

INCLUSION & DIVERSITY STRATEGY



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1. Basildon Borough:

The Borough of Basildon was formed as Basildon District on 1 April 1974, from the former area of Basildon Urban District and the part of Thurrock Urban District that was within the Basildon New Town. Basildon borough comprises the five main settlements of Basildon, Billericay, Wickford, Laindon and Pitsea. The last two form part of the same built-up area as Basildon New Town.

The borough has a population of 187,200 (ONS 2019 mid-year estimates) and has seen a population increase of 3.6% since 2014. This is projected to rise to 206,500 by 2043, a further rise of 10%. Basildon is comparatively young compared to other Essex districts. The median age of Basildon residents is 40 and 10.4% of residents are from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) communities.

Life expectancy for both men and women in Basildon borough is close to the England average but there are stark differences in life expectancy between wards in the borough. Basildon borough is home to pockets of wealth and affluence as well as of poverty and deprivation. The 2019 Indices of Multiple Deprivation ranked Basildon borough as 111th most deprived of 317 English local authority areas, yet the 2021 UK Prosperity Index ranked Basildon borough as 139th most prosperous of 379 UK local authority areas.

2. Introduction & Policy Context

The Corporate Plan 2021-2024 sets out the Council's three strategic ambitions as follows:

People

We want Basildon to be home to healthy and active local communities able to support themselves and each other.

Place

We want Basildon to offer a high quality of life for all residents through attractive, liveable, accessible and safe neighbourhoods and towns along with the provision of enduring facilities, green spaces and town centres that meet the needs of the community.

Prosperity

We want Basildon to have a thriving, dynamic and diverse economy where all our communities benefit from increased opportunity and our workforce has the right skills for our local economy and beyond.

And a specific deliverable to “ use our influence and work with partners to promote inclusion and diversity throughout the borough.”

The Corporate Plan also recognises the Council's commitment to being an organisation fit for purpose with good governance arrangements in place to ensure the Council is doing the right things, in the right way, in line with our values to enable delivery of this Corporate Plan.

3. Inclusion and Diversity Policy Statement

The Council’s Inclusion and Diversity Policy 2020-2024 sets out its overarching policy statement:

“Basildon Council is committed to actively promoting inclusion and diversity as a community leader, as a service provider and as an employer. The Council will embed inclusion and diversity through its core business and work to ensure that no person or group of people living, working or visiting the Borough will be directly or indirectly discriminated against.”

4. Inclusion and Diversity Strategy an Introduction

This strategy sets out Basildon Council’s approach in delivering its commitments set out in the Inclusion and Diversity Policy 2020-2024 . Its aim is to set out the Council’s vision, key activities and monitoring arrangement in order to tackle inequalities in Basildon Borough and promote inclusion, community cohesion, human rights and celebrate diversity.

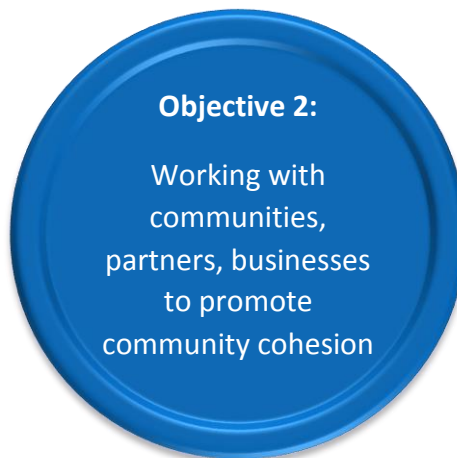
The strategy has been informed by community, staff and partner engagement, as well as research and data that indicated the rates of hate crime reports and the Basildon Council workforce profile.

The Inclusion and Diversity policy sets out three external (service user and community) objectives and two internal (workforce) objectives as follows:

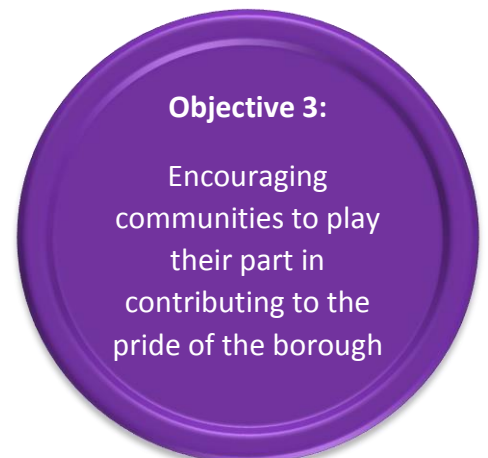
5. Council’s Objectives:



Objective 1:
Creating Inclusive Services and Spaces for All



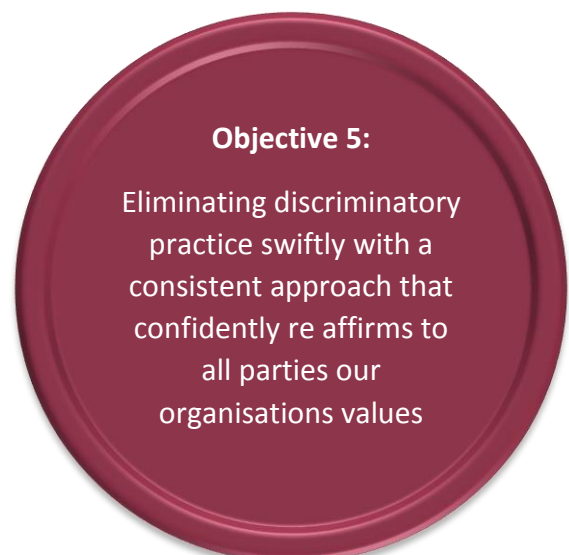
Objective 2:
Working with communities, partners, businesses to promote community cohesion



Objective 3:
Encouraging communities to play their part in contributing to the pride of the borough



Objective 4:
Be an employer committed to promoting inclusion and diversity within our workforce; and ensuring our workforce is reflective of the community we serve



Objective 5:
Eliminating discriminatory practice swiftly with a consistent approach that confidently re affirms to all parties our organisations values

a. Our Service Users

Objective 1: Creating Inclusive Services and Spaces for All

Basildon Borough's demographic profile is constantly changing, which means the needs of those living in the borough are likely to change. Basildon also needs to attract a wide range of communities from within the borough and outside the borough for us to have a thriving economy. Creating inclusive environments where everyone can participate or visit our Town Centres; and developing inclusive adaptable homes means that Basildon can become a hub where as many people as possible come to spend their money, live or work.

Delivering an inclusive service is not optional if we are to meet the needs of our service users and also run efficient and effective services. The Equality Act 2010 places a duty on all service providers to make reasonable adjustments to alter any practices that create 'substantial disadvantages' for people who use our facilities and services. Making our services inclusive means making sure anyone who needs them can use them as easily as possible.

Running effective and efficient services requires an understanding of our customers, what their service needs are and how to ensure seamless service provision for them. As the borough profile changes, it is likely that our customer's access needs to services may change. Basildon should keep abreast of this by having ongoing dialogue with service users to ensure our services are fit for purpose.

Our Priorities:

- Creating Inclusive Town Centres by embedding inclusive design into regeneration programmes and ensuring that planning policy and SEMPRA Homes take into account inclusive design
- Creating Inclusive Services by putting in place effective service user monitoring based on protected characteristics and using this information to shape the services; and by involving our diverse service users, communities and staff in service design, ongoing service review.

b. Our Stakeholders

Objective 2: Working with partners, businesses and communities to promote community cohesion

Community Cohesion, when quoted directly from the Equality Act 2010 is about "fostering good relations between communities". We want Basildon borough to be a place where all communities feel welcomed and connected to other communities in the borough. No one can impose cohesion on a community, but Basildon Council as a leader can help create the conditions in which local communities can flourish

According to the Local Government Association (LGA) Community Cohesion 2019 report. "Cohesive communities are about more than just preventing or addressing unacceptable behaviour and hate crime. For communities to flourish, there must be – and be seen to be – shared access to jobs and to services; a belief that all sections of the community have an equal stake in its success and its future, with no single part of the community perceived as undermining the fortunes of another; and a shared belief in a set of common values"

To create these conditions, Basildon Council needs other stakeholders such as its partners, businesses and the community to work collaboratively to make the borough a welcoming place where diversity, local culture and heritage is celebrated and a place where people feel secure and safe and are free from discrimination. Critical to this is knowing who exists in the community and who is arriving.

Our Priorities:

- Understanding Basildon Communities by improving our borough profile data and finding ways to identify and engage with our newly arrived communities.
- Celebrating Basildon Heritage and ensuring it represents our indigenous white British communities as well as our diverse existing and newly arrived communities
- Working with stakeholders, communities and partners to tackle disparity (this will include how we procure)
- Creating opportunities for better integration by enabling diverse communities to interact with each other in meaningful ways
- Ensuring that the council meets its commitment to tackling anti-Semitism and Islamophobia by promoting awareness and by embedding anti-discriminatory policy and practice into what we do
- Connecting communities as reflected in the Connecting Communities Strategy
- Working with Greater Essex partners to develop and support the Essex Diversity Awards and an Essex wide award for inclusive safe community venues.

c. Our Community: Our Priorities

Objective 3: Encouraging communities to play their part in contributing to the Pride of the Borough

Civic pride means different things to different people but in general, majority of those we engaged with from our Basildon community and workforce said it was a sense of community, where people were friendly and understood. To be understood people need to be heard and involved in decision making. This means allowing communities to be co-producers alongside Basildon Council. Co-production is based on a relationship in which the council and its communities seek solutions together and support each other in delivering positive outcomes. Co-production can bring both staff and citizens into the heart of the design and delivery of the public services they use, which can be incredibly empowering for all involved.

Our Basildon communities have also reflected on the Covid pandemic and how it presented a spirit of togetherness where neighbours looked after each other. Our communities tell us that this should never be lost. Being good neighbours help to contribute to the pride of the borough.

Our Priorities:

- Involving communities in decision making and creating innovative ways to reach out and receive feedback from communities that are not commonly heard
Encouraging good neighbourliness by harnessing the community spirit demonstrated during the height of the Covid Pandemic

d. Our People

This section sets out the Council's inclusion and diversity objectives as an employer which are contained with its **Workforce Strategy**

Objective 4: Be an employer committed to promoting inclusion and diversity within our workforce; and ensuring our workforce is reflective of the community we serve, at all levels

Our Priorities:

- a. Creating an inclusive workforce
- b. Create a great working environment for all
- c. Talent planning: Grow our own
- d. Creating an inclusive workplace
- e. Help all staff learn and improve
- f. Encourage employee wellbeing
- g. Address our skills gap

Objective 5: Tackling discriminatory practice swiftly with a consistent approach that confidently re affirms to all parties our organisations values

Our Priorities:

- a. Tackle all forms of bullying and harassment (Workforce Strategy 10.1, 10.2)
- b. Close the pay gaps:
- c. Support our new ways of working
- d. Grow an enabling workforce culture
- e. Review sickness absence triggers to ensure they do not breach legislative requirements (Equality Act 2010)

6. Allocation of the Inclusion and Diversity Strategy responsibilities

The Inclusion and Diversity Strategy will be delivered through a number of existing strategies and services which include but are not limited to:

- Connecting Communities Strategy
- Workforce Strategy
- Consultation and Engagement Policy
- Town Centre Regeneration Team
- Planning Policy Team
- Customer Services
- Communications Team
- Policy Team

7. Our Checks and balances

We want to ensure we do our best to get it right. To do this, monitoring of performance against delivery of the objectives set out in this strategy and the council’s overall inclusion and diversity arrangements will be managed through the council’s corporate performance management and assurance frameworks and associated arrangements.

The Council will work through robust governance structures with key stakeholders to drive and oversee the delivery of this strategy. This will include an internal Inclusion and Diversity Operational Group chaired by the relevant Director and working with the Community Diversity Council.