

Shropshire Council

SINGLE EQUALITY SCHEME

2010-2013

**Incorporating Age, Disability, Gender, Race, Religion
& Belief, Sexual Orientation, Transgender &
Community Cohesion**

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Action Plan

Glossary of Terms

Group that have helped to develop the Single Equality Scheme for Shropshire Council

If you can read this but know someone who can't please contact the Diversity Officer on 0345 678 9000 so we can provide this information in a more suitable format.

FOREWORD

At Shropshire Council, we embrace equality and diversity in all our work. The issue of equality is not the responsibility of one section or service area solely, but is owned by all Members and staff at all levels of the Council. We recognise the value difference can make and we are committed to serving the diverse needs of our communities.

Over 400 Members and staff have been involved in creating the new values and behaviours. One of these values focuses specifically on diversity- 'recognise the value difference can make and treat everyone with respect'

This single equality scheme outlines a genuine desire and commitment to achieve improved performance across all council services in equality of opportunity and outcome. But more than this it provides a clear link to our customer focused performance management framework. Focussing on the needs of our customers is a core value for Shropshire Council.

With the formation of a new unitary council one of the key priorities was to develop a single equality scheme for Shropshire Council. However, the Fire Service and Shropshire County PCT have also reviewed their current separate equality schemes and it was decided that a joined up approach in terms of involving and engaging communities, groups and people in Shropshire would be the best way forward. The joint workshops around Shropshire helped the separate organisations devise priorities for each of their organisations but, also outlined some key priorities for partnership working via the Shropshire Partnership's Equalities Forum.

The scheme for Shropshire Council incorporates a holistic view of the changing legislation and the recognition of the importance of a co-ordinated approach to all key equality strands; Age, Disability, Gender, Sexual Orientation, Race, Religion or Belief and Transgender as well as actions against the Community Cohesion agenda. This is in line with the national agenda on equalities included in the Equality Bill.

The Council's role as a community leader means that we play a key role in building community cohesion, engendering respect and tolerance. We will work with our communities to identify inequalities and agree initiatives that will be delivered in partnership with local people at a local level.

The 2008 Place Survey conducted by Ipsos Mori on behalf of Shropshire Council highlighted that community cohesion appears to be one of Shropshire's strengths as an area, with the majority of residents agreeing that it is an area where people of different backgrounds get along well together.

Shropshire Council works together with all our partners and the people of Shropshire to improve significantly the quality of life for Shropshire people. Our aim for the next three years is to be able to demonstrate that we are making real progress in ensuring equality in service delivery, employment and across all areas of our work.

Kim Ryley

Keith Barrow

Chief Executive

Leader

Diverse Shropshire

In order to ensure we are meeting the needs of our diverse communities the council recognises the importance of equality mapping which will help provide a better understanding of local issues to deliver positive outcomes. Equality mapping emphasises the importance of understanding difference in the context of other major issues such as health, education, community safety and access to work. Shropshire Council has produced an evidence base which has been used by the Shropshire Partnership to develop the Community Strategy.

- **Population**

Shropshire is a rural county with a population of 290,900 of which most live in the market towns. Males represent 49.4 % of the population and females represent 50.6% of the population. The County is one of the most sparsely populated in England which presents a real issue in the delivery of services. Approximately 36% of the population live in rural areas. Shropshire's population has been increasing at a faster rate (7%) than England (4%) as a whole since 1991.

- **Age**

Shropshire has an ageing population as many people choose to retire in the county. In 2007 about 48% of the county's residents were aged 45 or over, compared to only 40.8% nationally. In contrast, the number of people aged between 16-29 has fallen by 16.2%, compared to a fall of 6.4% nationally.

- **Ethnic and Cultural Origins**

In Shropshire, the 2001 census provided the only up to date source of information on the ethnic composition of the population. Only 1.2 % of the population are from black, mixed or other ethnic minority groups, which is significantly lower than the national figure of 9%.

Although the Gypsy and Traveller population of Britain comprises of a number of culturally distinct groups the local population in Shropshire is predominantly English. We have new emerging communities who have come mainly from the Eastern European Countries and we will work with our partners to ensure that we all understand better the needs of the new emerging communities and that they also have access to the services we provide.

- **Religion/Belief**

Of the population who have declared a religion or belief, the majority are Christian. The next most prominent faith groups are Buddhist and Muslim.

WELCOME TO SHROPSHIRE

- **Sexual Orientation**

There are 142,600 men and 145,300 women in Shropshire. There is a visible community of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGB &T) people but we recognise that there will also be a significant invisible LGB &T community which we must serve. There is currently no accurate data available on the number of LGBT people. However, Stonewall and our local LGB network suggest some 10% may be lesbian, gay or bisexual.

- **Disability**

At Shropshire Council we believe the Social Model of Disability is the most helpful and constructive way to consider disability. This Model takes the view that it is the 'barriers' in society which 'disable' people and prevent them from fully participating in society; barriers such as people's attitudes, the built environment and organisations policies and practices.

However we also recognise the definition of disability in the Disability Discrimination Act (1995) as:

Someone with physical or mental impairment which has substantial and long term adverse effect on his or her ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.

In Shropshire there are approximately 9000 wheel chair users, 2188 people registered as having hearing loss and 47 people who are deaf without hearing. Nationally, there are over 6.9 million disabled people of working age which represents 19% of the working population. (**Labour Force Survey, June 2006**)

WELCOME TO SHROPSHIRE

Shropshire Council

Shropshire Council believes that the diversity of the people of Shropshire is an asset and that unfair discrimination against any person or group must not be tolerated. We continue to make changes in the way we deliver, manage and monitor our services to meet the diverse needs of our communities.

Our Vision

"To improve significantly the quality of life for Shropshire people by working together"

Our Core Values

Our core values demonstrate how we do things is important to us - in everything we do we will do our very best to:

- Focus on meeting the needs of our customers
- Value each other and achieve more by working and learning together
- Use resources we have responsibly
- **Recognise the value difference can make and treat everyone with respect**
- Build trust by expressing ourselves openly and honestly

1. Our Corporate Aims

- Enterprise and growth, with strong market towns and rebalanced rural settlements
- Responding to climate change and enhancing our natural & built environment
- Healthy, safe and confident people and communities

EQUALITY, DIVERSITY & COMMUNITY COHESION

We live in a changing society and we can take pride in our traditions and tolerance, fairness and the rule of law. As an equal opportunities employer, we are committed to the values of integrity, impartiality, courtesy and helpfulness, in our dealing with staff, members of the public and other partner organisations.

Diversity involves recognition that everyone is different, and that this is valued and promotes respect. Promoting diversity within Shropshire Council involves creating an environment that capitalises on everything that makes us unique - our gender, race, ability, sexuality, beliefs, age, lifestyle, family status, linguistic ability and giving everyone a fair and equal chance to be successful.

Community Cohesion is a relatively new Government policy. Our schools now have a duty to promote Community Cohesion. The issues that underpin community cohesion are not new, poor social relations, lack of community integration and interaction can lead to community tensions, fear and prejudice and feelings of inequality. Our Local Area Agreement 'Evidence Base' outlines the challenges facing the county. Demographics, Worklessness, Migration, these all require strong community leadership to ensure Shropshire remains a welcoming place for all.

Purpose of Single Equality Scheme

This is the first Single Equality Scheme for Shropshire Council as a new unitary authority. Shropshire Council will ensure that, in everything it does, it will continue to promote diversity and equality of opportunity, eliminate discrimination, and bring about positive change. This policy seeks to enhance and promote the high quality services we provide already and to assist in creating a productive, safe and prejudice free work environment which treats all employees fairly and with dignity.

Shropshire Council's Single Equality Scheme serves two purposes:

To set out the Council's overall commitment to equality and diversity. This one document contains:

- our equality, diversity and community cohesion policy
- our approach to equality and diversity in Shropshire
- how we will manage, plan, mainstream and embed equality and diversity in our day to day work

To cover the statutory and non statutory duties:

- our statutory duties as a Local Authority under the current Disability, Gender and Race legislation
- our non statutory and general legal duties in relation to Age, Religion/Belief, Sexual Orientation and Transgender.
- our responsibility to build strong and cohesive communities

The Single Equality Scheme will help us to ensure that we focus more on the positive outcomes for people in Shropshire and that our services are more accessible and delivered effectively and efficiently. It will support and supplement the Council's corporate priorities, as set out in the Corporate Plan and also links with the Sustainable Community Strategy.

EQUALITY, DIVERSITY & COMMUNITY COHESION

How We Developed Our Single Equality Scheme

Encouraging participation and involvement is a specific requirement of the Disability Discrimination Act. Shropshire Council firmly believes that the only way to ensure we are delivering positive outcomes is to ensure we listen to the views, experiences and ideas of the communities we serve. Therefore, we have applied this requirement across all the equality strands to ensure we listened to as many people as possible in developing our scheme.

Our engagement and participation events at various places in Shropshire were undertaken jointly with the Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service and the Shropshire County Primary Care Trust. The joint events allowed the three services to work in partnership, share expertise, experience and knowledge and also highlight that equalities is a shared agenda. Whilst each public body organisation is required to produce separate equality schemes; by working together we can share the learning and look at overlapping issues and priorities.

We have consulted with the Equality and Human Rights Commission to ensure this new scheme for Shropshire Council meets all the requirements of the existing equality duty on public bodies.

Legislative Framework

Over the last ten years the Sex Discrimination Act 1975, Race Relations Act 1976, and Disability Discrimination Act 1995 have been expanded, and new laws have also been introduced to cover discrimination on grounds of religion or belief, sexual orientation, age and transgender.

The new Equality Bill will require public bodies to produce a single equality scheme. It will be an integrated duty to make it simpler and more efficient for organisations and will bring disability, sex, race and other grounds of discrimination within one piece of legislation. The Bill aims to simplify and strengthen legislation.

Legislation, legal frameworks, equality impact assessments and equality schemes can't hope to tackle all of these issues. Although important they require commitment from everybody at all levels to make all feel welcome, accepted and valued for the different perspectives that they bring and the joy and achievement that they can all bring if given the right environment.

For Shropshire, creating that environment is a priority using the local government equality framework and the single equality scheme to reinforce the values and the actions that many services are already taking to engage with and provide services for the whole community. However, we need to ensure that people aren't falling through the net and services need to think about who are vulnerable customers - how we can find out better what their needs are how we can deliver services in a common sense way that provides value for money for all the county's residents, treats everyone with dignity and respect and values everyone's contribution to making Shropshire the wonderful place it is.

National Framework

New Equalities Framework for Local Government

The Improvement and Development Agency (IDeA) launched a new Equality Framework for Local Government (EFLG) which builds on and develops the work councils have done on the Equality Standard for Local Government (ESLG). The Equalities Framework uses a wider definition of equality, which was originally set out in the Equalities Review, based on the idea of equal life chances. Local authorities therefore, need to continue to consider the impact of race, gender, transgender, disability, age, sexual orientation and religion or belief. It will also encourage councils to understand the relationships between these and socio-economic status and the experience of vulnerable groups, for example looked after children and the gypsy and traveller community.

There are three levels of performance within the new Framework, (Developing, Achieving and Excellent) which are still designed to allow authorities to benchmark their performance. The IDeA has confirmed that it is reasonable for Shropshire Council to migrate to the 'Developing' Level of the new Framework. This is based on the equalities mapping exercise undertaken in preparation for Unitary and that SCC was self assessed at Level 3 and all other District and Borough Councils were at level 2 of the old Equalities Standard.

New Equalities Framework for Local Government & Shropshire's Single Equality Scheme

We will use the Single Equality Scheme action plan to help provide the evidence of the positive outcomes for people in Shropshire against the criteria for the 'Achieving' level.

New Equality Framework		Shropshire Single Equality Scheme
• Knowing your Communities	→	Welcome to Shropshire
• Place shaping	→	Leadership
• Community Engagement	→	Communication & Service Delivery & Customer Care
• Responsive Services	→	Service Delivery & Customer Care
• A Modern and diverse workforce	→	Diversity in the Workplace

EQUALITY, DIVERSITY & COMMUNITY COHESION

Comprehensive Area Assessment

This replaces the old Comprehensive Performance Assessment for local authorities and is now an area assessment focusing on how well local public services are delivering services against locally agreed priorities and how likely they are to improve in the future. The three key questions asked in the area assessment are: How well do local priorities express community needs and aspirations, how well are the outcomes and improvements needed being delivered and what are the prospects for future improvement. Tackling inequality, disadvantage and discrimination is one of the themes underpinning the assessment.

There are clear links between the New Equalities Framework and the Comprehensive Area Assessment framework, particularly in terms of equality mapping and community engagement and involvement. The term 'equality mapping' has been added to the more familiar 'knowing your communities' to emphasise the importance of understanding difference in the context of other major issues such as health, education, community safety, access to work and identifying where the equality gaps are for different groups

National Indicator Set

In developing our comprehensive evidence base to develop the priorities for the LAA, partners have taken into account the needs of different groups in the community and assessed the extent to which priorities have an impact on them.

The Government Office has an important role to challenge partnerships to ensure that they have considered outcomes for particular groups as part of the LAA. The Equality and Human Rights Commission's representatives are located regionally and they worked collaboratively during the negotiation process

LEADERSHIP

Corporate Commitment

The corporate commitment to this agenda has been vital to ensure that Shropshire Council continues to deliver the high standard of services and care. All our Members take responsibility for championing and promoting equality and diversity within the Council and externally. They engage and listen to the views of local communities via the Local Joint Committees, strategic partners and others to take a more collective approach to addressing inequalities in Shropshire. Additionally, we have a Member Champion for Equalities, and there are also a number of existing arrangements that help deliver the Council's vision and promote diversity:

- Scrutiny Panel Members ensure that equality issues are an integral part of their work when looking at specific services
- The Chief Executive leads the Council Management Team (CMT) that has the collective responsibility for driving the equality and diversity agenda throughout the organisation
- The Council also supports the Shropshire Partnership's Equalities Forum and the Portfolio Holder can attend the Forum meetings
- The Strategic Equalities Group is chaired by the Assistant Chief Executive, Performance & Partnerships to demonstrate corporate commitment and to help ensure equalities is being embedded throughout the organisation

Equal Opportunities Statement

Shropshire Council is committed to treating everyone fairly, openly and honestly. We are striving to achieve equality for the diverse mix in our communities and our own workforce, recognising that people have different needs, cultures, experiences and expectations.

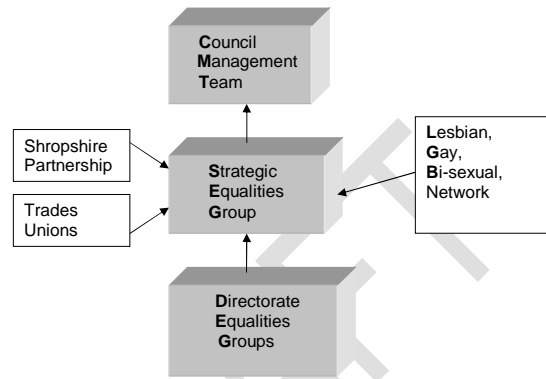
The Council recognises that valuing equality and diversity will lead to more sensitive services that are responsive to the needs of the communities, a workforce that is representative of the community, and a commitment to participation by all. We believe that:

- less favourable treatment on the grounds of gender, race, colour, ethnic or national origin, disability, marital status, sexual orientation, responsibility for dependants, age, trade union or political activities, religion/beliefs, transgender or any other reason which cannot be shown to be justified should not be tolerated and,
- each member of the community as a citizen, service user, service provider or as an employee of the council is entitled to expect fair and equal treatment at all times.

Shropshire Council's policy statements on Race, Gender, Age, Disability, Discrimination on the Grounds of Sexual Orientation and Religion/Belief can be found on our website - www.shropshire.gov.uk.

LEADERSHIP

Reporting and Monitoring Structure



Council Management Team. - This is chaired by the Chief Executive and comprises of all the Service Directors. This group provides leadership and takes corporate responsibility for ensuring that the Council not only complies fully with all the equality legislations, but that Equality and Diversity is mainstreamed into everything that the Council does. Through the lead director for Equality and Diversity, the Group is regularly updated on new policy initiatives as well as on progress being made.

Strategic Equalities Group. - Our Strategic Equalities Group is chaired at Assistant Chief Executive level and is responsible for driving equality and diversity forward on behalf of Shropshire Council and to respond to the evolving and changing agenda on a regional and national level. The group is made up of the senior lead officers from each of the Service areas and also with representation from the staff groups, Trades Unions and the Shropshire Partnership.

Directorate Equalities Groups. - The Directorate Equality Groups report to the Strategic Equality Group and work closely with the Diversity Officer to ensure that equalities and diversity is embedded into their service area. These groups are made up of officers from the different service teams within the directorate working with the senior lead officer.

Partnership Working

The Shropshire Partnership is a strategic partnership involving regional, public and local agencies, the voluntary and community sector, business, young people and equality and diversity communities. Partners work together to meet local needs and improve the quality of life in Shropshire. The Shropshire Partnership is also sometimes referred to as the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP).

Area Partnerships

There are three Area Partnerships located in the northern, central and southern areas of the county. Each area has its own area partnership structure that brings together key partners, stakeholders and community groups who identify and address local community priorities. The partnerships also help support the local implementation of county wide priorities and actions contained within the Shropshire Community Strategy, Local Area Agreement and Local Development Framework.

Shropshire Partnership Equalities Forum

The Equalities Forum is a partnership network for all Shropshire's equality and diversity organisations and public sector community and voluntary organisations. The Forum has a work programme, organises events and operates a small awards scheme. The forum was established in 2004 and has raised the profile of the equalities agenda. The Forum meetings are chaired by a member of the Forum supported by the Community Safety Team Coordinator and the Diversity Officer.

Successful initiatives have been the Forum's role in developing a Multi Agency Protocol to tackle '**Hate Crime**' in Shropshire and more recently, developing a Partnership '**Welcome Booklet**' for Migrant Workers and new emerging communities in Shropshire.

The **Awards Scheme** offers awards, to a maximum of £1000, to local communities, small voluntary organisations and other new or established groups serving communities in Shropshire. Aims of the awards scheme are:

- Combat hate crime and racism in Shropshire
- Support initiatives to raise awareness of equality issues
- Build capacity of smaller groups serving the BME and other equality communities
- Support local events and activity to celebrate equality and diversity

Below are some of the events/initiatives supported by the equality and diversity awards:

- Rock Against Racism and Cultural Diversity Day event
- LGBT History month and annual Film Festival
- Disability Tourism in Shropshire
- Gypsy and Traveller week
- Gender Matters
- IMPACT – Alcohol Advisory Service

LEADERSHIP

Community Working

Community Working is a new service for Shropshire Council, working with and for the local communities. Community working is centred on people and communities. Our work enables residents to have a greater stake in the community in which they live. This is about the Council and its partners working together with the community to improve the quality of life for everyone in Shropshire.

Community development seeks to empower individuals and groups of people by providing them with the skills they need to effect change in their own communities. Community Officers help people take part in this process. There is a team of officers called the Community Working Team who will support community development and regeneration.

The Community Working Teams will work closely with communities, groups and people to address local issues, to promote equality and diversity, to help establish groups and projects that raise awareness of equality and diversity and support local partnership initiatives. We will ensure that the 'seldom heard' groups are also supported and presented with opportunities to help Shropshire Council to develop and manage its services. From time to time they will arrange meetings with different equality and diversity communities so that any specific needs can be identified and met.

DRAFT

DIVERSITY IN THE WORKPLACE

We are committed to valuing and supporting our employees to realise their full potential and creating a diverse workforce that broadly reflects the community in which we operate. Our commitment to Members and employees is one of continuous development through training and awareness raising, helping to make this policy fully effective.

Our Human Resources policies set out our commitment to fair employment, equal opportunities, learning and development and valuing diversity. We will continue to work hard to ensure we attract, recruit and retain staff from diverse backgrounds. We expect our staff to:

- provide a high standard of service to local people, and to those they come into contact with
- respect others regardless of who they are
- undertake training and self development as identified to help improve our services to users, including equality and diversity training
- promote equality of opportunity and help build cohesive community relations
- adhere to all appropriate Council policies, procedures and codes of practice
- demonstrate these values in the way they work
- challenge behaviour or attitudes which are contrary to this policy

Workforce Planning – Positive Action

We are working with Assistant Directors across the Council in undertaking workforce planning interviews. These interviews will assist us in writing the workforce strategy for the next three years.

In addition, we are undertaking a workforce skills audit which will enable us to identify the skills of our workforce which will inform workforce strategy and form a baseline statistic for future workforce planning.

Stonewall Diversity Champions

Stonewall works to achieve equality and justice for lesbians, gay men and bisexual people. Shropshire council is proud to be a part of the Stonewall Diversity Champions programme which is a good practice forum where employers can work with Stonewall, and each other, to promote lesbian, gay and bisexual equality in the workplace.

An action plan is in place to assist with raising our profile with Stonewall and ultimately increasing our position in the Stonewall Equalities Index. This includes raising awareness internally within Shropshire Council as well as externally, particularly with regards to recruitment.

DIVERSITY IN THE WORKPLACE

Equal Pay

Work to address equal pay is being carried out via a phased implementation of Job Evaluation. Phase 1 covered Grade 1 to 4, approximately 4000 employees, was completed in 2003. Phase 2 covering approximately 2,000 employees, was completed in 2008. An independent review of Senior Managers grades was completed in February 2009. Phase 3 of Job Evaluation will cover the remainder of the NJC employees and is currently in the planning phase.

An equal pay review is planned to be completed in November 2010 to address any equal pay issues arising from the transfer of employees to Shropshire Council.

Member Training

The new Member induction programme for Shropshire Council was delivered between June and July 2009. Specific Equalities and Diversity sessions were delivered in conjunction with the Office for Public Management and received satisfaction ratings of 98% and 87%. These sessions are considered to be essential for all Members of Shropshire Council. The purpose of the programme was to provide Members with relevant knowledge and information about what is expected of them in their role, functions of directorates and services, key contacts, and offer to support them further. Feedback from Members about the Equalities and Diversity sessions included:

- "Thought provoking and questioning – excellent aspects of training"
- "Challenging, made me think about many other aspects and how I would and should consider the equalities issues – Well done!"
- "Very effective approach to constructively challenging and working through assumptions and approaches"

Staff Training

Equality and diversity learning sessions are delivered within corporate induction and 'Ignition' (new manager induction programme). Corporate training programme courses reflect the Shropshire Council value 'recognise the value difference can make and treat everyone with respect'.

- ii) Since June 2006 half day Equality and Diversity awareness workshops have been available for staff who require a general understanding about diversity principles, issues and legislation, this is part of the Corporate Training Programme.
- iii) Training sessions on how to undertake an Equality Impact Needs Assessments (EINA) for relevant staff are delivered within the corporate training programme.
- iv) Specialist advice on disability is available as a one to one or small group session conducted by the Human Resources and Development Officer (Disability).

DIVERSITY IN THE WORKPLACE

Specialist technical provision within directorates

- i) County Training provides a service for their staff which assesses the standards of presentations to ensure they comply with the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA).
- ii) County Training deliver sessions called understanding disability, cultural awareness and bullying and harassment. These sessions are specifically for young learners in the community and the staff who support them in learning and employment training services (LETS).
- iii) Children and Young People's Service deliver sessions specifically for residential care workers to ensure they comply with national minimum standards. These started in August 2008 and include working with children and young people with disabilities, relevant legislation, prejudice and discrimination, inclusive working and inclusion.
- iv) Community Services deliver sessions for staff specifically in adult, community and health services on equalities awareness for staff working in the health and social care sector. These sessions cover mental health and physical disability, mental capacity act awareness and learning disability.
- v) Children and Young Peoples Services, through its Homophobia in Education Steering Group developed a resources list for schools and colleges, staff and governors to prepare them to challenge homophobic behaviour against pupils.

SERVICE DELIVERY & CUSTOMER CARE

Shropshire Council provides many services, as well as being responsible for commissioning services from other agencies and organisations and it is important that the community is aware of our services, how they can access them and know that the services will be delivered efficiently and without prejudice. We are committed to the principles of Best Value in the delivery of services and we will ensure that they are responsive to the needs of our communities.

Our Diversity Officer- works to support the directorates with their equalities work programme and also works closely with our key partners and community groups to ensure that all our services are fair and accessible to all in Shropshire.

The Access Officer is responsible for ensuring that all our buildings are compliant with the DDA and Shropshire has a Senior Librarian Equal Access whose remit includes ensuring that equality and diversity issues are incorporated within the library service.

Shropshire Council has a dedicated Gypsy Liaison Service which is responsible for the day-to-day management of the 3 sites across Shropshire, including welfare of all the families within the residential sites. The Officers work closely with other departments and agencies to ensure all Gypsies and Travellers have fair and equal access to services. The Gypsy Liaison Service is also very involved in the new Government 'Supporting People' initiative.

Participation, Engagement and Consultation

Shropshire Council works with our partners to significantly improve the quality of life for people in Shropshire. Our plans and strategies and key services are shaped by residents views elicited through consultation and engagement.

Local Joint Committees.

Local Joint Committees (LJCs) enable people across Shropshire to get more involved in the decision making of the Shropshire Council. There are 28 Local Joint Committees in place, covering the whole of the county. Each committee meets four times a year and gives people a chance to meet with their local councillors and to raise issues of concern about services or problems within their communities.

Local councillors from Shropshire Council and all of the parish and town councils in the local area have voting rights when it comes to making decisions. Local people are able to discuss local issues, raise concerns, ask questions about local services and call service providers to account. Other public organisations such as the police, primary care trust, fire and rescue service, can also be invited to the meetings to provide information.

Shropshire's Compact

The Compact is an agreement that sets out the "rules of engagement" for how Shropshire Council and the voluntary and community sector (VCS) should work together for the benefit of the people they serve.
Compact codes of practice cover:

SERVICE DELIVERY & CUSTOMER CARE

- Volunteering
- Funding and procurement
- Consultation and policy appraisal
- Equality and diversity

Shropshire Partnership - Consultation

The Shropshire Partnership has a range of mechanisms that it uses for consulting with the residents of Shropshire. Key to this is the 'Commitment to Consultation' that all of the major public service providers in Shropshire have made. They have committed to carry out high quality, useful and timely consultations that engage and empower the residents of Shropshire.

We encourage local residents to get involved with our business and are committed to building positive relationships with people from all parts of our society. Listed below are some of the ways in which we ensure that the people of Shropshire can have a say:

Shropshire's Commitment to Consultation states:

- We will only conduct a consultation when it is appropriate

That is when the information gathered will be used and is useful, and when decision makers are in a position to act on the findings.

- We will be clear on the purpose of the consultation

The consultation will have clear aims and purpose. We will clearly state what can be achieved through the consultation, what can't be influenced or changed as a result and what questions are being asked.

- We will wherever possible coordinate consultations with partners

We will work with partner organisations to ensure that people aren't over consulted and that we make the best use of resources. All partners will check the consultation portal at the initial planning stage of all consultation to see if links can be made with other organisations or previously gathered information can be used.

- We will ensure a reasonable consultation period

Wherever possible a 12 week consultation period will be used. We will be clear on when the consultation period starts and ends.

- We will provide feedback

Clear feedback will be given to all participants and where relevant a wider audience.

- We will use plain English

Consultations will be jargon free wherever possible and wherever it is used a glossary will be provided.

Consultation Portal

The Shropshire Partnership's also has a Consultation Portal that has been developed to provide a quick, easy and efficient way of finding out about consultation activities being carried out across Shropshire, as well as those that have taken place in the past and are planned for the future. The site brings together information about consultations being undertaken by a range of organisations, including Shropshire

SERVICE DELIVERY & CUSTOMER CARE

Partnership, Shropshire Council, West Mercia Constabulary, Shropshire Fire & Rescue and Shropshire County Primary Care Trust etc. It also provides contact details for each consultation so you can find out more. To access the Consultation Portal go to www.shropshirepartnership.org.uk

Citizens Panel

We have an established Challenge Panel - a forum of local people from around the county representing various user groups, interested parties and members of the public. The panel members are asked to give comments, views and suggestions on policies and services delivered by Shropshire Council. The ideas they put forward are then used to shape services to ensure they are of the highest quality and meet the needs and concerns of local people. Shropshire Council's Challenge Panel is a chance for the people of Shropshire to have a real say in the decisions that affect them - and for local people to get involved in the design and delivery of our services

Listed below are some of the ways people can get involved:

Residents' survey – a survey of local people's views of Shropshire Councils services

One-off consultations – view our past, present and future consultations

Online comments – follow the 'contact' link to share your comments, questions or complaints

Council meetings – most of our council meetings are open to the public

Youth Parliament – A voice and an opportunity for young people to get involved in the democratic process

Local scrutiny events – one-off events asking for the views of the local community and experts to tackle a specific local issue; the whole group works together to come up with recommendations.

Equality Impact Needs Assessment – (EINA)

An Equality Impact Needs Assessment (EINA) is a tool to assess our policies, services and projects do not have an adverse impact on any particular group. The assessment offers us an opportunity when appropriate to refocus services or employment practices on the needs of diverse communities or diverse groups of staff.

An EINA is a process of analysing a proposed or existing service, strategy, policy or project. The aim is to identify any effect or likely effect on different groups within the community. The outcome is to make sure that, as far as possible, any negative consequences for minority groups are eliminated or minimised and opportunities for promoting equality are maximised.

Managers must ensure that all outcomes of their EINA programme are implemented into service plans and monitored.

SERVICE DELIVERY & CUSTOMER CARE

Shropshire Council's EINA programmes covers:

- Race
- Disability
- Gender
- Sexual Orientation
- Age
- Religion/Belief

Our EINA programme is performance managed via our corporate plan quarterly reporting cycle to our senior managers and elected Members and our Directorate Equality Groups are responsible for monitoring and review of the EINA programme.

Procurement

The Council's procurement strategy describes the Council's policy in procuring supplies and services. The strategy also sets out the principles relating to equality, diversity. The Council will:

- include a requirement within contracts for agencies delivering services on our behalf, to deliver effective and appropriate service, fairly and without unlawful discrimination
- ensure that all contractors commit to service delivery following the principles set out in the Council's equality, diversity and strategy
- establish mechanisms for ensuring that equality targets are met by suppliers through contract managements
- require contractors to supply monitoring reports on service delivery and take up
- establish mechanisms for managing equality issues by monitoring these reports and taking appropriate action to resolve any shortcomings

Value For Money

Achieving and demonstrating value for money is important for us and our value for money strategy sets out what we do and how we do this. At Shropshire Council we consider whether we are delivering value for money from a number of perspectives.

We analyse factors such as:

- the cost of providing services;
- performance against our priorities;
- how the cost and performance of our services compares to others;
- the views of our customers.

The experience of the people that use our services is an essential element in forming a view about whether or not the Council is providing value for money. There is little value in providing a service that local people don't actually want.

We use whole service value for money review and lean service reviews to test whether or not services are delivering value for money and are an important tool for improving the efficiency and effectiveness of our services.

Our evidence based and customer focussed reviews means that we consider the diverse needs of Shropshire residents.

SERVICE DELIVERY & CUSTOMER CARE

Comments, Compliments and Complaints

Shropshire Council welcomes all feedback from customers. It is their feedback that helps us to improve the way we do things and learn from where things have gone wrong.

- **Comments** - we want to hear customers suggestions and ideas about our services.
- **Complaints** - if our customers are unhappy with something we have done they can make a complaint. We want to provide a good quality service. If things go wrong we need to know so that we can put them right.
- **Compliments** - we want our customers to tell us when they think a council employee or service has been done well.

How you can give feedback:

We value feedback and want to be able to tell the customer how we dealt with the issue, however if the customer chooses to remain anonymous we cannot do this. Customers can give us feedback in a number of ways:

- On-line
Customers can complete an on-line form.
- By telephone
Customers can call our Customer Services team on 0345 678 9000
- In writing
Customers can send their letters to:
Complaints and Scrutiny Unit

COMMUNICATION

Good communication is key to providing high quality, responsive council services in Shropshire. It is essential to understand the needs of local people, to provide and communicate details of accessible and responsive services, to develop strategies for improving life in Shropshire, and to ensure that we play an effective role in community leadership. Two way communications gives a voice to local people and helps them shape the services delivered in their communities

Access To Information

Shropshire Council acknowledges that the provision of appropriate information is a key milestone in the promotion of equalities and diversity and the Council is committed to ensuring that all information it produces is accessible to all members of the community.

We recognise that some sections of the public may not enjoy equality of opportunity in access to information and we will continue to review our methods of communication. We seek to raise awareness of services available to residents and to improve communication with a range of diverse communities, including those that we have traditionally found hard to reach.

The main access points for information on the Council services are as follows:

- The Council website www.shropshire.gov.uk
- Customer Contact Centre - 03456789000
- The Council's Area Headquarters based in Bridgnorth, Oswestry and Wem
- Customer First Points - Libraries
- Community and Voluntary sector organisations

Translation & Interpretation

We offer Translation and Interpretation services for people who communicate in a language other than English and services for people who have sensory impairment, learning difficulty or limited reading ability.

MONITORING PERFORMANCE

Annual Review of the Policy

This Single Equality Scheme will be reviewed annually by the Council Management Team who will ensure that progress is reported to Cabinet through the Strategic Equalities Group. In addition, the Action Plan will be subject to the Council's normal scrutiny process by Members, with Scrutiny Panels encouraged to involve people from our communities in this process.

We will also be reviewing Shropshire Council's position as a Stonewall Diversity Champion annually.

The annual review of the progress and the annual report will be published on our website www.shropshire.gov.uk

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Glossary of Terms

Cabinet	The Cabinet is responsible for the every day administration of the Council. It comprises of the Leader of the Council and seven other elected Members.
Children & Young People's Services	The part of the Council's responsible for delivery of services to children, young people, schools, families and carers.
Community Services Directorate	The part of the Council's responsible for delivery of social care services to vulnerable adults, and the provision of community services such as libraries, museums and Housing.
Corporate Plan	The Corporate Plan sets out the future vision, aims and priorities of the Council, how we plan to deliver these and how we will measure how we are doing.
Council	All the Elected Members or Councillors of the Council.
Council Management Team	The chief officers of the Council. The Group members are; the Chief Executive, Corporate Directors of Community Services, Children & Young Peoples Services and Development Services, the Director of Resources, the Head of Chief Executive's Office and the Head of Legal Services
Development Services Directorate	The part of the Council responsible for all economic development and environment services, including public transport, road safety and waste management.
Directorate	A 'department' of the Council responsible for delivering specific services or functions.

Diversity Officer	The Councils officer whose role is to work with the Council and the Shropshire Partnership to develop the working relationship between the different partners, and promote equality and diversity within the community.
Equality & Human Rights Commission – (EHRC)	A Non Departmental Public Body (NDPB), established under the Equality Act 2006 as a corporate body
Equality Framework	A benchmarking tool developed for local government to enable local authorities to achieve and maintain the highest standards of equality in service delivery and employment practices.
Equality Impact Needs Assessment	An assessment that is carried out on a policy, practice or procedure in order to identify any adverse effects that such a policy etc may have upon a particular group of people.
Local Strategic Partnership	A single non-statutory multi-agency body, which matches local authority boundaries. It aims to bring together at a local level the different parts of the public, private, community and voluntary sectors.
Member	Elected Councillor of Shropshire Council.
Stonewall	Diversity Champions for Lesbian, Gay & Bisexual issues.

Acknowledgements:

We would like to thank everyone who has helped to develop the first Single Equality Scheme for Shropshire Council. Listed below are some of those who have helped to develop our first single equality scheme:

Name		Organisation
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Jes	Blower	Shropshire Council – HR & D Officer
Steve	Cunningham	Shrewsbury Action Against Racism
Gina	Cusack	Shrewsbury College of Arts & Technology
Nina	Dunmore	Shropshire Primary Care Trust
Geoff	Forge	Shropshire Disability Network
Angela	French	Shropshire Council – Landlord Services Housing Services Manager
Linda	Gladman	Shropshire Council – HR & D
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Kal	Parkash	Shropshire Council – Diversity Officer
Rico	Paris	Gender Advisory Bureau
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