



**For Immediate Release**

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### **New councillors' forum set to help make the borough a more inclusive place**

Residents facing equality, diversity and inclusion challenges will be able to have their concerns heard through a new panel of borough councillors.

Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council's Cabinet gave the go-ahead to set up a councillors' Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Forum at a meeting last night (Tuesday 6 July).

The new panel of equality, diversity and inclusion 'champions' will work with local partners, such as the NHS, Hampshire County Council and voluntary and community organisations, to better understand inequalities faced by certain individuals and listen to local people's concerns around barriers to accessing services and opportunities, such as health, employment and education.

Quarterly forum meetings will discuss evidence of inequalities, current initiatives to address these and consider further action with partners to make Basingstoke and Deane a more welcoming and inclusive place for people to live, work and visit.

Cabinet Member for Communities, Planning and Infrastructure Cllr Simon Bound, who is the council's lead on equality, diversity and inclusion, will be advised by the panel as it looks at better ways of tackling discrimination and helping to create a more inclusive borough.

The council has a long track record of working with local communities and partner organisations, such as the Basingstoke and District Disability Forum and Basingstoke Unites Against Racism, to tackle inequalities.

Cllr Bound said: "It is now more important than ever that we all work together to help people and communities in this borough who face inequality and discrimination. We want to build on the work that is already being done and councillors have a key role to play in this.

"This forum is another step towards raising awareness of local inequalities and helping to address these. We need to do all we can to make sure the borough is a truly inclusive place where everyone can thrive and feel that they belong."

**ENDS**

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