

Appendix One:

Luton Borough Council Equality Inclusion and Cohesion Charter 2016 - 2020

Luton Borough Council is committed to ensuring that all its citizens can thrive emotionally, mentally, physically and educationally; that it is a town of equal opportunity and is inclusive and cohesive for all the citizens, based on its principles of social justice for all. We are committed to the principles enshrined in the Equality Act 2010 and our commitments under the Public Sector Duty (Section 149) 2010. Throughout all key documents is the golden thread of the Council's vision, values and mission statement. A key value of the Council is to embrace equality and diversity, cohesion and inclusion, which is underpinned by this Charter.

The Council's corporate mission statement:
The needs of Luton's people will be first in everything we do.
The Council's vision:
Luton Borough Council will be a high performing, financially viable authority, delivering high quality services that improve health and opportunity for local people and protect the most vulnerable.
Together with our partners, we will help make Luton a place where everyone can learn and thrive and where business can grow and prosper.
Celebrating and building on Luton's rich history and its vibrant cultural mix, we will develop safe, strong, sustainable communities.
We will be responsive, accountable and innovative – a leader in what we do and a voice for our town.
The Council's values:
Aligned to the achievement of the vision are a set of corporate values that shape corporate behaviour and underpin the work of the Council in delivering services to citizens, customers and communities in challenging times
Embrace equality and diversity, cohesion and inclusion
Respect others
Act with integrity
Constantly strive for improvement
Focus on our customers and citizens

Social Equality, Inclusion and Cohesion:

Luton Borough Council agrees with the principles of a community based on social justice, the principles of equality, inclusion and cohesion. This is a society which develops and enables fair treatment for individuals and groups, taking account of disadvantages that may arise from differences such as economic inequality, class, gender, race, ethnicity, citizenship, religion, age, sexual orientation, disability or health. For the Council, social justice goes further than striving for equality of opportunity. It embraces a commitment to the achievement of greater equality of outcome through focussing on the capability that each of its citizens has to live a full and rewarding life.

Providing services

Luton, like much of the UK, continues to face unprecedented change and challenge due to the economic situation and the austerity measures of the national government, this has meant that the Council continues to transform how it commissions and delivers services to its citizens. Increasingly, this has led to services provided through partnership arrangements. As a result, the organisation has become smaller, with fewer people employed directly, but ensuring that its employee base continues to have a strong set of skills, capabilities and local knowledge.

Luton Borough Council will continue to be highly customer oriented, with an even stronger awareness of citizen and community needs. We recognise that with economic challenges the Council will also have to become a leaner and far more flexible organisation with simple, clearly understood procedures, able to respond quickly to resolve issues and problems. However, even with the financial challenges, the Council will continue to strive to improve services, working with all our partners to help achieve this objective.

Employment

Although local authorities are currently losing significant numbers of staff, the Council seeks to be an employer that people want to come and work for, and this will be achieved by complying with all legislation which supports anti-discriminatory practice, and by welcoming and encouraging job applicants from all backgrounds, supporting our employees to become the best they can be.

The Council has an 'Equality in Employment procedure'; this policy states its commitment to:

- Exceeding its requirements to promote equality of opportunity;
- Being at the forefront of valuing diversity in terms of our workforce;
- Taking proactive positive steps to make its workplace a fair environment;
- Working hard to reduce disadvantage, discrimination and inequality;
- Ensuring it meets legal requirements in accordance with the Equality Act 2010.

It will do this by;

- Recognising the unique contribution each employee can make and will promote a climate of respect for all, requiring employees to treat each other with fairness, dignity and respect.
- Oppose any form of discrimination against job applicants or employees on the grounds of age, disability, gender, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sexual orientation, marriage or civil partnership status, trade union activity or responsibility for dependants.
- Ensure all employment policies and practices, including recruitment and selection, learning and development, promotion and pay, are non-discriminatory, in line with relevant employment legislation and best practice.

Our Investment Framework for 2015 – 2035 continues the principles of the LBC Prospectus 2013 – 2016 with its guiding three point plan;

- To increase income from business growth
- To better equip residents of all ages to get jobs though investment in education and training
- To work efficiently with all the organisation mentioned (in the Prospectus) to ensure the most vulnerable in Luton are safe ,supported and healthy

Our Investment Framework sets out its core growth and business plan for the next 20 years with clear regeneration plans and better education and work opportunities for the town's citizens. It will also support strategies for improving public health and housing and supporting the elderly and vulnerable as well as improving the life chances of our children and young people.

Continuous improvement

Luton Borough Council, like all other local authorities, has to ensure that what it does and how it delivers services to the citizens of Luton is of an acceptable standard. We continually measure ourselves against other authorities and national guidelines, looking at where we are doing well and targeting those areas we need to improve. We do this so that we can see what difference we are making to individual lives and also the communities of Luton.

Narrowing the Gap

Like many places, Luton is a town of contrasts. LBC is committed to improving the lives of all its citizens and to help narrow the gap of social mobility.

Narrowing the gap on education and income will not only support better social and community outcomes but it also improves the likelihood of people playing a full and active part in society. The right education and skills enable people to fulfil their potential and earn a decent income. It will be important to both narrow the income gap within Luton compared to the regional and national averages as well as to narrow the gap between different groups such as men and women and sections of our communities.

There is a strong correlation between income levels and education both in terms of adults without high level qualifications or skills being low earners and children from poor backgrounds' ability to achieve at school. Narrowing the gap on educational attainment and proportions of children and young people not in education, employment or training between the most and least disadvantaged areas and families will contribute to a more equal, cohesive and inclusive Luton. Similarly, we need to focus on enabling the working age population to increase their skills to be able to secure higher skilled and paid work or to join or re-join the workforce.

Care and respect in our communities

An equal, cohesive and inclusive community is one where people demonstrate care and respect for each other. By this we mean that people do not discriminate against others because they are different and that people recognise the value that every person, no matter what their background, brings to society in Luton. Caring and respectful behaviour includes volunteering and community participation, being a good neighbour, welcoming new residents and co-workers, being polite, listening to the views of others, and helping to care for the area. There are strong links between a caring and respectful society and one which is safe.

Human Rights

Luton Borough Council adheres to the human rights of all its citizens. There are sixteen basic rights in the European Convention on Human Rights Act (1998). They don't only affect matters of life and death; they also affect our rights in everyday life: what we can say and do, our beliefs, our right to a fair trial and many other similar basic entitlements.

The Human Rights Act states that all public authorities must pay proper attention to citizen's rights when they are making decisions that affect them. This includes government departments, and the local authority or health authority, and also agencies like the police, the courts and private companies when carrying out public functions.

This is nothing new – respecting rights and balancing rights and responsibilities has always been an important part of public service in this country. The Human Rights Act makes sure that those in authority have to check that they do not ride roughshod over an individual's rights, even when they believe they are doing so for a good reason. They have to be careful about the balance they are striking and think hard about how they can cause the least possible harm to individuals.

Safeguarding

In Luton we want to protect the individual and safeguard our communities, we do this by having a strong sense of community inclusion and cohesion, strong anti social policies and services which support those affected by crime, including hate crime, or those affected by domestic violence.