



Bromsgrove District Council Equality Strategy Annual Report 2022

1 Introduction

1.1 This annual report informs the progress on the equality agenda covering the period January 2022 to December 2022. Building on our last report and work carried out since 2021, this progress report provides a detailed insight into our ongoing commitment to equality. It highlights our achievements and sets out the different ways the council is seeking to ensure that our services are fair, inclusive, and accessible to all our residents and support good equalities practice for our employees.

1.2 The Council adopted its new Equality Strategy 2022 to 2026 during this year, this provides a detailed insight into our ongoing commitment to equality, set out in one place our equality objectives and other arrangements for embedding equality into everything we do and, perhaps most importantly, set out where we must improve.

1.3 As we continued to recover from COVID-19, the Cost of Living hit and this impacted greatly the work being undertaken by the council and its partners, generating new activity to help support disadvantaged groups and promote equality during this challenging period.

2 The Council's Vision, Purposes and Priorities

2.1 Bromsgrove District Council's vision is to enrich the lives and aspirations of all our residents, businesses, and visitors through the provision of high-quality services, ensuring that all in need receive appropriate help and support. People are at the heart of everything we do; whether they live in our district, work here, or choose to visit. Everyone deserves to receive the best possible service and support and we aim to put those in need at the forefront.

2.2 The Council is committed to providing residents with effective & efficient services that not only meet their needs but understand them too. Through considering what really matters to our residents the Council's Strategic Plan 2019-2023, sets out eight key priorities, underpinned by five strategic purposes.

Eight Key Priorities for 2019-2023

- Economic development and regeneration
- Skills for the future
- Improving health and well being
- A balanced housing market
- Reducing crime and disorder
- Financial stability
- High quality services
- Sustainability

Five Strategic Purposes, with our communities at the heart:

- Run and Grow a Successful Business
- Work and Financial Independence
- Living Independent, Active and Healthy Lives
- Affordable and Sustainable Homes
- Communities which are Safe, Well Maintained and Green

3 Meeting our Equality Duties

3.1 The Equality Act 2010 legally protects people from discrimination in the workplace and in wider society. The Act covers nine protected characteristics, and these are the grounds upon which discrimination is unlawful. The characteristics are

- Age
- Disability
- Gender Reassignment
- Marriage and Civil Partnership
- Pregnancy and Maternity
- Race
- Religion or Belief
- Sex
- Sexual Orientation

Although it is not stated in legislation as a protected characteristic, we also commit to treating everyone equally regardless of their socio-economic status. Our 2022-2026 Equality Strategy will include it and will work to eliminate discrimination and disadvantage caused by a person's socio-economic status.

3.2 The Equality Act 2010 consists of a General Equality Duty, supported by specific duties, and requires public authorities, like Bromsgrove District Council, to consider or think about how their policies or decisions affect people who are protected under the Equality Act. The General Duty requires public bodies to have due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not

In addition, public authorities also have specific duties and must do the following:

- Publish equality information at least once a year to show how they've complied with the equality duty
- Prepare and publish equality objectives at least every four years

4 Population Overview

4.1 Between the last two censuses, held in 2011 and 2021, the population of Bromsgrove increased by 5.9%, from just over 93,600 in 2011 to around 99,200 in 2021. This is made up of 48.9% male and 51.1% female.

The age breakdown was:

- 18.2% aged under 15 years.
- 58.9% aged 15-64 years
- 22.9% aged 65 years and over.

The number of people aged 50 to 64 years rose by around 1,800, an increase of 9.4%, while the number of residents between 35 and 49 years fell by just over 2,300, a 11.1% decrease.

4.2 In 2021 people in Bromsgrove identified their ethnic group as

- 93.1% White, compared with 95.8% in 2011.
- 2.4% Mixed or Multiple, compared with 1.5% the previous decade.
- The number of Bromsgrove residents identifying their ethnic group as Asian, Asian British or Asian Welsh was 3.2%, up from 2.1% in 2011.
- The percentage of people who identified their ethnic group within the Black, Black British, Black Welsh, Caribbean or African increased from 0.5% in 2011 to 0.8% in 2021.

4.3 In 2021, 53.5% of people in Bromsgrove described themselves as Christian, down from 68.9%, while 5.6% did not state their religion, down from 6.9% the decade before. In 2021, 37.4% of Bromsgrove residents reported having "No religion", up from 22% in 2011.

4.4 In terms of disability, 9.5%, up from 9.1% of the population have a long-term health condition or disability that limits their day-to-day activities a little, and 6.1%, down from 7.6%, stated that their day-to-day activities were limited a lot.

4.5 In 2021 Bromsgrove residents described their health as followed:

- Very good was 52.2%, increasing from 50.0% in 2011.
- Good was 32.9%, decreasing from 33.2%
- Bad was 3.0%, decreasing from 3.5%
- Very bad was 0.9%, like 2011.

The 2021 Census was conducted during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. This may have influenced how people perceived and rated their health, and therefore may have affected how people chose to respond.

4.6 Of Bromsgrove residents aged 16 years and over, 30.0% said they had never been married or in a civil partnership in 2021, up from 26.8% in 2011.

4.7 The question about sexual orientation, which has not been asked in previous censuses, was voluntary and only asked of those aged 16 years and over.

- 92.0% identified as Straight or Heterosexual

- 1.1% identified as Gay or Lesbian
- 0.8% as Bisexual
- 0.1% as Pansexual
- 6.0% did not answer the question.

4.8 The question about gender identity, which has not been asked in previous censuses, was voluntary and only asked of those aged 16 years and over.

- 95.1% stated their gender identity as the same as sex registered at birth
- 0.1% stated their gender identity different from sex registered at birth but there was no specific identity given.
- 0.1% identified as Trans Woman
- 4.7% did not answer the question.

4.9 For more information from the 2021 Census including work, travel, housing, education and caring responsibility please go to [2021 Census Profile for Bromsgrove](#)

5 Our Equality Objectives

5.1 During 2022 the new Equality Strategy for 2022 to 2026 was adopted by the council. This report sets out the progress on key areas of equality work, during 2022, that underpin our revised objectives and building on what we have already achieved. Our objectives for the next 4 years are:

- Objective 1: Ensure we deliver inclusive and responsive services.
- Objective 2: Engage and communicate with the community in appropriate and accessible ways.
- Objective 3: Understand our communities and celebrate and respect diversity.
- Objective 4: Develop and support a diverse workforce.

The key achievements and progress in 2022 provide the evidence of how we are delivering against the objectives in our strategy.

6 Key Achievements and Progress in 2022

The following sections evidence some of our achievements and progress against Objective 1: Ensure we deliver inclusive and responsive services.

6.1 Covid-19

6.1.1 Going into 2022, the Redditch and Bromsgrove District Incident Management Team (DIMT), chaired by the Deputy Chief Executive, and supported by Public Health, continued to meet regularly, bringing together a range of local partner agencies focused on ensuring a collective approach to supporting local communities through providing guidance, information, advice and support.

6.1.2 Although in March 2022, DIMT was stood down, elements of the work, such as covid vaccinations clinics for instance, including pop ups and mobile van, continued throughout 2022 and into 2023, supported by partners including our Bromsgrove Social Prescribing team who made themselves available to help reach people in different communities and offer wider support and signposting to various services.

6.2 Cost-of-Living

6.2.1 Through the Government's Household Support Fund (HSF), all District Councils worked together with Worcestershire County Council to try and ensure funding was allocated in such a way that it reached those most in need, including working with Act on Energy to provide financial support with energy bills, whether that be current energy bills, energy debt or financial help to repair or replace heating systems. Originally HSF was only intended to last 6 months up to March 2022 but the Government continued it with a Phase 2 and Phase 3 throughout 2022/23 (and a HSF Phase 4 during 23/24 is planned). At a District level, working with partners such as Citizens Advice Bromsgrove and Redditch, BDHT, local foodbanks and white goods schemes, and our own Financial Inclusion Team, support has been provided such as food parcels, essential while goods, supermarket vouchers, post office cash vouchers and more. Working with other local organisations and groups has helped us to identify eligible households (whether that be families, pensioners, disabled for instance) who were in need and eligible to benefit from this support.

6.2.2 At the suggestion of the Chief Executive, a Bromsgrove and Redditch Cost of Living Partnership Group was set up during 2022 including partners such as Act on Energy, Citizens Advice Bromsgrove and Redditch, Age UK Bromsgrove, Redditch and Wyre Forest, Bromsgrove District Housing Trust (BDHT), Worcestershire County Council, local foodbanks, Primary Care Network (PCN) and more, in addition to District Council officers internally. The purpose was to facilitate partnership working between agencies with a shared commitment to minimise the depth of damage of the cost-of-living crisis and the length of its impact.

6.2.3 Through the Cost-of-Living Partnership Group, to help ensure residents were informed and knew who to contact for help, including those digitally excluded, an 'at a glance' Bromsgrove and Redditch cost of living leaflet containing brief advice and key contacts, was produced and printed copies were distributed by partner agencies during the latter part of 2022. This was alongside a wider digital campaign including dedicated [cost-of living-webpages](#). A draft poverty alleviation plan was also produced.

6.2.4 The Holiday Activities and Food programme (HAF) is a DfE funded programme to support children aged 4-16 years (reception -Year 11) who are in receipt of pupil premium (or benefits related) free school meals (FSM) to access enriching activities and food during Easter, summer, and Christmas school holidays. The Bromsgrove Children and Youth Provider Forum are used to support the project provision with information sharing and updates. During this year, free activities and food have been made available for young people to access across the main school holidays. By working with schools and local organisations we were able to target the young people in need to make this accessible for them. Activities were delivered by various providers under our umbrella who also provided either a breakfast, lunch box or hot meal to those eligible children participating.

6.3 Shopmobility

6.3.1 Bromsgrove Shopmobility remains open on reduced hours as current demand is low. A survey was launched near the end of 2021 to understand the demand and the need for the service. There was a low response to the survey (19 in total) 9 people were aware of the service and 6 people had used it, only 2 regularly. The others had no need. 3 people use a similar service in other areas. There was nothing to suggest, from the responses, that the current provision didn't meet the needs of residents.

6.4 Community Transport

6.4.1 BARN (Bromsgrove and Redditch Network) continue to run the 'BURT' community transport service on behalf of Bromsgrove District Council. BURT, which stands for Bromsgrove Urban and Rural Transport, has been Bromsgrove District's local community transport minibus service since 2009 (they won the latest tender in 2021). They average about 350 registered users.

6.4.2 The service helps residents of the district who are unable to make essential journeys by conventional transport, either because of personal mobility or disability difficulties, or because suitable public transport is not available. The BURT minibus is adapted for wheelchair users and helps people get to fitness classes, life-after-stroke sessions, dementia clubs, social activities, and friendship groups, and more, or sometimes just to the shops. In 2022 BURT provided 3,470 journeys to their customers across the district.

The following sections evidence some of our achievements and progress against Objective 2: Engage and communicate with the community in appropriate and accessible way

6.5 Community Engagement

6.5.1 During 2022 the council continued to deliver a range of community engagement and consultations with the information gathered supporting service delivery and corporate decisions. The council continues to work hard to increase participation with responses encouraged from our diverse population to ensure a cross representation of responses.

6.5.2 The Bromsgrove Community Panel, a list of Bromsgrove District residents who have signed up to be kept informed about engagement and consultations carried out by the council, continues to grow. As of the end of 2022, there were 393 members with new members signing up regularly.

6.5.3 During the year, surveys have gone out to the public covering a range of topics including:

- Annual Community Survey
- Bromsgrove Centres' Business Survey
- BDC Draft Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Licensing Policy
- Stoke Heath Ward Community Governance Review

- Understanding Residents feelings and Views of the Covid-19 vaccination

6.5.4 The Bromsgrove Youth and Community Hub has coordinated a successful Youth Council since 2018. As part of a process to widen its engagement with young people across the district, the District Council funded an expansion of the youth council to include schools. This started with researching and identifying youth councils already established within the local schools and bringing them into the wider youth council. There were mixed responses from schools but the students of those that took part raised several issues they wanted to address both within school and in the local community. Some of the community issues included litter in the town centre, progress at the Birdbox, the provision of arts in the area and the Artrix building, accessibility and inclusion and crime rates. Work with the Youth Council will continue into 2023 to strengthen engagement with schools and the young people.

6.6 Interpreting and Translation

6.6.1 The Council continues to provide interpreting and translation services and in nearly all cases interpreting has taken place via telephone or video call rather than face to face, which has enabled a cost saving for the council. Languages supported by interpreting and translation in Bromsgrove included Arabic and Polish. The service continues to be promoted internally across all services and managed within the Policy Team.

The following sections evidence some of our achievements and progress against Objective 3: Understand our communities and celebrate and respect diversity

6.7 Partnerships

6.7.1 Partnership working has continued throughout 2022 in different forms, helping to ensure different agencies address local need collectively rather than separately in isolation. This has been shown through Partnership structures such as Bromsgrove Partnership.

6.7.2 The Bromsgrove Partnership Board, chaired by the Chief Executive of Bromsgrove District Housing Trust (BDHT), includes several different representatives from the statutory sector and voluntary and community sector, including the Chief Executive and Leader of Bromsgrove District Council. It met virtually on a regular basis during the pandemic but in May 2022, the Board met in person for the first time since January 2020. In person meetings have been the preference ever since, strengthening working relationships and improving understanding between agencies at a strategic level, with representatives keen to work together and collectively challenge systems, as appropriate, when its recognised change is needed.

6.7.3 Due to the strengths of the Bromsgrove Partnership, and the difficulties facing the Bromsgrove Primary Care Network (PCN) in trying to establish an effective Collaborative from scratch, the Bromsgrove Partnership Board was asked and agreed to take on the remit of Bromsgrove Collaborative in the summer of 2022. Following discussion on data presented by Public Health in November 2022, the Board agreed overarching collaborative priorities: Mental Health and Inequalities.

Being Well Funding from Public health was also allocated at the end of 2022 with agreement it be used to appoint a Wellbeing Lead to support the Bromsgrove Collaborative work.

6.7.4 The District of Bromsgrove received £2.8m over 2022-25 from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF). The UKSPF replaces EU structural funds and allows local communities to invest in local priorities from regenerating high streets, to tackling economic decline, and helps reverse geographical inequalities. Every place receives funding, with areas in greater need receiving more support. The Partnership Board oversee the funding and a separate Task Group, made up of a selection of Board members and business representatives, was set up at the end of 2022 to consider project proposals submitted and make recommendations.

6.7.5 The Bromsgrove Partnership Theme Groups continued to meet virtually, strengthening the links between agencies, and continuously striving towards more joined up local provision. The Community Wellbeing Theme Group and Ageing Well Group have enabled partner agencies to come together to share information updates on services and highlight challenges, which in turn help to identify partnership opportunities.

6.7.6 Through Bromsgrove Partnership Board discussions during 2022, it was decided a separate Cost of Living Partnership Group was required which could feed into the Board. Due to the partners involved and the majority working across Bromsgrove and Redditch, it was agreed between partners it would be a joint Bromsgrove and Redditch partnership group.

6.7.7 The Bromsgrove Partnership Board continues to oversee the Asset Based Community Development (ABCD) work, which is where original discussions took place on ABCD back in 2020. The Chief Executive of NewStarts, a local voluntary and community sector organisation that hosts of the community builders, joined the Board permanently in 2022 to provide a strategic link.

6.8 Asset Based Community Development (ABCD)

6.8.1 Asset Based Community Development (ABCD) approaches show that connecting people and creating more resident-to-resident relationships builds interdependence and reliance on each other. Connecting people to their shared interests, and enabling them to exchange skills and resources, helps communities identify and act on the issues that are most important to them. This provides a brief update on the progress of ABCD work across Bromsgrove district and the county during 2022.

6.8.2 Following a successful joint bid for funding by Bromsgrove District Council and Redditch Borough Council to Public Health, two community builders for Bromsgrove District were appointed at the very end of 2021. Hosted by NewStarts, a voluntary and community sector organisation, the community builders started in their roles at the beginning of 2022, one community builder for Catshill and one for Rubery, as agreed by the Bromsgrove Partnership Board.

6.8.3 Despite recent changes within the Public Health ABCD team during 2022, the community builders were well supported through ABCD training and peer support meetings, specifically for the community builders. A joint Bromsgrove and Redditch

ABCD Learning Network also emerged during 2022, facilitated by Public Health, bringing together the community builders, their hosts, ABCD Guides trained officers from within the District Council, relevant portfolio holders and other relevant District Council officers.

6.8.4 Within 6 months there have been some successes including: Easter egg hunts; Jubilee celebrations; working with Rubery Honey who ran a sunflower challenge with seeds being distributed, growth tracked and reported on a worksheet; enabling mums to set up a market stall to recycle baby clothes (known as 'Octo-mom market'). Also, individual successes such as a widow, unknown to services, being introduced to a community coffee morning and other groups. However, it is recognised that this approach will take time to fully embed and a challenge to all agencies is to ensure they give the space and time needed for the communities to step forward and lead.

6.8.5 Countywide ABCD Workshops continue to be delivered and anyone with an interest in ABCD is encouraged to attend. All community builders, relevant portfolio holder, several District Council officers and the host of community builders have all attended but it's open to all.

6.9 Starting Well Partnership

6.9.1 Our free service supports parents of children and young people 0 to 19 years and facilitates a variety of evidence-based groups for parents. The groups give the opportunity to learn new strategies build their confidence and strengthen their family relationships.

6.9.2 During 2022 our Community Team held several events across the district and reached 5,413 Bromsgrove residents (parents and children). The Parenting Team facilitated 27 parenting programmes with 398 parents completing them. We had 5 volunteers actively working as peer supporters in our parenting groups and breastfeeding support groups as well as recruiting and training new volunteers during 2022.

6.9.3 The Social Prescribing Service, a successful wellbeing service, celebrated one year of helping residents. The service is commissioned by Bromsgrove Primary Care Network (PCN), which is made up of nine GP surgeries across the Bromsgrove District. The contract between the PCN and Bromsgrove District Council is for five years.

The service, which is run in partnership with ONSIDE, connects residents with Social Prescribing Link Workers through a self-referral process. The link worker then provides them with a face-to-face conversation during which they can learn about activities in their communities and design their own personalised solutions to life struggles. In 2022, the service received 332 referrals and supported over 250 Bromsgrove patients to complete a programme of support.

Social prescribing can support a wide range of people, including (but not exclusively) people:

- with one or more long term conditions
- who need support with their mental health
- who are lonely or isolated

- who have complex social needs which affect their wellbeing.

6.10 Community Safety

610.1 The North Worcestershire Community Safety Partnership (NWCSP) brings together Safer Bromsgrove, Safer Redditch, and Safer Wyre Forest. The NWCSP delivers a range of community safety initiatives and works with agencies and communities to achieve the Partnership's vision of keeping "North Worcestershire a safer place to live, work and visit".

6.10.2 In support of national Hate Crime Awareness Week 2022, North Worcestershire Hate Incident Partnership hosted its annual Hate Crime Awareness Conference, returning to a face-to-face event. This hugely successful event included three high-profile guest speakers who captivated the audience in discussing their own experiences of hate crime:

- Azeem Rafiq, inspiring anti-racism campaigner and former professional cricketer
- Rt. Hon. Stuart Lawrence, coach, motivational speaker, and younger brother of Stephen Lawrence
- Naughty Boy, award-winning music producer, songwriter, and musician Shahid Khan, better known nationally and internationally by his stage name Naughty Boy

6.10.3 The Respect Programme covering Redditch and Bromsgrove, provides crime prevention and community safety awareness workshops as part of schools personal, social, health and economic education (PHSE) lessons. Respect provides sessions on subjects such as recognising and reporting hate crime, understanding healthy relationships/recognising domestic abuse, the dangers of substance misuse and promoting respect and community responsibility. The programme also received 192 referrals for 1 to 1 support through its therapeutic mentoring programme. This academic year, the focus for the programme was to reintroduce face-to-face sessions following the end of Covid restrictions.

6.10.4 Residents learnt more about the work against anti-social behaviour as the North Worcestershire Community Safety Partnership marked Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) Awareness Week, in July. The Council joined West Mercia Police and other agencies, to speak to the public at an awareness raising event in Bromsgrove town centre. There was also a social media campaign throughout the week raising the profile of how ASB is tackled in local communities.

6.11 Community Events and Activities

6.11.1 During 2022, we celebrated the diversity, culture, and heritage in our community and with our workforces. Many events returned, some for the first time since 2019, enabling people to gather. Important dates included Remembrance Sunday, Armed Forces Day, Holocaust Memorial Day, Polish Independence Day, Ukraine Independence Day, World Mental Health Day, LGBT+, Black History Month, International Women's Day and White Ribbon Day.

6.11.2 The Recovery Through Creativity projects were launched in late April to support the creative business sector across Bromsgrove's town centres, as a part of the work of the Northeast Worcestershire Cultural Compact. The purpose was to allow our local creative business sector to access funding to rebuild, to try out new ideas, to take risks and increase the number and diversity of the people engaging with their offer. From Creative Arts Showcase, Brenda Killigrew Sewing Studio, Bromsgrove Indie Club, and the Friends of St John's there were incredible ideas and offers for the town and community to be a part of and enjoy.

6.11.3 The Queen's Platinum Jubilee saw 4 days of great events in Bromsgrove Town, from the 20th Anniversary of the Jubilee Bandstand in Sanders Park and the lighting of the National Beacon, Bromsgrove Festival, and the Indie Club on the Birdbox, and the High Street take over by Bromsgrove's Royal Legion. The Town proudly showed how to celebrate the 70 years of the Queen's reign through diversity and inclusivity.

6.11.4 Bromsgrove hosted its second Pride Event, following the successful one from last year. Run by volunteers, the event received a grant from the BDC Equality Small Grants Scheme to support its delivery. This year it was held in July in the High Street with the family-friendly event featuring stalls, entertainment and promoting awareness of the LGBTQ+ community.

6.11.5 In 2022, we were successful with a Short Breaks funding application in Bromsgrove to support Rigby Hall School to deliver SEN Community football sessions. Three sessions are available for various ages each week where young people with Autism, Down Syndrome, ADHD, SLD and MLD can be supported.

6.11.6 Some other events and activities that supported people in our community included –

- The Green Fun Day, a family fun day with a green, sustainable, eco-friendly theme featuring free, family-friendly stalls, entertainment and displays for everyone to enjoy.
- A range of health and exercise sessions delivered across the district, many of which returned following Covid and are free.
- A range of summer free fun activities were delivered.
- A special ceremony in memory of those who died of Covid-19. Held in Sanders Park a memorial tree was planted, and a plaque unveiled in remembrance of all those who died from Covid-19, their families, and the incredible work carried out by key workers throughout the pandemic.
- The first walking football session was held in Hagley with seventeen attending. In partnership with Hagley Parish Council, the sessions see reduced physical contact and tackling which makes it perfect for people who have been out of the game for a while and want to make a comeback.
- The Council, alongside partners and community organisations commemorated the Queen's Platinum Jubilee in Sanders Park to bring together a celebratory event with food, street entertainment, and music. It finished with the ceremonial lighting of the beacons in the park with local choirs performing.

6.12 Equality Small Grants Scheme

6.12.1 Bromsgrove District Council Equality Small Grants Scheme is now in its 8th year of providing grants to small voluntary and community organisations. Following the last two years where we adapted the scheme to support the delivery of grants due to Covid those awarded since 2020 were able to be delivered.

6.12.2 The total budget of £10,000 was awarded to 12 organisations/groups with seven of these being new organisations/groups applying for the first time. Feedback on those who were successful is available on our [website](#).

The following sections evidence some of our achievements and progress against Objective 4: *Develop and support a diverse workforce*

6.13 Employee Support

6.13.1 We have developed and begun implementing our new four-year Workforce Strategy, which “sets out the Council’s vision and aspirations for its workforce, both now and in the future. In doing so it recognises the importance of our staff as a resource central to our success in delivering our strategic purposes. The strategy comprises 3 strands:

- Workforce Planning & Talent Management
- Health, Safety and Wellbeing
- Engagement



6.13.2 The Council provides an employee benefits platform for staff. This includes access to an employee assistance programme (EAP) which is available to all staff and their immediate family members. The employee assistance programme covers everything from health and wellbeing, finances, caring for the elderly, concerns at work, bereavement support etc. Staff can use this to access advice and support on just about anything including counselling sessions. There is also more tailored support available on an individual basis through HR and Occupational Health and Phone a Friend.

The benefits platform provides staff with a range of benefits including access to discounts, our cycle to work scheme, lease car hire and purchased annual leave etc. We try to tailor the benefits platform to the needs of our staff and ensure we provide opportunities to make their salaries go further.

6.13.3 We have a dedicated Wellbeing section on our intranet, signposting staff to wellbeing support and various wellbeing resources. We have implemented a Corporate Learning & Development Programme, which includes specific training to support our wellbeing agenda for staff and managers. This includes menopause awareness sessions, training for managers around how to build their team’s resilience & mental wellbeing, and coaching & mentoring opportunities.

All employees have access to an online training platform that provides various training sessions and resources (including videos podcasts, activity sheets and knowledge checks) which cover a range of soft skills, management, and wellbeing topics.

6.13.4 With the move to agile working we have introduced a mandatory eLearning platform for Display Screen Equipment (DSE) self-assessments (endorsed by the HSE). This takes staff through a DSE assessment process and provides personalised feedback around issues identified which then provides an individual action plan.

6.13.6 Following the success of remote working during the pandemic, we have launched a new Agile working policy. We recognise the positive impact that agile working can have on employee wellbeing. The policy ensures the customer is central to all our activities and service delivery, whilst providing a greater level of flexibility for employees, as deemed appropriate for each service area.

6.13.7 Chief Executive Q and A sessions have continued to be delivered via Teams, every month, providing an opportunity to hear the latest news from the Chief Executive and Heads of Service, and ask questions. The sessions are recorded to enable those to catch up. This continues to have a good attendance from staff across the council and provides a way of sharing information and keeping in contact. In addition we continue with formal staff surveys and short, snapshot surveys, as appropriate.

6.13.8 As an authority we continue to promote the use of one-to-one's and appraisals to support employee wellbeing and to encourage open, two-way communication between managers and employees, within teams and across the wider organisation.

7 Next Steps

7.1 The Council will continue to monitor progress against the Equality Objectives set out in the Equality Strategy (2022-2026) and will report annually on overall progress.

7.2 The Council will explore options for senior officers to undertake Accelerating Inclusion through Allyship training via west Midlands Employers. This training covers allyship, belonging, bias, discrimination etc. Allyship is important because it is:

- A strategic mechanism to promote equity in the workplace
- A way to drive systemic improvements to workplace policies, practices, and culture
- Essential in creating inclusive workplaces that attract the best talent

7.3 The council will explore options for establishing a staff equality, diversity and inclusion group.