16 Days. Staff were also given the opportunity to take a White Ribbon badge to show their

	commitment to ending gender-based violence and make a donation to the White Ribbon campaign. Throughout the 16 Days, informative social media posts were shared and Hertsmere Borough Council social media logos were turned orange. Hertsmere Borough Council staff marked Orange the World by wearing orange on 27 November to visibly highlight the issue of violence against women and girls. Our councillors participated in a series of videos highlighting what being an ally means to them.
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OBJECTIVE 2: We will consult with residents and our communities on matters, which affect them, taking into account the diversity of the borough

Action	Outputs
To undertake regular community priority surveys	During this year we undertook a Community Priorities survey to assess the importance or impact of a range of current issues on the residents of Hertsmere and which were presenting the largest concerns to our residents 182 responses were gathered from across the borough through two methods, the survey was based online using the Zen City platform and was supplemented with the community engagement team reaching out to local groups to improve the sample size of the survey and address potential digital inequality. This outreach activity meant 52 additional responses were gathered. The main question in the survey asked respondents to choose their top three priorities/concerns from a list provided and to put them in order of highest priority first. The community engagement team intends to use the results of the survey to direct its work more effectively to ensure the team is able to offer support for the issues that residents find are impacting their lives the most.

OBJECTIVE 3: We will deliver fully accessible, fair and inclusive services

Action	Output
Ensure all Council proceedings are accessible	Moved to Youtube webcasting of live meetings, to increase accessibility to the council's democratic processes
Ensure meetings are held around key religious festivals	Hertsmere's municipal calendar is updated annually and meeting dates are set to avoid

	Jewish festivals as a large proportion of councillors, and the population of Hertsmere, are Jewish. The council also endeavours to ensure that other religious festivals also avoided.
Secure funding for, and manage the delivery of the Community Support Service (CSS)	The Community Support Service, part funded by the council, supports residents with their mental wellbeing needs through proactive outreach. At the time of writing, the service supported 198 individuals in the 2024/25 year. ¹ .
Older Persons Advice, Learning and Safety Events	The Community Safety Team in partnership with a number of agencies have held a number of Older Persons Advice, Learning and Safety events across the borough, ensuring that older people have access to a wide range of services that are available to them. A bespoke event was held at Borehamwood and Elstree Synagogue in November 2024, to specifically engage with the Jewish Community.
Women's Safety Talks	Hertsmere CSP worked in partnership with the Community Security Trust (CST) and Hertfordshire Constabulary to deliver Women's Safety Talks. The talks covered risk assessment, conflict management, stalking and safety on the streets. Two Women's Safety Talks were held in 2024, with 39 attendees across both events. Feedback from residents included that the talk was "essential to hear".
We Move She Moves	Hertsmere Borough Council's award winning We Move She Moves physical activity project is now in its 11 th year. We Move She Moves is a movement aimed at getting women and girls in Hertsmere to take up physical activity. There are a wide range of sessions on offer, with something to suit all ages, abilities, and fitness levels.
Generation Plus	Our leisure provider, InspireAll run a comprehensive GenerationPlus programme for older adults including tennis, pickleball,

¹ At the time of writing, data is only available until the end of Q3.

	table tennis, badminton, walking netball and day trips.
Leisure activities can be accessed by vulnerable people and those with access or mobility needs	Older adults and those on certain benefits are able to apply for a concession card, making it easier for them to access local leisure facilities. InspireAll run a number of community events, which are intergenerational, the Easter egg hunts and fun in the park have a strong focus on younger residents.
Delivery of Healthy Hub and pop up hubs within local neighbourhoods	Healthy Hubs are delivered from key locations across the borough to ensure that they are accessible to all. Over 60 pop-ups have been provided in 2024/25.
Hertsmere Against Cancer	Our award winning Hertsmere Against Cancer Project has sought to raise awareness of the signs and symptoms of cancer amongst residents. Working with local GPs, over 3000 women have been booked for cervical screening, 400 women have been booked for breast screening and over 250 men have been contacted for conversations around their prostate risk and associated testing. As part of this, we have organised community awareness events including a bespoke event aimed at men to encourage positive conversations about their health and wellbeing.
Dissemination of 'Warm in Winter' bags to elderly and isolated residents	We have distributed 500 Warm in Winter Bags in 2024. In addition, Council Officers volunteered to pack bags in support of the charity.
Engagement with community groups to address and reduce digital exclusion	Our Community Engagement Team have attended a wide range of community groups, coffee morning, events and community spaces across the borough offering to assist residents with enquiries and supporting residents to access on-line services.
Improve the accessibility of the website	We have launched a new website in December 2024, which is fully accessible in its design and functionality. It has improved search and is fully mobile responsive. We have been working on the accessibility of our PDFs, making tables responsive on all devices, updating content and improving design and layout to ensure pages are

	screen reader friendly. Hertsmere are the first council to launch this Contensis for Councils product by our supplier Zengenti.
Community Enforcement Officers	In 2024/25 we launched our team of Community Enforcement Team, who have been out across the borough to provide a visible presence in the community and engage with residents on solving local issues and enviro-crime. Their role includes: - Patrolling the borough to engage, educate and enforce. - Providing support to members of the public and businesses when on patrol - Responding to reports of anti-social behaviour and environmental crime.
Raise awareness of Pension Credit eligibility	Following the changes to Pension Credit eligibility in the autumn of 2024, Council Officers worked to with Citizens Advice, Age UK and other key local partners to encourage those of pensionable age to check their eligibility, and apply for Pension Credit as appropriate.

OBJECTIVE 4: We will provide equal opportunities to our employees and encourage a culture of equality within the workplace

Equal Pay / Gender Pay reviews	We promote equality of opportunity for all by ensuring that all council employees receive pay for work of equal value. A copy of our equal pay statement can be found here. Hertsmere Borough Council conduct annual gender pay reviews to identify if there are any differences in pay between male and female employees
Staff Training	All staff are required to complete mandatory training for all to increase knowledge of equality and diversity. This helps improve interaction with service users and colleagues and make staff aware of obligations under the related legislation has taken place.

Disability Confident Employer	Hertsmere Borough Council is a Disability Confident Employer and as such guarantee interviews to people with disabilities who meet all essential job criteria.
Mandatory EDI training	We have held face to face EDI training for all staff and this included reference to our recent duty to take steps in relation to preventing sexual harassment. Staff also undertake mandatory EDI elearning which needs to be refreshed on a regular basis.
Equality Monitoring	We ask our employees to provide information relating to their protected characteristics and this is used to assess our employment practices.
Policies	Hertsmere Borough Council has a robust anti-harassment and bullying policy and take proactive action to respond to any concerns.

Other Inequalities: Veterans

Census 2021 was the first census in which residents (aged 16 years and over) were asked whether they had previously served in the UK armed forces, either as a regular, as a reserve or both. This includes those who have served for at least one day in the armed forces, either regular, reserves or Merchant Mariners who have seen duty on legally defined military operations.

Census 2021 data shows that:

- 1.6% of the adult population had served in the Armed Forces
- 0.6% of the adult population had served in the Reserve UK Armed Forces
- 0.1% of the population had served in both the Armed Forces and the Reserve UK Armed Forces.

The council is committed to the Hertfordshire Armed Forces Covenant. This is a statement of support between the civilian community and its local Armed Forces community. Further information on the Covenant can be found at [Hertfordshire Heroes](#).

The council is an active member of the [Hertfordshire Armed Forces Covenant Board](#) who work in partnership to deliver the Armed Forces Covenant locally. It brings together business, military organisations, charities, NHS and local authorities in a shared commitment to ensure

that those who serve and have served in the Armed Forces, and their families, are treated fairly.

Summary

Reflecting on the actions undertaken by the council, these demonstrate the steps the council has taken to achieve the statutory duties governed by the Public Sector Equality Duty in the Equality Act 2010 and related regulations.

The potential impact of projects and policies on people with “protected characteristics” is considered, reviewed and managed during the policy writing and review process.

The work undertaken in relation to the objectives show how the council is taking steps to achieve the following:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation
- Advance equality of opportunity between different groups
- Foster good relations between different groups

The Way Forward

This report includes many examples of how the council, working with its partners, is providing for the needs of “protected” and underrepresented groups in the borough.

It provides a snapshot of the work taking place to prevent and where necessary address, disparities arising from protected characteristics, where people live, their income or skill level.

This work is presented in the context of the longer-term impacts of the pandemic and the cost of living crisis, both of which have impacted the way that the council delivers its services, greatly influenced partnership working with the community and voluntary sector and continue to have a disproportionate impact on those whose protected characteristics increase their vulnerability.

The council will continue to maintain and where possible further develop its equality and diversity work in the year ahead.