



Race Equality Scheme

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Policy Statement

DIVERSITY AND EQUALITY

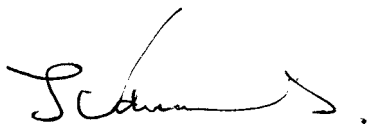
Swale Borough Council supports the principles of equal opportunity in employment and in the provision of services. The Council opposes all forms of unlawful or unfair discrimination on the grounds of colour, race, nationality, ethnic or national origin, sex, marital status, sexual orientation, disability, religious belief and age. The Council opposes harassment of any nature.

The Council believes that it is in its best interests, and those who work in it, to make sure that the people, talents and skills available throughout the community are considered when employment and development opportunities arise.

As an employer we will take every possible step to ensure that individuals are treated equally and fairly and that decision on recruitment, selection, training and career development opportunities are based solely on objective and job related criteria.

As a provider and commissioner of services, we will ensure that all enquiries and requests for service are treated equally and there is no discrimination against any group or individual.

Any behaviour resulting in unfavourable treatment will be considered contrary to our policy and will be a matter for disciplinary action.



J C Edwards
Chief Executive
October 2003.

Executive Summary

Background

1. Swale Borough Council has produced a Race Equality Scheme as part of its specific duties under the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 (RRA). The Council is obliged to comply with the new duties under the RRA with effect from 31st May 2002.
2. The aim of the Council's Race Equality Scheme is to ensure that all activity undertaken by the Council takes account of the diverse community it serves and the diversity of its employees. The Scheme seeks to eliminate discrimination in the Council's day-to-day practices by ensuring that when the Council develops policies and practices, they are assessed in terms of their impact on black and minority ethnic groups.
3. The Council's Race Equality Scheme is essentially an Action Plan for the next three years to ensure that the Council acts in line with its commitments on racial equality.

Responsibility

4. All Council employees irrespective of role, including agency staff, seconded staff and partnership staff working under special contract, have a responsibility to work towards successful implementation of the Scheme by ensuring that all work undertaken complies with the Council's responsibilities as a public body under the terms of the RRA.
5. In order to implement the Race Equality Scheme successfully and to embed race equality effectively within all strands of Council's business, there must be clear accountability for this area of work. As such, the Council has set up a Race Equality Impact Team. This Team will be made up of:

Strategic Director
HR Advisor
Chief Internal Auditor
Service Unit Manager

It is incumbent upon all members of the Senior Management Team to ensure that there is no discrimination of any kind in the delivery of their services either directly or indirectly. Equality issues must be seen as an integral part of the Council's organisational culture.

6. The Director of Corporate Services has overall responsibility for implementing the requirements of the Race Equality Scheme across Swale Borough Council and can be contacted at the Swale House, Sittingbourne, ME10 3HT.

Review of Policies and Consultation Arrangements

7. The Race Equality Scheme requires the Council to consult with community groups and assess the impact of its policies and practices on black and minority ethnic groups. In cases where the impact may be considered disadvantageous, the Council has a duty to seek to remedy the situation. In order to do this, key questions must be asked regarding the Council's policy and practice development as follows:

- Is there evidence that some racial groups could be adversely affected?
- Is there any public concern, especially from minority ethnic communities about possible discrimination?

8. When policies are revised or new policies drafted, the policy maker will need to undertake an equality impact assessment in order to answer these questions. Four key areas to be considered in this assessment are:

- Will the proposed policy lead to an increased or decreased level of participation in services by black and minority ethnic groups?
- Is there evidence that in the area affected by the proposed policy, different groups have different needs, experiences, and/or priorities? If so, have these matters been addressed?
- Is there an opportunity to promote equality of opportunity or good race relations via the proposed policy? If so, has this opportunity been clearly taken?
- Are there indications following consultation with relevant black and minority ethnic groups that the proposed policy may create problems? If so, have these concerns been addressed?

Employment and Training

10. In order to meet its employment duties under the RRA, Swale Borough Council will monitor by ethnicity and gender:

- The numbers of employees in post and their grades
- Applicants for employment (including internal promotion)
- Employees who apply for training and employees who receive training
- Employees who benefit or suffer detriment as a result of the performance assessment procedure
- Employees involved in grievance procedures
- Employees subject to disciplinary procedures
- Employees who resign

11. Under the RRA, Swale Borough Council has a specific duty to train staff to enable them to meet the general duty to promote race equality from 31st May 2002. Appropriate training arrangements will be included in training plans for 2003/04 and 2004/05. The Council must also ensure that all employees are made aware of the duties contained in the Race Equality

Scheme and this work is on-going and is part of the continuous performance improvement cycle required by the specific duties of the RRA.

Implementation

12. All Council employees will be involved in the successful Implementation of the Race Equality Scheme either through direct involvement in impact assessments or by taking part in training and awareness raising to ensure that equality issues are embedded in the organisation's culture.

13. The Race Equality Impact Team will report findings and proposed solutions to and identified problems to Management Team following Assessment of policies etc. in each area of Council activity. This information will be reported to the Executive on an annual basis.

14. This information will be published on the Council's website and will be passed to minority ethnic groups in the Community.

Further Information

15. A copy of the full version of the Council's Race Equality Scheme is available on the Council's website www.swale.gov.uk. Hard copies can also be obtained on request from the Human Resources Section.

RACE EQUALITY SCHEME

INTRODUCTION

Our Vision

1. Swale Borough Council's (SBC) equality vision for its customers and employees is 'equal access for all'. To enable SBC to turn this vision into reality we must promote equality in the policies we develop, the services we provide and the delivery of these services. We are committed to making racial equality an integral part of what we do and how we do it.

Our Commitment

2. We are committed to making sure we value the contribution of staff enabling all to realise their full potential and recognise and harness the benefits that diversity can bring.

3. We are committed to ensuring that our policies and services promote equality of opportunity for all within our community and will oppose all forms of unlawful or unfair discrimination on the grounds of race, colour, sex, ethnicity or nationality.

What we want to achieve

4. SBC is committed at the highest level to the active promotion of equality and good community relations by making sure that the culture, work and employment practices, policymaking and provision of services at SBC reflects the needs of the community.

5. All women and men, regardless of background are able to access services easily and feel confident that they can approach SBC (and any of its service providers) for help and advice without fear of discriminatory practices or prejudice. (see footnote ¹)

Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000

6. SBC sees the Race Relations (Amendment) Act (RRAA) as a tool in helping us to achieve these objectives and ensuring that our decision/policy making and service delivery is inclusive taking into account the diversity of our current and future customers and their individual cultural needs.

7. The RRAA gives SBC (as a public authority) a general duty to promote race equality. This general duty requires SBC to have "due regard to the need":

- a. to eliminate unlawful racial discrimination; and
- b. to promote equality of opportunity and good relations between persons of different racial groups.

¹ Definitions of Discrimination are provided at Annex D of this Scheme

8. SBC is also subject to the “specific duties”. These require us to publish a Race Equality Scheme showing how we intend to fulfil our obligations and put in place arrangements for ethnic monitoring of employment functions. These duties will ensure that race equality issues are integral to our policy decision-making and service delivery.

9. This document is SBC’s Race Equality Scheme document. The document will explain how we are and will continue to implement these duties and the obligations for us all as policy makers and service providers/commissioners as well as our responsibilities as employers.

10. For our customers, this scheme will tell you how to complain if you think we are not complying with the RRAA.

WHAT WE DO

11. SBC is a local authority, which has a wide range of responsibilities and these are explained in detail at Annex B.

WHO ARE WE?

12. SBC employs approximately 380 staff who are based predominantly in Sittingbourne with representation at both Sheerness and Faversham.

13. The Council operates under executive political management arrangements. The Executive has a wide-ranging leadership role. In particular, it is responsible for leading the community planning process and the search for continuous improvement in service delivery for the benefit of the Swale community. It leads the preparation of the Council’s policies and budget to support this and is responsible for taking in year decisions of resources and priorities to deliver the Council’s vision, objectives, policies and budget. It also seeks to form partnerships with other agencies and sectors to address the local needs of the Swale area. Management Team are responsible for implementing the policy framework established by the Council and to ensure that appropriate level of resources and management structures are in place to achieve the council’s vision and mission.

14. The Council is broken down into three ‘Directorates’ and the structure of the Council can be found at Annex A.

HOW WE WILL COMPLY WITH THE GENERAL DUTY

15. The general duty is set out in paragraph 7 above and SBC is committed to meeting its obligations. We will use the specific duties (see paragraph 8) including the commitments made in this Scheme to ensure that race equality is a core issue in our policy and decision-making and the delivery of services as well as in the way we manage and develop all staff.

16. We will work to eliminate unlawful racial discrimination and to promote equality of opportunity and good relations between different racial groups by using our existing structures, systems and procedures and putting in place new ones as and where necessary.

INTERNAL ARRANGEMENTS TO ALLOW US TO COMPLY WITH THE SPECIFIC DUTIES

17. We will set up a Race Equality Impact Team (REIT) to co-ordinate action to ensure that SBC complies with its obligations under the RRAA.

18. This team will be accountable to Members and Management Team and will be responsible for driving the following work:-

- To identify new systems and procedures as necessary to ensure that work across SBC takes place in time and with transparency;
- To implement a programme of training on new equality duties;
- To begin to draw together equality related data;
- To consult with external ethnic minority groups for advice and guidance.

HOW WE WILL COMPLY WITH THE SPECIFIC DUTIES

19. The Commission for Racial Equality's (CRE) Code of Practice proposes that a Race Equality Scheme should show how we plan to meet our statutory duties under section 71(1) of the RRAA in particular sections 2(2) and (3) of the Race Relations Act (Statutory Duties) Order 2001, which say the following

- 2(2) A Race Equality Scheme shall state, in particular –**
- (a) those of its functions and policies, or proposed policies, which that person has assessed as relevant to its performance of the duty imposed by section 71(1) of the Race Relations Act; and**
 - (b) that person's arrangements for -**
 - (i) assessing and consulting on the likely impact of its proposed policies on the promotion of race equality**
 - (ii) monitoring of its policies for any adverse impact on the promotion of race equality;**
 - (iii) publishing the results of such assessments and consultation as are mentioned in sub-paragraph (i) and of such monitoring as is mentioned in sub-paragraph (ii);**
 - (iv) ensuring public access to information and services which it provides; and**
 - (v) training staff in connection with the duties imposed by section 71(1) of the Race Relations Act and this Order.**
- (3) Such a person shall, within a period of three years from 31st May 2002, and within each further period of three years, review the assessment referred to in paragraph (2)(a).**

ASSESSING RELEVANCE

20. The general duty applies only where it is relevant. The CRE's statutory Code of Practice defines relevance as being "about the extent to which a function or policy affects people, as members of the public and as employees of the authority". Race equality will clearly be more relevant to some of our

functions than others. In certain areas, race equality will have little or no relevance.

21. The CRE's Code of Practice suggests that "to decide whether a function or policy is relevant to the general duty to promote race equality, we should consider whether that function or policy could affect different racial groups in different ways".

22. To enable us to decide on 'relevance' we have drawn together a comprehensive list of our current strategies and policies and these are shown at Annex E.

23. SBC will review its work/policies and identify whether the work has a high, moderate or low/nil effect on the public. The REIT will work together with those within the functions to assess whether

- There is any evidence that the function may be affecting some racial groups differently or there has been concern expressed that this might be the case.

24. SBC has adopted this approach to ensure that we have "due regard" to the general duty. As the CRE explains: "*due regard ... means that the weight given to race equality should be proportionate to its relevance to a particular function. In practice this kind of proportionate approach may mean giving greater consideration and resources to those functions that have most effect on the public.*"

25. Following this assessment SBC will decide on the policies, schemes or services that should be subject to full Race Equality Impact Assessments over the next three years. Any decision taken to undertake a full REIA does not mean that we view the policy, scheme or service to have had an adverse impact but that it is an opportunity to review our practices in particular areas that are highly relevant to our duty under the RRAA.

26. The following gives an example of the questions that will be asked of each policy, service or scheme when they are being screened for their impact on racial discrimination:-

- 1. Is there any evidence of higher or lower participation or take up by different ethnic groups?**
- 2. Is there any evidence that different ethnic groups have different needs, experiences, issues and priorities in relation to the policy area?**
- 3. Is there any evidence to show that particular policies create problems specific to different groups?**
- 4. Is there any evidence of public concern that the function or policy in question is causing discrimination?**
- 5. Is there any to opportunity promote race equality by altering a policy or working with other groups or the wider community?**

27. The following provides an outline of the actions we would expect to take as a result of the assessment of a function.

Action	HIGH	MODERATE	LOW
Monitoring	<p>Ethnic Monitoring of policies schemes and services to be carried out.</p> <p>Awareness of ethnic make up of major customer groups.</p> <p>Publication of results</p>	<p>Where data gathered, ethnic monitoring dimension to be included where appropriate and sensible.</p> <p>To consider ethnic monitoring where data not gathered currently.</p> <p>Publication of results</p>	<p>Where data gathered, ethnic monitoring dimension to be included where this is sensible.</p> <p>No requirement for ethnic monitoring where data not gathered currently.</p> <p>Publication of results</p>
Public Access to Information	Commitment to follow communications best practice Check scheme or service delivery channels to ensure that these promote equality of opportunity		
Staff Training	Specific training compulsory.	<p>On line training compulsory.</p> <p>Specific training available.</p>	On line training available
Annual Reporting Requirements	Yearly report to MT on race related activities and new policies.	Re confirm status and flag up new issues annually to MT.	Re confirm status and flag up new issues annually to MT.
Race Equality Impact Assessments	Assess 1 or 2 major impact policy areas annually		

IMPACT OF PROPOSED POLICIES

28. Where new policies, schemes or services are proposed, we will review their likely impact and where there is no equality issue involved there will be no further action. If there is a likelihood of moderate or high impact then the policy, scheme or service will be screened to determine whether or not it is relevant.

29. In all cases we will continue to ensure that the duty to promote race equality will be given key consideration in policy/decision making and service delivery as previously described in this scheme.

PUBLICATION OF IMPACT ASSESSMENTS

30. We will publish the outcome of any race equality impact assessments annually as part of our Local Performance Plan. This will include:-

- The aims of the policy, scheme or service;
- Outcome of the assessment highlighting any adverse impact;
- Monitoring data and research;
- Details of any consideration given to mitigate any adverse impact;
- Details of any consideration given to alternative ways of achieving the promotion of race equality.

CONSULTATION

31. We will make this scheme available for comment and consultation on Swale Borough Council's website and will seek the views of the Swale Minorities Policing Panel on the contents of this policy and any future impact assessments to ensure that there is representation from within the community on the cultural needs of diverse groups.

32. In addition we will continue to undertake the following activities:-

- Statistical analysis of ethnic monitoring data;
- Satisfaction surveys (analysed on a racial group basis).

PUBLIC ACCESS TO INFORMATION

33. Swale Borough Council is committed to communicating effectively with its customers, employees and the community as a whole. We will review how we can ensure that all hard to reach groups are able to access information.

EMPLOYMENT

34. Swale Borough Council has a specific duty in relation to employment. This is set out in Section 5 (2) and (3) of the Race Relations Act (Statutory Duties) Order 2001.

- 5(2) It shall be the duty of such a person to monitor, by reference to the racial groups to which they belong
- (a) the numbers of -
 - (i) staff in post, and
 - (ii) applicants for employment, training and promotion, from each such group, and
 - (b) where that person has 150 or more full time staff, the numbers of staff from each such group who
 - (i) receive training
 - (ii) benefit or suffer detriment as a result of its performance assessment procedures;
 - (iii) are involved in grievance procedures
 - (iv) are the subject of disciplinary procedures or
 - (v) cease employment with that person
- (3) Such a person shall publish annually the results of its monitoring under paragraph (2).

35. Swale Borough Council has established computerised systems to ensure that the monitoring under section 5(2) of the RRAA can be carried out effectively.

36. We will implement a series of training on diversity issues to ensure that line managers are trained in their responsibilities and that ethnic minority staff have good access to training and development and promotion opportunities.

37. The current level of ethnic representation within SBC's workforce represents that in the wider community i.e. 1%.

38. We are committed to ensuring that our employment practices are not discriminatory and that all staff are given the opportunity to develop and fulfil their potential.

39. The ethnic classification system used by SBC in monitoring employment is in line with National Census 2001 classifications (see Annex C).

Staff in Post

40. SBC undertook an ethnic survey of all its staff so that it can monitor the composition of staff by ethnic origin. The survey is voluntary although we do encourage staff to complete the survey.

Recruitment

41. All external recruitment is monitored by, amongst other things, ethnic origin, to ensure that there are no stages of the recruitment process (applications, shortlisting, interviews, offers of employment and take up of employment), which are potentially or actually discriminatory.

Promotion/Progression

42. Whilst promotion opportunities at SBC are limited, we will monitor the processes and procedures used to ensure that there are no discriminatory practices.

Performance Appraisal

43. SBC currently analyses the outcome of its performance review scheme by gender, part time working and grade. We will continue to do this but will in future include ethnic origin as part of that analysis.

Grievance/Discipline

44. SBC has a very low level of disciplinary hearings and grievances and for that reason there has been no monitoring of these processes. The position will be reviewed annually and reported to Management Team and the appropriate committee.

Access to Training

45. SBC does not currently monitor the training provided to individuals by their ethnic origin. We will review our processes to ensure this is incorporated into our reporting mechanism.

Dismissals and other reasons for leaving

46. SBC currently collects but does not publish data on dismissals and other reasons for leaving by ethnic origin. In the case of dismissals, the numbers are small and could compromise confidentiality of individuals.

Training and Awareness on the duty to promote race equality

47. SBC will implement a training programme for staff appropriate to their grade and range of responsibilities. This training will include general awareness of this Scheme and what is required of SBC. A copy of the scheme will be published on the SBC Intranet.

48. This Race Equality Scheme will be published annually as part of our Local Performance Plan and will include information on the screening of functions together with any equality impact assessments and monitoring undertaken.

Complaints about failure to comply with the Specific Duties

49. Under the RRAA, the Commission for Racial Equality has the power to enforce the specific duties imposed on listed public authorities, including Swale Borough Council. Individuals do not have the right to take legal action against a public authority that has not fulfilled its specific duties. It is open to individuals, community organisations, Trades Unions and others to notify the CRE if they are concerned that a public authority has failed to comply with its specific duty.

50. SBC however hopes that you will feel able to raise any concerns directly with it. Complaints or concerns should be sent to the Monitoring Officer, Swale Borough Council, Swale House, East Street, Sittingbourne, Kent ME10 3HT. Complaints should be in writing. Any complaint will be acknowledged (in writing) in three working days. An internal investigation will be carried out by the REIT into the complaint and the REIT will respond within one month of receipt setting out the nature and results of their investigation and any action which SBC will take. It will also inform the complainant of the procedure for pursuing the complaint further (eg. With the CRE).

51. Internal complaints will be dealt with through internal procedures e.g. grievance procedure, Protected Disclosure Policy.

October 2003

CHIEF EXECUTIVE

- Best Value
- Customer Services Centre
- Community Regeneration
 - Sports Development
 - Economic Development
 - Tourism Development
 - Subsidiarity
 - Community Services
- Mayor's Office
- Leaders Support
- Performance Management
- Emergency Planning
- Internal Audit

DIRECTOR OF CORPORATE SERVICES, GOVERNANCE & SCRUTINY

- Human Resources
 - Human Resources
 - Training & Development
 - Health & Safety
- Democratic & Electoral Services
 - Committees
 - Elections
 - Post Room
- Legal (and Admin Support)
 - Legal Section
 - Word Processing
 - Land Charges
- ICT Services
 - Analysis/Programming
 - E-Government Development
 - ICT Support
 - Design Studio
 - Print Room
 - Central Admin
- Financial & Revenue Services
 - Accountancy
 - Exchequer Section
 - Technical Support
 - Cashiers
 - Council Tax
 - Housing Benefits

DIRECTOR OF DEVELOPMENT & ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES

- Planning & Building Control
 - Building Control
 - Local Plans and Conservation
 - Development Control
 - Planning
 - Enforcement
 - Planning Admin
- Engineering
 - Engineers
 - Hackney Carriages
 - Car Parks
 - Contract Management
 - Landscapes
 - Park Rangers
 - Harbour
 - Resorts
 - Estates
 - Building Maintenance
- Environmental
 - Pollution
 - Food/Health & Safety
 - Cleansing
- Housing
 - Homeless Section
 - Enforcement
 - Renovation Grants
 - Stay-Put
- Community & Environmental Admin

Swale Borough Council Functions

This annex provides details of the functions carried out by Swale Borough Council. These policies and procedures used by these functions will be reviewed for impact in line with the requirements of the Scheme.

a. HOUSING

Homelessness and Housing Advice Service

A statutory service for the promotion of measures to prevent homelessness and the assessment and housing of priority categories of homeless applicants in accordance with legal procedures and codes of guidance. Temporary accommodation for homeless clients is provided whilst applications are assessed. A Register of applicants for social housing is operated on behalf of the Council by SHA. Provision of housing advice is contracted to Housing Aid.

Housing Development

This service undertakes the assessment of affordable housing needs throughout Swale and secures funding and housing schemes via Housing Association partners and the H. Corporation to meet priority needs.

Grants and Stayput

A range of financial assistance is targeted to priority categories of dwellings and householders in accordance with legal criteria and the Council's annual grants programme. The works include repairs for health and safety needs; adaptations for disabled occupants. The Stayput service provides additional support/ assistance for the needy elderly and disabled requiring home repairs/ improvements. All works are closely monitored for cost, quality and client satisfaction purposes.

Housing Conditions and Home Energy Conservation

A range of statutory enforcement and advice services are provided to regulate and promote healthy housing and built environment conditions, remedy defective private drainage, regulate caravan site conditions, monitor/ promote energy conservation at home and reduce fuel poverty.

b. COMMUNITY REGENERATION UNIT

Community regeneration incorporates a range of services primarily concerned with economic and social improvement through partnership working with other agencies and the business and resident community. Whilst the work of the unit seeks to provide a holistic approach to regeneration with all the strands linking together, work is divided into key areas.

Economic Development undertakes projects to promote the economic well being of the Borough through promoting growth and diversity within the local

economy and encouraging greater access to the new employment opportunities generated amongst the local population. The service incorporates a whole range of strands, including Tourism Development, Rural Regeneration, infrastructure development, inward investment and education skills.

Community Development is similarly complex and in addition to undertaking project work to support some of the most deprived communities in the region, the section provides services, relating to crime and disorder, community safety, LA21, cultural development and external funding. Responsibility is also taken for the management of the Council operated community facilities and the organisation and running of major events and festivals.

Sports Development promotes healthy lifestyles through encouraging participation of residents in a while range of sporting activities.

The unit is responsible for servicing the **Local Strategic Partnership** and its working groups, has recently appointed a **Subsidiarity Officer** to look at the potential for the devolution of services to local communities.

c. AUDIT SERVICES

Internal Audit is an in-house review service that primarily reports upon the adequacy of systems and procedures within the Council to safeguard assets and interests and to ensure adherence to policies, regulations and legislation.

Internal Audit system reviews are scheduled in accordance to a strategic and annual audit plan. During the annual planning process consideration is given to major developments that might significantly affect organisational business risk and key controls. Each review involves ascertaining, documenting, testing, evaluating and reporting upon a defined area of Council activity.

Additional allowance is made within the Audit Plan for providing ad-hoc audit support and advice on risk and control issues arising, for example, on the development of new systems, major contracts or projects, and for undertaking contingency work and special investigations into potential fraud, theft, corruption or loss to the Council.

d. ICT SERVICES

ICT Network and Help Desk Service

The provision of a network and helpdesk service to 350 clients throughout the Council's 7 Service Units and support services, ensuring the system is available at required times and that optimum performance is achieved by the systems. Full security procedures are maintained with system back-ups being taken on a daily basis to ensure system integrity.

ICT Development Service

To provide a good quality, cost effective I.T. Consultancy, systems analysis, design and production service to ensure that our clients obtain best value from

I.T. systems in order to meet their own operational and legislative requirements.

Graphic Design and Printing

These sections provide internal support through the operation of the commercial-standard Print Room; supply and maintenance of satellite photocopiers; graphic design of all documents and word processing.

e. ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES

Environmental Services aim to deliver statutory and discretionary front line services that promote quality of life and public health at optimum efficiency. In house staff and contractors deliver services. The functions of the service unit are currently arranged in 3 discrete service areas:

Pollution Control - responsible for both reactive and proactive work in relation to noise, air, land and water pollution.

Cleansing services – providing waste management, pest control, street cleaning, dog control, public convenience and borough warden services.

Commercial services – responsible for food safety, health and safety at work, and animal welfare licensing.

In undertaking enforcement activities, consideration is given to the adopted enforcement policy and the Governments Good Enforcement Concordat.

f. FINANCE AND REVENUE SERVICES

Finance

This Unit provides a key support service to both Members and Officers of the Council. The Financial Services Manager has statutory responsibilities and powers to administer the “financial administration” on behalf of the Council. On a day-to-day basis the Unit provides support to all the other Units and Management Team to achieve the Council’s Corporate Objectives.

Within the Unit the Exchequer Section manages the payroll function for all staff and members. Similarly it manages the prompt and accurate payment to the Council’s creditors for the provision of supplies and services. The Section also manages the collection of debts due the Council taking recovery action when necessary.

Another Section manages and accounts for the treasury management function of the Council, the insurances, VAT and other taxation matters.

The least tangible service is the financial advice and strategic financial planning. This embraces the statutory role mentioned above, which requires sound financial administration of the Council’s affairs, compliance with accounting codes of practice, maintaining adequate financial systems and records accountable to the Council’s External Auditors. The tangible

elements of this part of the Units work is the collation and presentation of the Capital and Revenue Budgets, the closing of the “accounts” for external audit inspection and publication of the Statement of Accounts.

Revenue

The Revenue part of the Unit has three distinct parts. The first part is the operation of the Council’s three cash offices situated at Swale House, Sittingbourne and at the two District Offices at Faversham and Sheerness on the Isle of Sheppey. Staff within this section also handles the banking for cash received over the counter at the cash offices and via the post. As part of the bank reconciliation payments by credit card, direct debits and standing orders are also taken into account.

The second section handles the billing, recovery and administration of the collection of Council Tax and the National Non-Domestic Rates, more commonly known as Business Rates.

The third section is the administration of Benefits for rented accommodation (rent and council tax benefit), and owner-occupiers in respect of council tax benefit only. This section is also present at the two District Offices as well as at Swale House. In terms of budget and staffing this section is the biggest service provider by the Council.

g. DEMOCRATIC AND ELECTORAL SERVICES

The section services all meetings of the Council, the Executive, Committees, Groups and Working Parties and carries out the resultant administrative work and making of statutory orders.

Regulatory Services

The Unit undertakes, on behalf of the Electoral Registration Officer, the maintenance of both the Full and Edited versions of the Register of Electors, the absent voter lists and Overseas Electors. On behalf of the Returning Officer, in his variety of capacities, the Unit conducts all elections whether at European, Parliamentary, County, Borough, Town or Parish level, together with the review of electoral boundaries.

h. LEGAL AND ADMIN SUPPORT SECTION

Legal

The legal section acts in litigation on behalf of the Council and undertakes conveyancing of the Council's properties, together with carrying out local land charge searches on behalf of prospective purchasers of property within the Borough.

Admin Support

The section operates on a support basis for all other Units of the Council in providing the following services:- Post Room, for sorting all incoming and

dispatching all outgoing post, together with associated services, including Messengers and Couriers.

i. PLANNING AND BUILDING CONTROL

Development Control

The Development Control function primarily relates to the consideration and determination of planning applications for development proposals in Swale. The process involves very extensive consultation with statutory consultees, Parish Councils, amenity societies, local residents etc. The Council strongly encourages potential applicants to discuss their proposals informally with planning staff prior to submission.

Applicants have a right of appeal to the Secretary of State if they are dissatisfied with the Council's decision on their application.

Planning enforcement seeks to prevent unauthorised development and to ensure that all new development is carried out in accordance with the approved details.

Local Planning and Conservation

The Council has a duty to prepare and subsequently review a statutory Local Plan for the whole of the Borough. This involves a series of prescribed stages, including a Public Local Inquiry chaired by an independent Inspector. Development Briefs and other forms of Supplementary Planning Guidance are also prepared and, once again, involve extensive consultation with external agencies, local residents etc.

The conservation function includes advising on proposals involving listed buildings and development in conservation areas. The Council also reviews and designates conservation areas, gives grant aid for essential restoration and enhancement works and seeks to prevent historic buildings becoming "at risk".

Building Control

The Building Control function is a statutory responsibility of the Council to ensure that the current technical performance standards are met with regard to the health, safety and welfare of people in and about building within the control of the Council.

The Building Control Service under the Building Act 1984, administers, or has responsibility for the following:

- The enforcement of the Building Regulations and related legislation
- The control of Demolition work
- The control of defective premises
- The control of dangerous structures
- The processing of Initial Notices from approved inspectors
- The registering of replacement window notices

- The control of disabled access in and about buildings
- The control of connection to sewers

I. HUMAN RESOURCES

Human Resources provide advice, guidance and support on a Strategic and Operational basis to the organisation. The HR section is committed to ensuring that the organisation complies with the requirements of employment and other relevant UK law and monitors the make up of the workforce in accordance with statutory requirements.

j. ENGINEERING SERVICES

Highways

The major responsibility for the maintenance of highways rests with the Kent County Council, which is the statutory highway authority. This duty is discharged through the “Kent Highways Partnership Agreement”, which in effect sub contracts the delivery to District/Borough Councils. The work undertaken by the Borough under the terms of this agreement includes repairs, road strengthening, street lighting, statutory inspections and traffic management.

Hackney Carriages

The licensing and inspection of Hackney Carriage and Private hire vehicles and the licensing drivers to ensure a high quality and safe Hackney Carriage and Private Hire service within the Borough.

Concessionary Fares

The service helps people of pensionable age and those who are registered disabled with access to public transport through the provision of a bus pass which enables half fare bus travel throughout Kent.

Coast Protection

The main purpose of this service is the maintenance of Coast Protection works and the monitoring of the coastline in pursuance of the Council’s powers under the Coast Protection Act. Monitoring is required to ensure that the undefended eroding cliffs do not give rise to risks of public safety and that the coastal defences are adequately maintained.

Parking Enforcement

This service provides for adequate public car parking through the management and maintenance of car parks for the benefit of shoppers, workers, leisure centre users and visitors to Swale. The service also ensures the enforcement of the on-street parking restrictions throughout the Borough thus maintaining traffic flow and highway safety.

Property Portfolio

The management of the Council's Property Services including maintaining the Asset Register and a suitable supply of land, the disposal of surplus assets, the management of Let Properties and the operation of Markets.

Building Maintenance

This service undertakes the maintenance and adaptation of council property and ensures the efficient operation and energy management of Swale House.

Cemeteries and Closed Churchyards

Responsible for the maintenance and management of five cemeteries and 17 closed churchyards. New burials take place regularly. A respectful bereavement service is provided to the families of the deceased.

Greenspaces

The council provides a variety of open spaces throughout the borough ranging from nature reserves to formal urban parks and every possible alternative in between. The sites provide for formal and informal recreation for every age range and 53 of the sites include provision of fixed play equipment for children.

Leisure Centres

Four leisure facilities have been provided by the council for indoor leisure activities. The Swallows in Sittingbourne and Sheppey Leisure Complex in Sheerness are managed by a service provider under contract to the council. Two further facilities, the Faversham Pools and Queen Elisabeth II Jubilee Centre are managed by separate charitable trusts who operate the facilities on behalf of the council.

Queenborough Harbour

Lying at the mouth of the Swale, adjacent to the Medway River the council operates Queenborough Harbour. The Harbour provides 110 swinging moorings and a number of drying fishing / leisure berths on the Town Quay. The Queenborough Yacht club have provided an all tide landing which allows people to walk ashore at all states of the tide. A trot boat services is provided at weekends.

Seafront

This service is responsible for the management of the pleasure beaches on the Isle of Sheppey. Beaches at Sheerness, Minster and Leysdown have attained national recognition through the Seaside Award Scheme. In addition the beach at Sheerness also has been awarded the European blue flag quality award. A small team of staff maintain the beaches free from litter and safe for the public to use.

k. BEST VALUE SECTION

The BV team offers guidance and support to: -

- 1) Managers - in undertaking their Best Value Reviews, which means managers have to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the way Swale's functions are exercised, having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness.
- 2) Members – in undertaking Scrutiny Reviews, which review in dept, arrears of the Council's business to ensure services provided are of the highest standard and offer Value for Money.

j. CUSTOMER SERVICES CENTRE

The Customer Service Centre is responsible for dealing with customer enquiries at the first point of contact. Enquiries can be made via the telephone, email and face to face.

National Census 2001 Classifications

White - British
White - Irish
White - other
Black or Black British Caribbean,
Black or Black British African
Black Other
Indian
Pakistani
Bangladeshi
Chinese
Asian Other
Mixed White and Black Caribbean
Mixed White and Black African
Mixed White and Asia
Mixed Other
Other

Legislation supporting Equal Opportunity

The Sex Discrimination Act 1975
The Race Relations Act 1996
The Equal Pay Act 1970
The Disability Discrimination Act 1995

The purpose of this legislation is to

- Eliminate discrimination;
- To enable employers to develop equal opportunities in their business;
- To provide a complaints mechanism for any individual who believes they have suffered discrimination.

Types of Discrimination

Direct Discrimination

Occurs when a person is treated less favourably on the grounds of race, colour, nationality, ethnic or national origins, sex, sexual orientation, marital status, disability or religion

Indirect Discrimination

Occurs when an unjustifiable requirement or condition is applied which has a disproportionately adverse effect on one particular group.

In addition discrimination by way of the following is also unlawful:-

- Victimisation when a person is treated less favourably as a result of their involvement in allegations or proceedings relating to any of the above legislation;
- All forms of harassment including racial and sexual.

Council & Partnership Strategies

The Freedom of Information Act Publication Scheme allows us to share our strategic plans with you so that you can see how we intend to achieve the strategic objectives outlined in the previous pages. The next section contains a summary of all the Council's Strategies, some of which include working with Partners, and the complete documents can be viewed on our website at www.swale.gov.uk. If you do not have access to the Internet, we can send you copies if you ask for them.

1. Community Plan
2. Community Safety Plan 2002-05
3. Consultation Strategy
4. Contaminated Land Strategy
5. Cultural Strategy 2002
6. Economic Development Strategy 2000-2005
7. e-Government Strategy
8. Equity Strategy
9. Housing Strategy
10. Homelessness Strategy
11. Housing Assistance Policy 2003/04
12. Human Resource Strategy
13. Play Strategy
14. Playing Pitch Strategy
15. Procurement Strategy
16. Sports Development Strategy
17. Supporting People Locality Plan
18. Sustainability Strategy
19. Swale Borough Local Plan 2000
20. Waste Management Strategy
21. Environmental/Housing Services Enforcement Policy
22. Capital Strategy

1. Community Plan (in draft format with reference to partnership working)

The Community plan is about local peoples' aspirations for their area, their own lives, the wider community and environment, and just as importantly, how everyone will work together to achieve the vision and objectives that are agreed.

The Plan is also set in the context of sustainable development. Swale has its own Local Agenda 21 strategy and the UK and other EU governments are signatories to global sustainable development protocols that we all can contribute to.

This will be Swale's first Community Plan. It has been prepared and developed by the Swale Regeneration Partnership on behalf of the people living and working in our Borough and is a tool for partners delivering services across the Borough. It is the community's agenda for change over the next five years.

The Plan not only makes it clear what the position is in Swale now, against a range of important performance indicators, it also details where we want it to be in five years time. In this respect its progress acts as a performance measure for the community and service providers. It is the leading strategic document that the Borough will use as part of comprehensive performance assessment (CPA) undertaken by the Audit Commission.

2. Community Safety Plan 2002-2005

The Community Safety Plan is an agreement between local people and the members of the Swale Crime & Disorder Reduction Partnership (CDRP) on the issues that need to be tackled in partnership. It helps to identify where the work of the agencies overlaps and where a co-ordinated approach to crime and disorder can be further progressed. Reducing crime and the work of the Crime & Disorder Group forms part of the Borough's overall strategy for helping to improve Swale as a place to work and live.

3. Consultation Strategy

The Consultation Strategy sets out a coherent, inclusive approach to public consultation. It is intended to help drive forward the Council's vision and mission statements, which in turn have been influenced by the local government agenda.

Particularly relevant to the consultation strategy are the new duties of economic, social and environmental well-being. The Council also recognises the increased emphasis on engaging and involving the community, becoming more open and accountable and the new duty of best value.

4. Contaminated Land Strategy

This document comprises two of four interrelated strategies, which, together, set out how the Borough Council will fulfil its statutory duty under the Environmental Protection Act 1990 – Contaminated Land.

The primary objective underlying the legislation is to provide an improved system for the identification and remediation of land. This document details processes by which we will seek to determine what sites within its area are Contaminated Land and to subsequently seek their remediation.

5. Cultural Strategy

The term "Culture" means different things to different people so, before writing the strategy, we asked nearly 3,000 people who either live, work and study in Swale or visit Swale about the things that were important to them and what they felt the term "Culture" meant. It became clear that culture is about the cultural well being of an area and not just about the services managed, funded or regulated by the Council. It meant the activities, facilities, public features and traditions, which are identified within the area. It is also about the needs, demands and aspirations of the communities that Swale Borough Council serves. It's about sports, gardening and walking; tourism and 'days

out'; the sense of identity that the landscape, the street environment and local history gives to the towns and villages in Swale; as well as leisure pursuits like theatre, cinema, festivals and the arts.

Culture is the community in which we live and the activities we participate in – what we do here in Swale outside work and what makes Swale what it is. Looking to the future it is about the opportunities that local people wish to see realised. The Cultural Strategy tries to define that as clearly as possible over the next few years.

6. Economic Development Strategy 2000-2005

To help achieve the goal of a strong economy this strategy sets out five objectives, under which a number of action plans outline the work of the Unit over the period 2000-2005. Within some of these action plans are key projects, which are identified as being of particular significance and will form the focus for the Unit's work.

7. e-Government Strategy

Following the approval of Swale's Implementing Electronic Government (IEG) Statement by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) in January 2003, an e-Government Strategy is being drawn up to reflect the IEG statement and Swale's Customer Service Strategy.

This will in turn identify the technical requirements, which will be incorporated into a new Information & Communications Technology Strategy (ICTS) along with other non e-Government related technology issues. The current Information Technology Service was formed in 1997, and focussed on the migration from a mainframe environment to a server based one. This strategy has now been fully implemented. Both the new e-Government and Information & Communications Technology strategies are anticipated to be in place by May 2003.

8. Equity Strategy

The aim of the strategy is to set out the principles of equity (fairness) and equality (equal access), which will be followed by the Council and incorporated into all its activities. It was prepared using information gained from the public consultation undertaken by the Council as part of the Local performance Plan process.

9. Housing Strategy

The local Housing Strategy seeks to identify the housing and related community needs of the Borough and to establish priorities for meeting these in the light of available resources.

The strategy has been formed through partnerships and contacts between the Council and a wide range of other organisations. It is currently in the process of being updated.

10. Homelessness Strategy

This strategy (currently under development for publication in August 2003) sets out the issues affecting homelessness in Swale and planned measures by the Council and other relevant Agencies to address these issues, improve service provision for the homeless and to prevent homelessness arising.

11. Housing Assistance Policy 2003/04

This sets out what assistance the Council is able to offer during the year by way of grants, practical assistance and advice to householders requiring essential repairs and adaptations to their homes. Details of the budget allocations for this assistance and the grant conditions that apply are also provided.

12. Human Resource Strategy

The HR Strategy is at an early draft stage and we anticipate it will be completed during 2003/04. The Strategy will outline how we will manage our people to achieve corporate objectives, and it will cover the following areas:

- recruitment and retention;
- pay, terms and conditions - including work life balance and health related issues;
- Developing our people to deliver consistent and effective quality services;
- skilling and developing managers and leaders of the future.

13. Play Strategy

The mission of the Swale Play strategy will be to provide challenging play for the youth of Swale, to encourage the integration of play regardless of age, disability or ethnicity and to provide safe areas of play for children.

It is the responsibility of the community, or those responsible for developing communities, to ensure that all children have access to rich, stimulating environments that are free from unacceptable risk, and thereby offer children the opportunity to explore both themselves and their world through their freely chosen play. There is a life long value in play that starts in our most formative years and continues on into adulthood, which serves to inform and shape future generations.

14. Playing Pitch Strategy

In partnership with Sport England and in accordance with their methodology this will provide a Strategy covering all sports pitch provision for football, rugby, cricket and hockey throughout the Borough including Parish Council, School and Private facilities. It will identify existing location, quality, level, usage and demand. In addition latent and future demand for development provision will be identified.

When completed in May 2003 it will be used to justify planning policy through supplementary guidance, to support external funding bids for improvements, to plan and provide for future demand and to assist in the development of sports such as mini soccer.

15. Procurement Strategy

The Council is a regular purchaser of goods and services in the area; the procurement strategy identifies the rules that will be employed to ensure the fair treatment of all organisations and individuals who may be suppliers. It sets out standards expected of Council employees in the procurement of goods and services, it links to the overall vision of a “strong economy” for Swale by encouraging the use of local business where ever possible and to the “healthy environment” through the promotion of the use of sustainable approaches.

16. Sports Development Strategy

The Sports Development Strategy will ensure that sports provision across the Borough is developed in a planned and co-ordinated manner. Everyone in the Borough deserves the right to enjoy sport and recreation at whatever level they choose. However, to meet this challenge, it is essential that whilst the Council continues to be a provider/commissioner of sports development within the Borough, it is not the only provider/commissioner, with significant contributions being made by other public agencies, the private sector and community organisations.

The strategy aims to set out the current sports provision of the Borough, identify the areas of need, and work with a variety of partners to establish an achievable work plan which identifies improvements for the Borough.

17. Supporting People Locality Plan

The Locality Plan for Swale is linked to the Council and its partners’ other strategies, which enable the delivery of services to supported housing client groups. The plan further emphasises the joined up approach between the strategic partners in the planning, commissioning and delivery of support services.

18. Swale Vision 1999

This strategy explains the impact a sustainable approach will have on the quality of life, a healthy environment and the impact this can have in ensuring continued and growing prosperity for the Borough. It sets out the standards and conditions for sustainability under which Swale’s business will be conducted in the future.

19. Swale Borough Local Plan 2000

The Swale Borough Local Plan was adopted on the 20th July 2000. The purpose of the Plan is to provide detailed policies and proposals for further development in the Borough for the period up to and including 2006. The

policies and proposals in the Plan form the basis for the consideration of all planning applications. They seek to ensure that major development takes place in a co-ordinated manner, respectful of the local environment.

20. Waste Management Strategy

The purposes of Swale Waste Management Strategy document are:

- To establish a realistic plan for waste reduction & recycling to meet the needs of the borough and explain clearly how the Council proposes to achieve these objectives, and indicate the projected costs of achieving the objectives;
- To state the Council's objectives for dealing with waste by more environmentally sustainable methods than the present high reliance on landfill;
- To state the objectives of partnership working with community, WDA and external organizations (build partnerships with community, encouraging public participation in recycling and composting initiatives);
- To build partnerships with WDA, through the Municipal Household Waste Strategy, alongside working with neighbouring districts and boroughs;
- To build partnerships with external organizations;
- To indicate the Council's current thinking on the process of letting new waste contract(s);
- To explain Swale's community education programme, emphasizing the ongoing waste reduction, recycling and reuse promotions;
- To state the Council's future waste recycling targets & policies to be incorporated in the WDA's Municipal Waste Strategy and Kent Waste Local Plan;
- To aim to provide the basis for service delivery and financial planning;
- To embrace the Council's core values of a healthy environment;
- To provide public information and consultation that would generate feedback from partners, community and businesses;
- To inform industry and encourage the development of new markets and technology.

21. Environmental/Housing Services Enforcement Policy

Fair and effective enforcement is essential to protect the health, safety and interests of the residents, visitors and businesses of the Swale Borough. Even in a small case a decision about enforcement action has serious implications for all involved; the general public, businesses, victims, witnesses and defendants. Environmental Services and Housing Services will apply this policy so that it can make fair and consistent decisions about enforcement.

The Policy is also designed to make sure that everyone knows the principles that are applied when carrying out enforcement work. By applying the same principles, everyone involved in the process is helping to treat stakeholders fairly but effectively.

22. Capital Strategy

The Capital Strategy provides clear strategic guidance about the Council's capital objectives, priorities and spending plans through links with service level strategies, corporate documents and consultations with citizens and stakeholders in the Borough. It sets out our approach to capital investment, both in terms of the capital assets that we already own and also in terms of the development of new assets. The capital strategy is an overarching document linking both internal systems and external stakeholders with the objective of ensuring capital investment is used in the best interests of the Borough.