

## Somerset West and Taunton Corporate Equality Action Plan (CEAP)

(Progress Status updated at 26/7/2021)

The Equality Act 2010 imposes the following General Duties on Local Authorities to:

*(a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Equality Act 2010; (b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it; (c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.*

This Action Plan sets out the actions the Council will take (alone or in partnership with others) to deliver its agreed equality objectives, which in turn support one or more aims of the General Equality Duty.

## **PART A – SWT Equality Objectives**

SWT has **five** equality objectives which were approved by the Shadow Executive for SWT in March 2019

These are:

- 1. Councillors and officers will fully consider the equality implications of all decisions they make.**
- 2. Those with protected characteristics feel empowered to contribute to the democratic process and any Council activity that affects them; their input is used to inform the planning and delivery of services.**
- 3. People with protected characteristics are able to access services in a reasonable and appropriate way.**
- 4. Actions are taken to identify and reduce any inequalities faced by our staff or our potential employees.**
- 5. Work with communities and voluntary sector groups to address inequalities experienced by low-income families and individuals**

The actions identified, and progress to date, against these objectives are shown in this part of the Action Plan (Part A).

SWT Objective 1		Councillors and officers will fully consider the equality implications of all decisions they make.	
	Action	Action Lead	Progress
1.1	All SWT members to be aware of their responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010	SWT	<p>A member training working group has recently been approved. The group will take on responsibility for identifying and prioritising training and development needs for councillors.</p> <p>An all-member session has been scheduled for December 21 to be delivered by Black Lives Matter Taunton to raise awareness of challenges and inequalities faced by Black and Ethnic Minority people.</p>
1.2	The Performance and Governance team to screen all reports submitted to committee or the Full Council to ensure they are accompanied by an Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA) or include clear reasoning <b>why</b> such an assessment is not required, to ensure that protected groups are not further disadvantaged by the policies, strategies, projects or schemes we adopt.	SWT	<b>Ongoing</b> – part of business as usual.
1.3	Agreed sources of the socio-economic profile of SWT area to be identified/created, promoted and available for all EIAs to ensure consistency.	SWT	<b>Complete</b> - District profiles are available. Presently available from the Business Intelligence team.
1.4	Good practice regarding EIAs to be shared within the council.		<b>In Progress</b> – ‘lunch and learn’ sessions for officers, regarding good practice relating to EIA’s, commenced Jul 2021. Further sessions will take place during the remainder of the financial year.

1.5	Review Learning Pool e-learning equalities and diversity module		<b>Complete</b>
-----	---	--	-----------------

<b>SWT Objective 2</b>		<b>Those with protected characteristics feel empowered to contribute to the democratic process and any Council activity that affects them; their input is used to inform the planning and delivery of services.</b>	
	<b>Action</b>	<b>Action Lead</b>	<b>Status</b>
2.1	Create a publicly available list of equality community and VCS groups in Somerset.	SEOG	<b>Complete.</b> A list has been created and shared amongst SEOG partners. The list can be accessed by officers via the SWT equalities and diversity Intranet page.
2.2	Introduce capability to allow for greater public participation in council meetings (e.g. live stream and recording of meetings).	SWT	<b>Complete.</b> Live streaming and video recording in place and have been used throughout the pandemic.
2.3	Draft and approve a Statement of Community Involvement for SWT, Stating how SWT will involve all of the community and stakeholders in the preparation, alteration and review of local planning policy and the consideration of planning applications within the Local Planning Authority area., to ensure the specific needs and concerns of particular groups and individuals are captured and considered.	SWT	<b>Complete.</b> Statement approved and adopted.

2.4	Appoint an elected member as a Disability Ambassador.	SWT	<b>In progress</b> . a joint officer and member equality group is in place, focusing on all the protected characteristics, including disability. The Executive has approved the creation of a number of member champions including one for Equalities. Appointments to this role is pending.
-----	---	-----	--

<b>SWT Objective 3</b>		<b>People with protected characteristics are able to access services in a reasonable and appropriate way.</b>	
	<b>Action</b>	<b>Action Lead</b>	<b>Status</b>
3.1	Make training available for SWT frontline staff in deaf awareness.	SWT	<b>Not yet progressed.</b> This action has been impacted by Covid 19.
3.2	Increase the number of our services which are available to access online 24/7	SWT	<b>Ongoing</b> – further online services are now available on our website
3,3	Publish an Accessibility Statement in accord with Public Sector Bodies (Websites and Mobile Applications) (No. 2) Accessibility Regulations 2018.		<b>Complete</b> Plan published on time. Action plan in place.

SWT Objective 4		Actions are taken to identify and reduce any inequalities faced by our staff or our potential employees.	
	Action	Action Lead	Status
4.1	Achieve at least Level 1: 'Disability Confident Committed'.	SWT	<p><b>Complete</b> - SWT registered for the Disability Confident scheme Aug 20 . Since then we have been successful in achieving Level 1 and now have reached Level 2 which means we can now use the upgraded branding on all our recruitment and website comms.</p> <p>We are registered on the .Gov website so other organisations can see our status. There is a Level 3 – 'Disability Leader' which SWT can progress to in the future.</p>
4.2	Capture staff equalities information on iTrent to enable workforce profiling by ethnic group, gender, disability, age, religion and sexual orientation, analyse implications of such profiling against community profiling, and publish the results.	SWT	<p><b>In progress</b> - HR have worked on this and getting staff to complete details on iTrent. however data is not held for all staff (as provision is discretionary).</p> <p>There are standard reports on iTrent for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Age Analysis by Sex</li> <li>• Disability Analysis by Organisation Unit</li> <li>• Ethnic Origin Analysis</li> <li>• Sex Analysis by Ethnic Origin</li> <li>• Sex Analysis by Organisation Unit</li> </ul> <p>There is not a standard report available for religion/belief or sexual orientation but a bespoke report could be produced.</p>

4.3	Provide recruitment training that includes avoiding unconscious bias for all staff who may shortlist or interview applicants for jobs at SWT.	SWT	<b>Not yet progressed.</b>
4.4	Monitor dignity and behaviour in the workplace cases (bullying and harassment) against each of the protected characteristics to establish and trends.	SWT	<b>Ongoing</b>
4.5	Mental health support for staff	SWT	<b>In Progress.</b> Lots done to help staff cope during the pandemic, including Mental Health First Aiders in place, Wellbeing Champions, an Employee Assistance Programme (CareFirst), a weekly wellbeing bulletin as well as Resilience Workshops.
4.6	Equalities and diversity training for all staff / monitoring e-learning	SWT	<b>In progress</b> Mandatory e-learning underway.
4.7	Support SWT staff from the EU through Brexit (e.g. settled status awareness and registrations)	SWT	<b>In progress</b> - This was widely covered across the whole organisation and HR are currently supporting one member of staff.

4.8	Staff 'task and finish groups' – focusing on projects around specific equality issues		<p><b>Ongoing</b> – Great progress has been made.</p> <p>A project to support neurodivergent needs was initiated by the council's Portfolio Holder for Corporate Resources, Cllr Ross Henley. A working group comprising staff with direct or indirect experience in neurodivergent issues was established to help shape policy and make recommendations for change.</p> <p>The aim of the project was to support staff, customers, Councillors and partners with neurodivergent needs through a review of the council's recruitment processes and by raising awareness through learning and development.</p> <p>Neurodiversity covers a range of conditions including attention deficit disorders, autism, dyslexia, dyspraxia and Tourette's. It is estimated that more than 15 per cent of people in the UK are neurodivergent, meaning they learn and process information differently.</p> <p>SWT has been shortlisted for this year's Municipal Journal Achievement Awards in recognition for this work to support neurodiversity in the workplace. The awards ceremony for the 'Innovation in Building Diversity and Inclusion' category will take place on 17 September.</p>
-----	---	--	---

<b>SWT Objective 5</b>		<b>Work with communities and voluntary sector groups to address inequalities experienced by low income families and individuals</b>	
	<b>Action</b>	<b>Action Lead</b>	<b>Status</b>
5.1	Draft, approve and implement a Social Value policy to secure wider social, economic and environmental benefits as part of the council's procurement activity.		<b>Completed</b> – Social value strategy included as part of refreshed procurement strategy – approved by Executive March 2021.

## **PART B – Somerset Equality Officer Group (SEOG) Objectives 2019-2023**

In Somerset public bodies have decided to work together on equality and diversity. We are doing this through a partnership called Somerset Equality Officers Group (SEOG). This group is made up of County and District Councils, Somerset Clinical Commissioning Group, Taunton Musgrove and Yeovil Hospitals, Somerset Partnership and Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue. This document sets out the Equality Objectives that these public bodies have committed to and the actions they will undertake to complete them.

SEOG has five equality objectives. These are:

- 1. Work with Communities to improve the opportunities for integration and cohesion.**
- 2. Improve understanding and reduce the stigma of mental health and Disability within and across communities**
- 3. Work with the Gypsy and Traveller community to improve relationships and the provision of pitches**
- 4. Create an Equality Working group for staff in the Public Sector in Somerset** (to be revised to ‘Review and where necessary improve recruitment practices to make them more inclusive’).
- 5. Improve the consistency of Accessibility standards across the Public Sector for service users including the Accessibility Information Standard**

The SEOG objectives were created over a 6-month period. Firstly, SEOG pulled together their collective knowledge of areas of work and inequality. They also reviewed evidence and data to establish what this was telling them about local need. This was then used to inform a long list of potential objectives for SEOG to consult with the community on. We did this over a three-month period sharing the objectives with over 150 equality and diversity groups, providing an online consultation and going to four community events. Based on this information we selected 5 objectives that we could collectively contribute towards.

Each member of SEOG has agreed to adopt these 5 collective equality objectives. These we will work together on to achieve a greater impact. These objectives will have joint and individual actions underneath them. SEOG member organisations are also able to adopt their own organisational objectives. For SWT these are set out in Part A of the Plan.

Joint SEOG Objective 1		Work with Communities to improve the opportunities for integration and cohesion.	
	Action	Action Lead	Status
6.1	Continue to support local groups hosting inclusive community events, such as 'Wacky Wednesday' in Wellington and 'Pride in Priorswood' in Taunton.	SWT	<b>Ongoing</b> although impacted by Covid 19 restrictions on large public gatherings.
6.2	Continue to promote and mark special days such as Mental health awareness week, Pride week, Black History Month, Holocaust Memorial Day, Armed Forces Day that support groups and individuals who share protected characteristics	SWT	<b>Ongoing</b> SWT has continued to use its Social Media channels to promote these special days to the public and has used internal newsletters and group emails to promote among staff.  Additionally, SWT has supported the creation of the 62-metre-long Rainbow Inclusivity Pathway in Goodlands Gardens Taunton as well as the very successful Taunton Pride event, held on 17 July. The aim is to make Taunton feel more inclusive and welcoming to people who may have felt marginalised in the past.
6.3	Work with the Lesbian, Gay Bisexual and Transgender community about support that is needed and opportunities that are available for better integration opportunities.	SEOG	<b>Completed</b> Research was completed with the community and a service has been commissioned to gain the voice of the community.
6.4	Work with the Faith and Belief community about support that is needed and opportunities that are available for better integration opportunities	SEOG	<b>Completed.</b> Research was completed with the community and a service has been commissioned to gain the voice of the community

6.5	Undertake countywide Faith Audit	SEOG	<b>In Progress</b> - This will be completed through the Interfaith and Belief network recently commissioned and referred to later.
6.6	Review how Somerset Authorities mark Holocaust Memorial Day (HMD). Work with partners to create a larger joint response.	SEOG	<b>In progress</b> - Progress is being made on this action. A joint online and physical event are being planned.
6.7	Work with Hate Crime support organisations, Hate Crime Champions and Community Groups to create a hate crime event in Somerset	SEOG	<b>Not yet started</b> .
6.8	Support the BME Community around creating a Multicultural Forum in Somerset.	SEOG	<b>Completed.</b> Somerset Multi-Cultural Association has been created with representatives from BME groups in Somerset.  Work will need to be undertaken on Public Bodies relationship with the Forum.
6.9	Work with ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) providers in Somerset to create a single website to identify all ESOL provision in Somerset	SEOG	<b>Completed</b> A directory has been created and a webpage has been finalised and published <a href="http://somerset.gov.uk">English courses for speakers of other languages (somerset.gov.uk)</a> .

Joint SEOG Objective 2		Improve the understanding and reduce the stigma of mental health and disability within and across communities	
	Action	Action Lead	Status
7.1	Signpost sources of mental health support on our website and within our Tenant's Newsletters.	SWT	<b>Ongoing</b> – various social media post and news items on the SWT website have promoted mental health support, particularly during mental health awareness week.
7.2	Use Social Media and SWT staff/Member newsletters to promote Mental Health Awareness Week in May and Time To Talk in February	SWT	<b>Ongoing</b> – as per the above action.
7.3	Deliver mental health awareness training to our front-line staff	SWT	<b>Not yet commenced</b>
7.4	SWT to undertake Council domestic violence self-assessment and implement an action plan.	SWT	<p><b>In progress</b> - Domestic abuse Policy reviewed and updated in line with Domestic Abuse Act.</p> <p>Domestic abuse action plan is in place</p> <p>Full self-assessment not yet completed but work is in progress with partners on changes resulting from the Domestic Abuse Act to ensure Council remains fully compliant and supports victims of abuse and signposts offenders to appropriate support where possible.</p>

7.5	Create a Joint Disability conference for Somerset	SEOG	<b>In progress</b> – Target delivery date June 2022
7.6	Work with Disabled People in Somerset to improve understanding of what a hate crime is and how to report it through videos and talking heads.	SEOG	<b>In progress</b> – Target delivery date April 2022
<b>Joint SEOG Objective 3</b>		<b>Work with the Gypsy and Traveller community to improve relationships and the provision of pitches</b>	
	<b>Action</b>	<b>Action Lead</b>	<b>Status</b>
8.1	Include a positive policy within the emerging SWT Local Plan to support pitches in appropriate locations (criteria based) informed by the GTAA	SWT	<b>Not yet progressed</b>
8.2	Work across Somerset to identify pitch/plot provision for Gypsies and Travellers (including temporary and transit pitch provision)	SEOG	<b>In progress</b> - Work has taken place to identify some land that could be used for Gypsy and Traveller provision.

8.3	Work with support services to create a companion document for the Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment (GTAA) focusing on services	SEOG	<b>In progress</b> - Whilst the document has been created it will need to be updated once the GTAA is completed in Autumn 2021
8.4	Work with the Community to create an informed Illegal encampments process for Somerset	SEOG	<b>In progress</b> - A process has been created in Sedgemoor that could be used across other authorities.
8.5	Work with the Community to create briefing sheets for staff around understanding of the community in relation to service delivery	SEOG	<b>Deleted</b> – training will be delivered through the Gypsy Liaison Officers
8.6	Work to find suitable funding to create a Gypsy Liaison role for Somerset	SEOG	<b>Completed</b> Funding has been agreed till October 2021. Further funding will need to be identified after this point.
8.7	Work with the community to create a functioning Gypsy and Traveller Forum	SEOG	<b>Completed</b> – This will be taken forward by the Gypsy and Traveller Liaison Roles.
8.8	Explore options at Otterford B site	SWT	This option has been explored but has been rejected. We have told the landowners that we shall not be pursuing this option – it is not ideally located and there are planning complications.

8.9	Review the Gypsy, Traveller Accommodation Assessment for Somerset	Lead by SDC	<p><b>In Progress</b></p> <p>The lead council is Sedgemoor for contract purposes, but the project group contains representatives from all the District Councils and Somerset County Council.</p> <p>The project was originally scheduled to be completed in Summer 2020. The desk-based assessments had been completed and the interviews with the community were due to start Spring 2020. However, the Covid-19 pandemic and rules around lockdowns and isolation meant the interviews could not be completed outside the traditional travelling period. The last 18months the subjective data collection with the community was rescheduled and then postponed as we went into and out of restrictions. We have now entered the period where travellers traditionally are touring for seasonal work and family reasons, so may not be at their residential home site. Therefore, the interviews are unlikely to be rescheduled before autumn.</p> <p>RRR Consulting are preparing an interim report based on the secondary data as this will at least provide some updated evidence that will have greater weight than the 2013 Somerset GTAA. We hope to receive this soon.</p> <p>Provisional date for completed GTAA is autumn/winter 2021.</p>
-----	---	-------------	---

Joint SEOG Objective 4		Create an Equality Working Group for Staff in the Public Sector in Somerset	
Action		Action Lead	Status
9.1	Create a pilot staff equality working group made up of multiple public bodies in South Somerset.	SEOG	<b>Deleted</b> - Group not going ahead as planned. This objective to be replaced by. 'Review and where necessary improve recruitment practices to make them more inclusive'.

Joint SEOG Objective 5		Improve the consistency of Accessibility Standards across the Public Sector for service users, including the Accessibility Information Standard.	
Action		Action Lead	Status
10.1	Work with the Somerset Disability Engagement Service to provide accessibility audits for Somerset and share learning from these.	SEOG	<b>In Progress</b> – First audits identified.
10.2	Create a Customer Charter for Somerset, recognising the Accessibility Information Standard	SEOG	<b>Not started</b> – target date April 2022
10.3	Create an action plan to support the Customer Charter	SEOG	<b>Not started</b> – target date April 2022