

# FAREHAM

## BOROUGH COUNCIL

### Report to Policy and Resources Scrutiny Panel

**Date**                    **21 October 2024**

**Report of:**            **Assistant Chief Executive Officer**

**Subject:**              **MOTION – SUPPORT FOR LGBTQ+ PEOPLE**

#### **SUMMARY**

At the meeting of the Council on 25 July 2024 a motion was proposed by Councillor Furnivall that: “the Council show support for the LGBTQ+ community by flying the Pride flag during Pride Month from 2025 and to explore how to ensure anyone dealing with the Council may be offered the opportunity to be addressed using pronouns of their choice if they wish”.

Council agreed that this motion should be referred to the Policy and Resources Scrutiny Panel for consideration.

Members of the Policy and Resources Panel are asked to consider the motion before them and to make its recommendations. To aid Members, a number of options and considerations are presented within the report.

#### **RECOMMENDATION**

It is RECOMMENDED that the Panel:-

- a) reviews the content of the report, noting the duties of the Council;
- b) considers the motion as referred to the Policy and Resources Scrutiny Panel;
- c) makes any comments or recommendations for further consideration.

## **INTRODUCTION**

1. A motion was presented to Council on 25 July 2024 by Councillor Furnivall to show support for LGBTQ+ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Questioning and Asexual) people and communities. This report highlights the Council's responsibilities with regards to equalities and outlines some of the work we already do.
2. To further aid the Panel's discussions, the report identifies some of the considerations associated with implementing the proposals alongside potential additional opportunities for supporting LGBTQ+ communities.

## **BACKGROUND**

3. The Motion proposed at the meeting of the Council on 25 July 2024 Councillor G Furnivall stated the following:

This Council notes that:

4. Fareham Borough is the proud home of a large, diverse and thriving LGBTQ+ community.
  - Results of the 2021 Census show that 8.14% of residents (16 and over) identify as LGB – ie. approximately 1 in 12. Furthermore, 0.27% of residents state that their gender is different to that assigned at birth – ie. approximately 1 in 370.
  - According to Home office statistics sexual orientation hate crime in Hampshire rose by 65% in 2022 from the year before. In fact, all hate crime rose by 64% making Hampshire the highest rise in the South East.
  - The Stonewall and YouGov 2018 'LGBT in Britain - health report' stated that 1 in 8 LGBT people (18-24) had tried to take their own life in the previous year and almost half of trans people surveyed said the same.

Council therefore notes:

- That harm has been done to LGBTQ+ people in the past and that discrimination exists.
- The Home Office has stated that increased discussion of "transgender issues" could be behind the rise in anti-LGBTQ+ hate crimes.
- That more could be done to support and enable equity in Fareham society

Fareham Borough Council resolves:

- That all LGBTQ+ people deserve to be treated with dignity and respect
- To show support for LGBTQ+ people by flying the Pride flag during Pride month from 2025
- To explore how to ensure anyone dealing with the Council may be offered the opportunity to be addressed using pronouns of their choice if they wish.

5. Having been duly seconded by Councillor C Bainbridge, the motion stood referred without discussion by Council to the Policy and Resources Scrutiny Panel. In accordance with the Council's Constitution, Part One Appendix 5, Equalities comes under the Policy and Resources portfolio, hence the motion being referred to this Scrutiny Panel.
6. To assist the Panel consider the motion, this report outlines the Council's duties with regards to equalities and also presents potential options for discussion.

### **Our duties as a Local Authority**

7. The Equality Act was introduced in 2010 to help make Britain a fairer society. The Act places particular duties on Councils to reflect the pivotal role we play in dismantling inequality and driving up positive outcomes. It incorporates nine protected characteristics:
  - Age
  - Disability
  - Gender reassignment
  - Marriage
  - Civil partnership
  - Pregnancy and maternity
  - Race
  - Religion or belief
  - Sex and sexual orientation
8. In addition, Councils are required to demonstrate due regard to the need to:
  - Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation,
  - Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not share it; and
  - Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not share it.
9. Councils are also required to have at least one published equality objective, which is to be reviewed every 4 years. Approved as part of the Annual Review of the Corporate Strategy at the meeting of the Executive on 7 November 2022, the Council's Equality Objectives up to 2026 are to:
  - Improve our understanding of Fareham's community, enabling the Council to meaningfully engage in decision making.

- Celebrate diversity and promote inclusion across our community, ensuring Fareham Borough Council services are accessible to all members of our community.
- Embed an inclusive mindset across Fareham Borough Council.

10. A range of actions have subsequently taken place in support of these objectives. These include monitoring staff diversity, equalities training for managers and the recording of protected characteristics during consultations on a regular basis.

11. Equalities Impact Assessments are also carried out to consider the potential impact of policy decisions and to identify possible reasonable mitigations. More broadly, equalities are an important consideration for many officers when delivering services on a day-to-day basis.

### **CONSIDERATIONS AND OPPORTUNITIES**

12. Fareham Borough Council has a good overall approach to equality issues. The following identifies some of the possible implications of the proposals in the Motion, particularly with regards to their effective delivery. It also presents potential additional options for consideration.

#### **Flying the Pride Flag during Pride month:**

13. Taking place during June each year, Pride Month is dedicated to the celebration of LGBTQ+ pride, commemorating the contributions of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer culture and community. Pride Flags are visible symbols of community inclusion and are commonly flown during the month-long activities.

14. Out of the 13 Councils in the county, including Hampshire County Council, only Fareham, New Forest, Gosport and Rushmoor don't currently fly a Pride Flag at least once during the year.

15. The flagpole outside the Civic Offices is reserved for the Union Flag which is flown Monday to Friday in accordance with national guidelines. We also fly the Borough Flag on the day of a Council meeting. There are six further flag poles close to the performance podium in the pedestrianised area of West Street. These do not have the same guideline restrictions used to manage the Civic flagpole and are currently flying the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Fareham Borough flags.

16. Whilst flying a pride flag is a positive statement of support, doing it on its own may carry the risk of accusations of 'Pink/Rainbow Washing,' being made against the Council. This is where an organisation is only superficially sympathetic to the community and not taking positive action to support it.

17. In addition to flying the Pride flag, there are opportunities for Members to consider which could provide more meaningful outcomes:

18. *Providing information and guidance:* There is currently no specific information or guidance on our website for the LGBTQ+ community. We could post information on our public noticeboards, website, as well as on the staff intranet pages, signposting to information and advice including links to local LGBTQ+ support groups. This

information could then be shared on our social media channels as part of Pride Month.

19. *Town Centre Regeneration for all*: One of the underlying principles of the emerging Town Centre Regeneration Strategy will be to ensure the town is welcoming and safe for all our communities including LGBTQ+ people. As part of recent engagement with town centre businesses, we are aware that some are keen to celebrate the LGBTQ+ community. Further work could take place to identify opportunities through events, activities and other initiatives that might emerge as part of the Strategy.

### **Addressing people using the pronouns of their choosing if they wish**

20. To implement this approach in a considered and effective way across the Council would require additional work focusing on:
21. *Internal audit of approaches and customer contact points*: Council services engage with a diverse range of customers and there may already be multiple examples of good practice adopted. It is also important to map contact points, where pro-nouns are currently asked for. This includes the IT systems used to deliver services.
22. A particular consideration is whether changes to IT systems would result in additional costs and if so, how much. If costs are prohibitive, it may be that a gradual transition to ensuring online services ask for pronouns in a consistent way is preferred.
23. *Identifying good practice externally*: Researching how other Councils and organisations incorporate the asking of pronouns in their customer facing services and IT, such as customer portals, will help ensure any approach meets the needs of our customers.

### **RISK ASSESSMENT**

24. There are no significant risk considerations in relation to this report.

### **CONCLUSION**

25. This report presents a number of ideas and potential areas for further work to aid members in their consideration of the motion to the 25 July Council Meeting which asked the Council to show support for the LGBTQ+ community.

**Background Papers:** None

**Reference Papers:** Minutes of the meeting of the Council, 25 July 2024

### **Enquiries:**

For further information on this report please contact Roy Brown (Ext 4489)