

Motion in relation to Socio-economic Duty

Proposed by: Councillor Calvin Horner

Seconded by: Councillor Miriam Swainston

Council notes that:

- Section 1 of the Equality Act 2010 (“the socio-economic duty”) requires public authorities, when making strategic decisions, to have due regard to reducing the impact of socio-economic disadvantage.
- This duty has not been enacted in England but may be voluntarily adopted by local authorities to strengthen action on poverty and disadvantage.
- While Hertfordshire ranks among the least deprived counties nationally on the Index of Multiple Deprivation 2025, there are pockets of disadvantage across East Herts, and rural deprivation is known to be masked by district-level averages.

Council believes that:

- Socio-economic disadvantage is a driver of unequal outcomes in health, education and employment, and must be addressed to improve residents’ life chances.
- Strategic decisions taken by the council can either reduce or reinforce inequalities and should therefore be informed by a clear understanding of their impact on people experiencing disadvantage, with steps taken to mitigate any adverse effects.
- Adoption of the socio-economic duty would further strengthen the commitment to being Fair and Inclusive in the East Herts Council’s Corporate Plan.

Council resolves to:

- Ask Executive to consider inclusion of the voluntary adoption of the socio-economic duty within the council’s revised Equalities Strategy, to come before Council for adoption this autumn,

committing the council to have due regard to socio-economic disadvantage in strategic decision-making.

- Request that when drafting the revised Equalities Strategy for adoption by Council, Executive leads the development of a clear and fair definition of socio-economic disadvantage, including measures of poverty and other relevant indicators, to support consistent application of the duty.
- Request that, should Council adopt a revised Equalities Strategy which voluntarily includes the socio-economic duty, Executive ensures that the duty is applied in a proportionate way, focusing on improving life chances and access to services for residents experiencing disadvantage, while maintaining fairness for all communities.