

Policy & Resources Committee Meeting	
Meeting Date	13 July 2026
Report Title	Corporate Equality Scheme 2024-2028 update report
EMT Lead	Lisa Fillery – Director of Resources
Head of Service	Stephanie Curtis – Head of Policy and Transformation
Lead Officer	Janet Dart – Policy & Engagement Officer
Classification	Open
Recommendation	1) Members of the Policy & Resources Committee are invited to note and discuss the Corporate Equality Scheme 2024-2028 update at Appendix I. 2) Members of the Policy & Resources Committee are invited to note that the Government are planning to bring in legislation which will require local authorities to adopt the Socio-Economic Duty. This is being monitored and Members will be updated when statutory guidance is available.

1 Purpose of Report and Executive Summary

- 1.1 The report at Appendix I provides an update on the progress of the objectives and actions in the Corporate Equality Scheme 2024-2028.
- 1.2 Out of 32 actions, 29 are rated as green, and are either completed or are ongoing due to being part of regular service delivery. Three are rated as amber (changed and/or timeline revised, but on track for delivery), 0 are rated red (on hold, significantly behind schedule with a risk of non-delivery or not started).
- 1.3 It is good practice to review the Corporate Equality Scheme to monitor the progress on actions, noting which items are completed, on target for completion or are at risk on non-completion.

2 Background, Context and Proposals

- 2.1 In July 2024 the Policy & Resources Committee adopted the Corporate Equality Scheme 2024-2028 which can be viewed at Appendix II. The scheme sets out four objectives, which aim to make Swale a fairer place:
 - Supporting integration and cohesion in our local communities - by fostering good relations between different groups.
 - Supporting vulnerable residents - by supporting Swale's more vulnerable residents, particularly those with a disability.

- Ensuring easy, clear and convenient access to our services - by improving the council's customer care and working with communities to make services more responsive to the needs of Swale's residents.
- Promoting equality as a local employer - by ensuring that those policies and practices that affect council staff are fair and promote equality of outcome.

2.2 Public authorities in England and Wales, which are subject to the specific duties of the Equality Act 2010, are expected to review and/or replace their equality objectives every four years.

2.3 The General Equality Duty is set out in Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010. In summary, those subject to the Act (including local authorities) must in the exercise of their functions, have regard to the need to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act;
- advance opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not; and
- foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

2.4 The duty covers nine protected characteristics – age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership*, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation. These are also known as protected characteristics. *The duty covers marriage and civil partnership but not for all aspects of the duty.

2.5 The specific duties require a public authority to publish specific items of information:

- Evidence of analysis that they have undertaken to establish whether their policies or practices have (or would) further the aims of the general equality duty;
- details of the information that they considered in carrying out this analysis;
- details of engagement that they undertook with people who they considered to have an interest in furthering the aims of the general duty; and
- prepare and publish equality objectives.

- 2.6 The Council has sought to meet these requirements by publishing a Corporate Equality Scheme 2024-2026 which incorporates all of the elements of paragraph 2.5.
- 2.7 The socio-economic duty (SED) (Section 1 of the UK Equality Act 2010) requires public bodies to consider how strategic decisions, such as budget setting or service changes, impact people suffering from socio-economic disadvantage. Currently active in Scotland and Wales, it aims to reduce inequalities in health, education, and income. It is not yet legally enforced for public bodies in England, but the 2024 Labour government has committed to enacting it.
- 2.8 Section 1 of the Equality Act 2010 introduces a socio-economic duty on public bodies states: *“An authority to which this section applies must, when making decisions of a strategic nature about how to exercise its functions, have due regard to the desirability of exercising them in a way that is designed to reduce the inequalities of outcome which result from socio-economic disadvantage.”*
- 2.9 The socio-economic duty requires public bodies to adopt transparent and effective measures to address the inequalities that result from differences in occupation, education, place of residence, health, crime rates or other matters associated with socio-economic disadvantage. However, successive governments have refused to enact it as law. In 2025 the government launched a public call for evidence/consultation on implementing the SED in England. Draft statutory guidance is due to be consulted on in 2026 activation of the SED potentially will take place late summer or autumn 2026.
- 2.10 The Policy & Communications Team are monitoring developments to the proposed changes in legislation and will update members further when statutory guidance becomes available.

3 Recommendations

- 3.1 Members of the Policy & Resources Committee are invited to note and discuss the Corporate Equality Scheme 2024-2028 update at Appendix I.
- 3.2 Members of the Policy & Resources Committee are invited to note that the Government are planning to bring in legislation which will require local authorities to adopt the Socio-Economic Duty. This is being monitored and Members will be further updated when statutory guidance is available.

4 Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

- 4.1 For recommendation 1, as this is largely a report for information, there are no alternative options proposed.
- 4.2 For recommendation 2, the information provided on the proposed change to legislation, which will require local authorities to adopt the Socio-Economic Duty, does not require a decision at this stage. Therefore, there are no alternative options proposed.

5 Consultation Undertaken or Proposed

- 5.1 The Senior Management Team were consulted to obtain updates on each of the actions in the Corporate Equality Scheme 2024-2028.

6 Implications

Issue	Implications
Corporate Plan	The Corporate Equality Scheme will support all five objectives in the Corporate Plan, and numerous cross-references to the Corporate Plan have been included within the text of the Scheme adopted in 2024.
Financial, Resource and Property	No specific implications have been identified at this stage.
Legal, Statutory and Procurement	As a public authority, we are required by statute to publish and review equality objectives and associated information by the Equality Act 2010.
Crime and Disorder	None envisaged at this stage. Some of the key actions in the Scheme refer to existing activity being undertaken by the Swale Community Safety Partnership.
Environment and Climate/Ecological Emergency	No specific implications have been identified at this stage.
Health and Wellbeing	No specific implications have been identified at this stage.
Safeguarding of Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults	No specific implications have been identified at this stage.
Risk Management and Health and Safety	No specific implications have been identified at this stage.
Equality and Diversity	The Corporate Equality Scheme 2024-2028 is concerned with the Council's obligations under the Equality Act 2010.
Privacy and Data Protection	No specific implications have been identified at this stage.
Local Government Reorganisation	No specific implications have been identified at this stage. However, there may be actions that need to be carried out as part of the preparation for Local Government Reorganisation.

7 Appendices

- 7.1 The following documents are to be published with this report and form part of the report:

Appendix I – Corporate Equality Scheme 2024-2028 update report

Appendix II – [Corporate Equality Scheme 2024-2028](#)

8 Background Papers

None.