



Accessibility Policy.



Corporate Property Strategy
2024-2029



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Version 3



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1. Introduction

This policy relates to how the Equality Act 2010 and the Milton Keynes City Council Equality Policy will be considered and applied across all operational and commercial buildings where services are provided to members of the public, including the council's core operational buildings.

The Equality Act 2010 replaced previous anti-discrimination laws with a single act and protects people from discrimination in the workplace and in wider society. The Act makes it against the law to discriminate against someone with one or more of the nine protected characteristics:

- age
- disability
- gender reassignment (including those in transition)
- marriage and civil partnership
- pregnancy and maternity
- race
- religion or belief
- sex
- sexual orientation

Property owners and occupiers are affected by the provisions, which prohibit discrimination in relation to the disposal of property; giving consent to the disposal of property; managing property; providing a service to the public; and exercising a public function.

The Public Sector Equality Duty came into force in 2011. It means that public bodies must think about how they can improve society and promote equality in every aspect their day-to-day business. As a public body, this means that we must consider, and keep reviewing, how we are promoting equality in:

- decision-making
- internal and external policies
- procuring goods and services
- the services they provide
- recruitment, promotion, and performance management of employees

Working to a standard beyond compliance to the Equality Act, the Council will consider the impact of its services by actively working to create opportunities and removing barriers. This is what we mean by equality, diversity, and inclusion.

2. Our Commitments

Milton Keynes Council serves a diverse community, where people from a range of backgrounds and experiences enhance the life and development of the City.

The Council's Equality Vision is to "Improve the way we engage, think, plan and act to deliver equality and inclusion for everyone, every day."

We will support the Council's Equality Vision through the following commitments:

Engage

- Support engagement in all equality streams.
- Work with the service areas to improve the service user experience.
- Maintain good communication with our staff, building users and tenants.
- Promote a culture of inclusion.

Think

- Understand the Equality Act 2010 and its implications.
- Undertake Equality and Fairness Impact Assessments where relevant.
- When buying or selling, managing, maintaining, refurbishing or designing our properties the council will consider the implications of the Equality Act and Equality Policy.
- Monitor and analyse trends in data and information in relation to our buildings.
- Ensure that officer policies and decision reports are written in Plain English.

Plan

- Ensure that wherever possible, budgets are prioritised to ensure that accessibility improvements are carried out efficiently.
- When working with services to identify their property requirements, ensure that their equality challenges are captured and considered.

Act

- Identify opportunities to improve accessibility when undertaking condition surveys for all buildings and sites where services are provided to members of the public.
- Wherever it is not possible to improve accessibility issues in the building, ensure that an Accessibility Statement is publicly available.
- Identify poorly performing assets and make recommendations to rationalise the property portfolio through relevant policies and procedures.
- Ensure that our staff are adequately equipped to serve a diverse community.

3. Accessibility Assessments

The Equality Act 2010 requires reasonable adjustments to be made in relation to accessibility. In practice, this means that due regard must be given to any specific needs of likely building users that might be reasonably met.

We will include accessibility assessments in our programme of condition surveys at all buildings and sites where services are provided to members of the public, including the council's core operational buildings, in order to assess compliance with the Equality Act 2010.

Accessibility work identified through the surveys will be broken down into three priorities:

- **Priority 1:** Items requiring immediate consideration as they are Health & Safety issues.
- **Priority 2:** Items requiring consideration for inclusion into short/medium term work programmes.
- **Priority 3:** Items for consideration/evaluation for inclusion within long-term upgrading and refurbishment projects.

Allocation of funds

To allocate the funds available in the most efficient manner, we will prioritise works using the following criteria as a guideline:

- Where the issue relates to a core council building where services are provided to members of the public.
- A specific access issue has been brought to the Council's attention by a member of the public or staff.
- There is a maintenance project planned that could integrate the work identified.
- There is a major refurbishment or construction project planned that requires additional funds in order to meet full compliance (Part M of the Building Regulations Act 2010).

Accessibility Statements

For properties that provide services to the public and where it is not reasonably possible to improve access, an Accessibility Statement will be produced and made available to the public on site and online.

The statement will indicate the limitations to access, and the systems or alternatives put in place in order to ensure the service is delivered to all.

Process

Accessibility assessments will form the basis of prioritising accessibility works in all buildings and sites where services are provided to members of the public.

Additional accessibility requests will be considered on a case-by-case basis in consultation with the relevant service area, having first considered removing or altering any feature preventing access; and/or providing reasonable means of avoiding the feature.

If it is not possible to improve accessibility to a building, an Accessibility Statement will be made publicly available.

Any new operational acquisitions must either be compliant with the Equality Act 2010, or capable of becoming compliant, unless there are exceptional reasons.

Any new designed buildings, extensions, or refurbishments must be compliant with the Equality Act 2010, Building Regulations Part M, and care and attention will be paid to ensure that all of the protected characteristics are considered within the design.

Authority

Authority for the improvement, refurbishment and maintenance of the Council’s commercial property portfolio rests with the Assistant Director of Property and subject to available budget.

4. Version Control

Version Number	Date issued	Author	Update information
1	27/09/2019	Bee Lewis/ Peter Beer	First published version
2	18/11/2021	Leon Howell	Contact details and accessibility
3	19/02/2024	Peter Beer	Update to new template and reference to corporate equality policy. Insertion of new commitments
4	13 August 2024	Bee Lewis	Updated to new template. Policy and process reviewed to reflect new Corporate Property Strategy.



Milton Keynes
City Council