

**Agenda Item No:****Report To:** Cabinet**Date of Meeting:** 30<sup>th</sup> March 2023**Report Title:** Digital Accessibility Policy**Report Author:** Ben Robinson**Job Title:** Digital Transformation Manager**Portfolio Holder:** Cllr. Alan Pickering**Portfolio Holder for:** HR Customer Services Communications and Digitisation

**Summary:** Ashford Borough Council is committed to providing a digital experience that is accessible to as many people as possible. This includes people with disabilities, older people, people from diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds, and people with varying levels of digital literacy. To this end, this Digital Accessibility Policy has been developed to ensure that the digital services we provide are available to all members of the public.

**Key Decision:** YES**Significantly  
Affected Wards:** All**Recommendations:** The Cabinet is recommended to:-

- I. Receive the recommendation of the IT & Digital Transformation Advisory Committee that the proposed Digital Accessibility Policy be adopted.

**Policy Overview:** Digital Accessibility Policy  
**Financial** N/A**Implications:****Legal Implications:** Failing to make reasonable adjustments could mean that we will be in breach of the Equality Act 2010 and the Disability Discrimination Act 1995. As a result the Equality & Human Rights Commission (EHRC) can use their legal powers against offending organisations.**Equalities Impact  
Assessment:** See Attached**Data Protection  
Impact  
Assessment:** Not Required**Risk Assessment  
(Risk Appetite  
Statement):** There is a risk of reputational damage if we are not able to keep up with the requirements.

<b>Sustainability Implications:</b>	N/A
<b>Other Material Implications:</b>	None
<b>Exempt from Publication:</b>	<b>NO</b>
<b>Background Papers:</b>	<b>None</b>
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## **Report Title: Digital Accessibility Policy**

### **Introduction and Background**

1. Ashford Borough Council is committed to providing a digital experience that is accessible to as many people as possible. This includes people with disabilities, older people, people from diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds, and people with varying levels of digital literacy. To this end, this Digital Accessibility Policy has been developed to ensure that the digital services we provide are available to all members of the public.
2. This Policy outlines the Council's commitment to make sure that its digital services are accessible to everyone who needs them. It sets out the Council's expectations for the design, development, and operation of its digital services, to ensure that they are accessible to all users. It also outlines the Council's expectations of its service providers, to ensure that they are also providing an accessible digital experience.
3. The policy has been considered by the IT & Digital Transformation Advisory Committee who recommend the adoption of the Digital Accessibility Policy to Cabinet.

### **Proposal**

4. The Digital Accessibility Policy is designed to ensure that the Council's digital services are accessible to all users. It is intended that this policy will mean that the Council is providing an inclusive digital environment, in which all members of the public, regardless of their disability or level of digital literacy, can access.
5. The Public Sector Bodies (Websites and Mobile Applications) (No. 2) Accessibility Regulations 2018 ("The Regulations") sets out requirements that councils need to meet, These are as follows:
  - Full conformance to the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) version 2.1 Level AA
  - Digital systems to publish an accessibility statement that explains its accessibility health and outlines workarounds for any remaining barriers.
6. Organisations that do not meet the accessibility requirement or fail to provide a satisfactory response to a request to produce information in an accessible format, will be failing to make reasonable adjustments. This means they will be in breach of the Equality Act 2010 and the Disability Discrimination Act 1995.

7. Ashford Borough Council will seek to ensure that all web-based content and mobile applications that it funds, develops or controls meet the requirements. WCAG regulations came into force for public sector bodies on 23 September 2018. In line with this the new website was built with an accessibility-first approach ensuring that it would be as accessible as possible for all of our residents.
8. The website accessibility monitoring team at the Central Digital & Data Office, which is part of the Cabinet Office) audited [www.ashford.gov.uk](http://www.ashford.gov.uk) in November 2021. Their audit flagged four technical issues with our website, which were fixed within the 12 week grace period afforded by the Central Digital & Data Office (CD&DO). Given the scope and size of our website it was reassuring that only four matters were highlighted by the CD&DO and this gives us confidence that our systems and processes for monitoring our website accessibility are sound.
9. With around a quarter of the UK population having some type of disability, accessibility is a key focus on our website development and regular monitoring of our website's accessibility is ensuring that we remain compliant with this important regulation.
10. The Digital Core Group is an officer group that is responsible for ensuring that Ashford Borough Council complies with the regulations. Appropriate steps, including advice and support, will be taken by the Council's representative for accessibility.
11. Any changes to legislation will be considered in a timely manner with policy and controls being reviewed accordingly. Any new Digital systems will be developed and managed to comply with the regulations, addressing any technical limitations that become apparent.
12. Ashford will provide all necessary accessibility information regarding any of its digital systems in the form of an Accessibility Statement which meets the required standard under the regulations on the system's web interface. The statement can be found at <https://www.ashford.gov.uk/accessibility-statement>.
13. Digital accessibility training will be a mandatory part of the induction process for all new staff who are creating digital content as well as continuing professional development for existing staff who are creating digital content.
14. This Digital Accessibility Policy will be reviewed regularly to ensure that it remains up-to-date and relevant. The Council will strive to ensure that its digital services are as accessible as possible and that all members of the public can access them.

## **Equalities Impact Assessment**

15. Members are referred to the attached Assessment. This policy has a positive impact on all our residents, in particular those with disabilities.

## **Consultation Planned or Undertaken**

16. The IT & Digital Transformation Advisory Committee have considered this policy and recommend to Cabinet that this policy be adopted.

## **Other Options Considered**

17. We can continue to work as we are but without the direction of this policy it could mean that we don't meet the regulations which could have serious implications as well as failing to meet our customers who have disabilities needs.

## **Reasons for Supporting Option Recommended**

18. Our residents deserve that we provide a digital experience that is accessible to as many people as possible. This includes people with disabilities, older people, people from diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds, and people with varying levels of digital literacy. This policy will help us achieve this.
19. Organisations that do not meet the accessibility requirement or fail to provide a satisfactory response to a request to produce information in an accessible format, will be failing to make reasonable adjustments. This means that they will be in breach of the Equality Act 2010 and the Disability Discrimination Act 1995. This could mean that the EHRC can use their legal powers against offending organisations, including investigations, unlawful act notices and court action. There is also risk of reputational damage if we are not able to keep up with the requirements.

## **Next Steps in Process**

20. Once cabinet have approved the policy it will be monitored via the Digital Core Group at officer level it is also recommended that this is monitored by the IT & Digital Advisory Committee.

## **Conclusion**

21. This Policy outlines the Council's commitment to make sure that its digital services are accessible to everyone who needs them. It sets out how the Council will ensure that its design, development, and operation of its digital services, are accessible to all users. The Council will also use this policy to ensure that its expectations of its digital service providers are met to ensure that they are also providing an accessible digital experience.

## **Portfolio Holder's Views**

22. **Cllr Alan Pickering – Portfolio Holder for HR Customer Services Communications and Digitalisation:**

"There has already been some good work conducted by our digital team to improve the accessibility of our online services since the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines came into scope for public bodies in 2018. However, this policy will further embed accessibility as a key focus for staff at Ashford

Borough Council.

“Furthermore, the work taking place to make our services accessible will make user accessibility easier for everyone, not just for those with disabilities.”

23. **Cllr Matthew Forest – Chair of IT & Digital Transformation Advisory Committee:**

“The IT & Digital Transformation Advisory Committee fully support this policy and we will have a key role in monitoring its implementation moving forward.

“This policy will be key for identifying future digital systems that the council invests in, ensuring that we are procuring services that are accessible to all.”

**Contact and Email**

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# Policy: Digital Accessibility Policy

Original  
Implementation Date:

New Policy



## Control Schedule

Policy Owner:	Robin Jones		
Policy Author:	Ben Robinson		
Approved By:			
Approval Date:		Minute reference:	
Policy Review Due:	16/1/2025	Review Cycle:	Every 2 Years
EIA completed:	16/1/2023	EIA Review Due:	16/1/2024

## Version Control

Version	Date	Author	Comment	Approved by
1.0	6/9/2022	BR	1 <sup>st</sup> Draft pulled together aligning with the Kent Digital Accessibility Group policy	
1.1	7/9/2022	JS	James Sloan changes	BR
1.2	16/1/2023	BR	EIA Added	
1.3	27/1/2023	JS	Added TM feedback	

## Decisions affecting this policy

Date	Committee/Member/Officer	Report title	Minute ref

## Policy Statement

1. Ashford Borough Council will seek to ensure that all web-based content and mobile applications that it funds, develops or controls meet the requirements set out in the Public Sector Bodies (Websites and Mobile Applications) (No. 2) Accessibility Regulations 2018 ("The Regulations"). This includes making reasonable adjustments where appropriate under the Public Sector Equality Duty and the Equality Act 2010.

The Regulations require:

- Full conformance to the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) version 2.1 Level AA
  - Digital systems (as defined under point 14) to publish an accessibility statement that explains its accessibility health and outlines workarounds for any remaining barriers.
2. WCAG 2.1 defines how to make Web content more accessible to people with disabilities. Accessibility involves a wide range of disabilities, including visual, auditory, physical, speech, cognitive, language, learning, and neurological disabilities
  3. The Digital Core Group is responsible for ensuring that Ashford Borough Council complies with The Regulations. Appropriate steps to meet The Regulations, including advice and support, will be taken by Ashford Borough Council's representative for accessibility.
  4. The objective of this policy is to set out the principles we must all follow to comply with The Regulations and thereby ensure that information is made accessible to anyone who has a right to that information.
  5. Ashford will comply with The Regulations and all relevant legislation. It will ensure changes to legislation are considered in a timely manner and review policy and controls accordingly.
  6. Digital systems will be developed and managed to comply with The Regulations, addressing any technical limitations that become apparent.
  7. Ashford will provide all necessary accessibility information regarding any of its digital systems in the form of an Accessibility Statement which meets the required standard under The Regulations on the system's web interface.
  8. Staff who manage contracts and procure new digital systems and services must make sure that contractors comply with their obligations under the current legislation; they must also actively manage any identified accessibility limitations until they are resolved. All contracts relating to digital systems and content must include appropriate Digital Accessibility Statements and clauses.
  9. Staff who produce content must learn how to make content accessible and keep up to date with accessibility standards. Digital accessibility training should be a mandatory part of the induction process for all new staff who are creating



content and of continuing professional development for existing staff who are creating content.

10. Anyone has the right to challenge the level of accessibility of our digital systems and the impact of any constraints outlined in this policy. Such challenges will be dealt with appropriately through support mechanisms also outlined in this policy.
11. Ashford supports the principles set out by WCAG 2.1, Levels A and AA. It maintains policies and procedures for monitoring the quality and compliance of its digital systems.
12. Any digital system or content that cannot be made accessible should be referred to the Digital Improvement & Web Development Officer who will act to manage the risk of non-compliance. This may be escalated to other accountable roles for accessibility compliance for example, The Digital Core Group.
13. Staff who manage systems must meet their obligations under the current legislation and actively manage any accessibility limitations identified until they are resolved. This includes an annual plan for auditing and updating accessibility statements.

## **Relationship with other existing policies**

14. Linked to Equality Policy 2022-2024.

## **Policy content**

### **In scope**

15. This policy applies to:
  - Everyone who procures, manages, or develops a digital system as part of Ashford Borough Council's business processes; and
  - Everyone who produces documents or content hosted on a digital system that meets the following description.
16. For the purposes of this policy, a "digital system" is any IT (Information Technology) system that is accessed using a browser or on a mobile device and is created for an internal or external audience (for example staff and members of the public). This applies to the administrative interface as well as the user interface.

This includes but is not limited to:

  - Websites
  - Web-based systems
  - Documents and content hosted on a digital system
  - Mobile applications.
17. A digital system is in scope for The Regulations if it is fully or partially funded, developed, or controlled by the Ashford Borough Council or has Ashford's branding.

## Out of scope

18. Any digital system that is not funded, controlled, or developed by Ashford Borough Council is outside the scope of this policy. This includes subscription services where the Ashford does not control or manage a system but pays for access to it, however if as part of the tender process, an accessible alternative was available, this means it was under our control.
19. If a digital system does not clearly fit this scope statement, the Digital Improvement & Web Development Officer will decide whether it should be included as a system that must meet the standards set out in this policy.

Some types of digital content are not in scope:

- files published before 23 September 2018 (unless needed as part of an active process related to tasks performed by the [name of organisation]).
  - audio and video content published before 23 September 2020;
  - live video and audio streams;
  - online maps and mapping services, if the information on the map is provided in an accessible format alongside;
  - third-party content that is neither funded, developed or under the control of the [name of organisation].
  - reproductions of items in heritage collections that cannot be made accessible without compromising the integrity of the item or without significant investment; and
  - content qualifying as 'archives', meaning it is not needed for an active process and is not edited after 23 September 2019.
  - Mobile applications are only in scope if they are listed on an app store and available to the public.
20. Even where a digital system is outside the scope of this policy, its accessibility should be considered, including provisions made for reasonable adjustments and alternative formats.

## Risks

21. Failure to comply with the relevant statutory standards is an infringement of legislation and may result in reputational damage and financial loss.
22. The Central Digital and Data Office (CDDO) actively monitors compliance with The Regulations, and which will perform periodic compliance audits Ashford's digital systems. If non-compliances are identified, the organisation will have 12 weeks to resolve all issues.
23. If issues remain unresolved following this period, Ashford Borough Council will be publicly listed as a non-compliant organisation and the Equality and Human Rights Commission may choose to start legal proceedings under the Equality Act.

## **Indicative Roles, responsibilities, and policy compliance**

24. A proposed management structure for digital accessibility is outlined below to support the statements set out in this policy.

### **Digital Core Group**

25. The Digital Core Group is accountable for ensuring that Ashford Borough Council adheres to The Regulations.

### **Strategic Lead for digital accessibility & compliance**

26. The Digital Transformation Manager will develop a suitable strategy and framework to support Ashford in meeting its accessibility goals and monitor its implementation. They will ensure that good practice is applied and support services in their digital plans. This includes acting on relevant legislation and actions needed, as set out in this policy, to ensure compliance.

### **Operational Lead for digital accessibility & compliance**

27. The Digital Improvement & Web Development Officer oversees matters of compliance with the technical web standards set out in the regulations, including compliance of accessibility statements. Working with the technical lead to resolve any issues This includes raising awareness of relevant legislation and of actions needed, as set out in this policy, to ensure compliance, including:

- Staying informed about the regulations and respond to any changes made to national guidance around accessibility.
- Liaising with the CDDO/GDS on any audits ensuring any issues flagged are resolved within the timeframe given.
- Supporting Procurement/Contract Managers to ensure that all systems (both existing and newly procured) have the Ashford Borough Council accessibility requirements built into contracts with the supplier.
- Conducting accessibility audits and testing using both manual and automated approaches.
- Creating and maintaining an accessibility audit framework that includes a list of systems in scope of this policy and their current accessibility status.

### **Technical Lead**

28. The Senior Systems Developers will advise and support the Operational Lead to resolve issues where technical issues have caused incidences of non-compliance with standards that are identified across Ashford Borough Council digital estate.

## **Health and Wellbeing Group**

29. The Health and Wellbeing Group support the maintenance of the framework and the monitoring of the Ashford overall adherence to the legislation through Equality Impact Analysis (EIA). There should be regular EIAs (Equality Impact Analysis) on how changes are affecting staff in different equality groups and positions within the Ashford Borough Council.

## **Digital Champions**

30. Assistant Directors/Service Managers must appoint a digital champion who is responsible for accessibility to take responsibility for service systems/forms/web pages ensuring that they meet digital accessibility compliance for their services.

To do this, Champions will be fully supported by the Operational Lead and the Digital Core Group. Service Accessibility Champions will:

- Raise awareness of accessibility within their service, so that staff understand their roles in making systems and content digitally accessible. This includes sharing all guidance, communications, and training opportunities within the service.
- Flag any changes to the list of systems in scope of this policy within their service, including each system's compliance status to the Operational Lead.
- Support System Owners within their service in their pursuit of compliance by liaising with the Operational Lead to schedule audits and plan remedial actions.

## **System owners**

31. Ashford Borough Council system owners will ensure that the digital systems under their control remain within the standards of WCAG 2.1 AA and relevant legislation. To achieve this, they must:
- Ensure their digital system or mobile application is fully compliant with WCAG 2.1 AA;
  - Ensure their digital system or mobile application matches the requirements set out in the Council's Accessibility Statement Template.
  - Put procedures in place to only publish accessible content on their system. If other services are providing content to the system owner, the system owner should make the service aware that they must only provide accessible content and can refuse to publish non-accessible content depending on their risk appetite.
  - Work with the Operational Lead to identify and monitor known accessibility issues in the form of a remedial action plan. Issues should be prioritised and resolved as part of this plan. If deadlines are provided as part of a

monitoring process, the system owner must resolve the issues by the stated deadlines.

- Work with contract managers and the Ashford Borough Council Accessibility Champions to incorporate accessibility requirements into new and existing contracts. This includes taking active steps to move websites into the Ashford Borough Council domain where appropriate. Provide information about their system's accessibility and allow access to the system for internal and external monitoring processes if asked to do so by the Operational Lead for digital accessibility and ensure that reasonable adjustments are in place for systems, for example providing accessible formats on request.

32. System owners are also responsible for the handling of any digital accessibility related complaints associated with their system(s) via the corporate complaints procedure. They should also report all such complaints to the Operational Lead for corporate monitoring purposes.

## **Procurement of Digital Systems**

33. Contract managers (or managers with contract management responsibilities) must make sure that contractors and commissioned service providers understand their responsibilities in providing digital systems that support Ashford Borough Council in meeting its obligations regarding digital accessibility. They must also ensure that any tools used to deliver such services comply with the current standards at the time. Advice can be given by the Operational Lead.

34. As part of the procurement process, contract managers should complete an Equality Impact Analysis (EIA) and check the supplier's conformity to accessibility requirements. Where a supplier does not meet accessibility requirements, tender should only be awarded if there are no suitable accessible competitors.

35. To achieve this, contract managers must ensure that appropriate clauses are included in the contract. They must then actively monitor and report on the compliance with those contractual obligations by the supplier as part of contract management.

36. Where issues are found that need funding to resolve, the contract manager and the service are responsible for managing these requirements.

37. Where products do not meet accessibility requirements, the supplier must provide evidence of their progress towards compliance. This must be actively monitored as part of contract management

38. Contract managers should seek support from the Operation Lead where they are unsure about digital accessibility compliance matters.

### **Service managers**

39. Managers, team leaders and supervisors must ensure that staff are appropriately trained to produce accessible content and that the content published (or submitted to be published) is accessible. Training materials are available on Ashford Achieve and there is a digital accessibility section on the SmartHub which provides guidance, tools and training for creating and procuring accessible content.

### **Staff creating digital content**

40. All staff are responsible for the compliance of any content they produce for a digital system, for example websites, intranets, digital document sharing platforms:
- Any multimedia & video content that is available to the public or to staff on a Ashford Borough Council digital system should have human-corrected captions
41. Staff should use the tools available on the SmartHub to make their content accessible before it is published and should seek advice from Digital Champions and then the Operational Lead if full accessibility cannot be achieved.
42. Ashford Borough Council advises that staff need to be given appropriate training on the tools and platforms they must use. Since digital accessibility is a developing area, regular training on updated technology and practice must also be provided. This training is mandatory for all staff creating digital content and must be repeated every two years.
43. In addition, any training, additional CPD opportunities or additional workload needed to use new tools and platforms should fall within staff members' current workload allocation and should not be carried out in addition to the workload already agreed by contract.

## **Reporting**

### **Internal reporting**

44. The Strategic Lead for digital accessibility & compliance will regularly report progress towards or problems with compliance to the Digital Core Group

### **External reporting**

45. Ashford Borough Council may be required to report on progress externally as part of the monitoring process or another query (such as a Freedom of Information Request). The Strategic Lead will act on behalf of Ashford Borough Council with support from the Operational Lead provide adequate and accurate information for these purposes.

## **Training and awareness**

46. All staff should feel confident that they know their personal responsibilities and can carry out their duties in respect of this Digital Accessibility policy. Appropriate training is available. Information, advice, and guidance are maintained on digital accessibility area of the SmartHub.

## **Policy compliance**

47. By performing a role or action detailed in the Roles and Responsibilities, you are deemed to have read, understood, and agreed to adhere to this policy.
48. If you do not understand the implications of this policy or how it may apply to you, ask for advice from James Sloan (Operational Lead) or Ben Robinson (Strategic Lead).

## Equalities Impact Assessment

1. An Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) is a document that summarises how the council has had due regard to the public sector equality duty (Equality Act 2010) in its decision-making. Although there is no legal duty to produce an EIA, the Council must have **due regard** to the equality duty and an EIA is recognised as the best method of fulfilling that duty. It can assist the Council in making a judgment as to whether a policy or other decision will have unintended negative consequences for certain people and help maximise the positive impacts of policy change. An EIA can lead to one of four consequences:
  - (a) No major change – the policy or other decision is robust with no potential for discrimination or adverse impact. Opportunities to promote equality have been taken;
  - (b) Adjust the policy or decision to remove barriers or better promote equality as identified in the EIA;
  - (c) Continue the policy – if the EIA identifies potential for adverse impact, set out compelling justification for continuing;
  - (d) Stop and remove the policy where actual or potential unlawful discrimination is identified.

### Public sector equality duty

2. The Equality Act 2010 places a duty on the council, when exercising public functions, to have due regard to the need to:
  - (a) Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation;
  - (b) Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
  - (c) Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it (ie tackling prejudice and promoting understanding between people from different groups).
3. These are known as the three aims of the general equality duty.

### Protected characteristics

4. The Equality Act 2010 sets out nine protected characteristics for the purpose of the equality duty:
  - Age
  - Disability
  - Gender reassignment
  - Marriage and civil partnership\*
  - Pregnancy and maternity
  - Race
  - Religion or belief
  - Sex
  - Sexual orientation

\*For marriage and civil partnership, only the first aim of the duty applies in relation to employment.

### Due regard



5. Having 'due regard' is about using good equality information and analysis at the right time as part of decision-making procedures.
6. To 'have due regard' means that in making decisions and in its other day-to-day activities the council must consciously consider the need to do the things set out in the general equality duty: eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations. This can involve:
  - removing or minimising disadvantages suffered by people due to their protected characteristics.
  - taking steps to meet the needs of people with certain protected characteristics when these are different from the needs of other people.
  - encouraging people with certain protected characteristics to participate in public life or in other activities where it is disproportionately low.
7. How much regard is 'due' will depend on the circumstances. The greater the potential impact, the higher the regard required by the duty. Examples of functions and decisions likely to engage the duty include: policy decisions, budget decisions, public appointments, service provision, statutory discretion, decisions on individuals, employing staff and procurement of goods and services.
8. In terms of timing:
  - Having 'due regard' should be considered at the inception of any decision or proposed policy or service development or change.
  - Due regard should be considered throughout development of a decision. Notes shall be taken and kept on file as to how due regard has been had to the equality duty in research, meetings, project teams, consultations etc.
  - The completion of the EIA is a way of effectively summarising this and it should inform final decision-making.

### **Armed Forces Community**

9. As part of the council's commitment to the Armed Forces Community made through the signing of the Armed Forces Covenant the council's Cabinet agreed in November 2017 that potential impacts on the Armed Forces Community should be considered as part of the Equality Impact Assessment process.
10. Accordingly, due regard should also be had throughout the decision making process to potential impacts on the groups covered by the Armed Forces Covenant:
  - Current serving members of the Armed Forces (both Regular and Reserve)
  - Former serving members of the Armed Forces (both Regular and Reserve)
  - The families of current and former Armed Forces personnel.

### **Case law principles**

11. A number of principles have been established by the courts in relation to the equality duty and due regard:
  - Decision-makers in public authorities must be aware of their duty to have 'due regard' to the equality duty and so EIA's must be attached to any relevant committee reports.

- Due regard is fulfilled before and at the time a particular policy is under consideration as well as at the time a decision is taken. Due regard involves a conscious approach and state of mind.
- A public authority cannot satisfy the duty by justifying a decision after it has been taken.
- The duty must be exercised in substance, with rigour and with an open mind in such a way that it influences the final decision.
- The duty is a non-delegable one. The duty will always remain the responsibility of the public authority.
- The duty is a continuing one so that it needs to be considered not only when a policy, for example, is being developed and agreed but also when it is implemented.
- It is good practice for those exercising public functions to keep an accurate record showing that they have actually considered the general duty and pondered relevant questions. Proper record keeping encourages transparency and will discipline those carrying out the relevant function to undertake the duty conscientiously.
- A public authority will need to consider whether it has sufficient information to assess the effects of the policy, or the way a function is being carried out, on the aims set out in the general equality duty.
- A public authority cannot avoid complying with the duty by claiming that it does not have enough resources to do so.

The Equality and Human Rights Commission has produced helpful guidance on “Meeting the Equality Duty in Policy and Decision-Making” (October 2014). It is available on the following link and report authors should read and follow this when developing or reporting on proposals for policy or service development or change and other decisions likely to engage the equality duty. *Equality Duty in decision-making*

<b>Lead officer:</b>	Ben Robinson
<b>Decision maker:</b>	Cabinet
<b>Decision:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Policy, project, service, contract</li> <li>• Review, change, new, stop</li> </ul>	To adopt this Policy which ensures that all web-based content and mobile applications that it funds, develops or controls meet the requirements set out in the Public Sector Bodies (Websites and Mobile Applications) (No. 2) Accessibility Regulations 2018 (“The Regulations”). This includes making reasonable adjustments where appropriate under the Public Sector Equality Duty and the Equality Act 2010.
<b>Date of decision:</b> The date when the final decision is made. The EIA must be complete before this point and inform the final decision.	

<p><b>Summary of the proposed decision:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Aims and objectives</li> <li>• Key actions</li> <li>• Expected outcomes</li> <li>• Who will be affected and how?</li> <li>• How many people will be affected?</li> </ul>	<p>This policy aims to outline the Council's responsibility to fully conform to the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) version 2.1 Level AA and sets out the principles we must follow to ensure that information is made accessible.</p> <p><b>WCAG defines how to make web content more accessible to people with disabilities.</b> Accessibility involves a wide range of disabilities, including visual, auditory, physical, speech, cognitive, language, learning, and neurological disabilities.</p>
<p><b>Information and research:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Outline the information and research that has informed the decision.</li> <li>• Include sources and key findings.</li> </ul>	<p>Work has taken place alongside the Kent Digital Accessibility Group to align this policy across Kent Districts.</p> <p>Ashford already supports the principles set out by WCAG 2.1, and its website has been audited for compliance with any issues resolved within the 12 week period.</p>
<p><b>Consultation:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What specific consultation has occurred on this decision?</li> <li>• What were the results of the consultation?</li> <li>• Did the consultation analysis reveal any difference in views across the protected characteristics?</li> <li>• What conclusions can be drawn from the analysis on how the decision will affect people with different protected characteristics?</li> </ul>	<p>N/A</p>
<p><b>Assess the relevance of the decision to people with different protected characteristics and assess the impact of the decision on people with different protected characteristics.</b></p> <p>When assessing relevance and impact, make it clear who the assessment applies to within the protected characteristic category. For example, a decision may have high relevance for young people but low relevance for older people; it may have a positive impact on women but a neutral impact on men.</p>	

<b>Protected characteristic</b>	<b>Relevance to Decision</b> High/Medium/Low/None	<b>Impact of Decision</b> <b>Positive</b> (Major/Minor) <b>Negative</b> (Major/Minor) <b>Neutral</b>
<u>AGE</u> Elderly	Low	Positive
Middle age	None	Positive
Young adult	None	Positive
Children	None	Positive
<u>DISABILITY</u> Physical	High	Positive
Mental	Medium	Positive
Sensory	High	Positive
<u>GENDER RE-ASSIGNMENT</u>	None	Positive
<u>MARRIAGE/CIVIL PARTNERSHIP</u>	None	Positive
<u>PREGNANCY/MATERNITY</u>	None	Positive
<u>RACE</u>	None	Positive
<u>RELIGION OR BELIEF</u>	None	Positive
<u>SEX</u> Men	None	Positive
Women	None	Positive
<u>SEXUAL ORIENTATION</u>	None	Positive
<u>ARMED FORCES COMMUNITY</u> Regular/Reserve personnel	None	Positive
Former service personnel	None	Positive
Service families	None	Positive

<b>Mitigating negative impact:</b> Where any negative impact has been identified, outline the measures taken to mitigate against it.	
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<b>Is the decision relevant to the aims of the equality duty?</b> Guidance on the aims can be found in the EHRC's <u>Essential Guide</u> , alongside fuller <u>PSED Technical Guidance</u> .	
<b>Aim</b>	<b>Yes / No / N/A</b>
1) Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation	Yes
2) Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it	Yes

3) Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it	Yes
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<p><b>Conclusion:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Consider how due regard has been had to the equality duty, from start to finish.</li> <li>There should be no unlawful discrimination arising from the decision (see guidance above ).</li> <li>Advise on whether the proposal meets the aims of the equality duty or whether adjustments have been made or need to be made or whether any residual impacts are justified.</li> <li>How will monitoring of the policy, procedure or decision and its implementation be undertaken and reported?</li> </ul>	<p><i>The accessibility policy can offer a positive impact for all and become an integral part of 'how we do things' and is based around making our digital services accessible for all.</i></p> <p><i>The risk in not having or a failure to adhere to the policy could result in reputational damage and financial loss.</i></p> <p><i>The Digital Core Group is accountable for ensuring that Ashford Borough Council adheres to The Regulations. With the Digital Transformation Manager will develop a suitable strategy and framework to support Ashford in meeting its accessibility goals and monitor its implementation.</i></p>
<b>EIA completion date:</b>	16 <sup>th</sup> January 2023

## Review of Policy

49. The next scheduled review date will be in January 2025.