Member Report

**Draft Equalities Objectives 2022**

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| **Public** | | | |
| **To:** | Cabinet | **Date:** | 21st December 2021 |
| **From:** | Managing Director (Head of Paid Services) | **Decision type:** | Executive |
| **Portfolio:** | Resources | **Forward Plan Reference: n/a** |  |
| **Priority:** | All Priorities |  |  |

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| **HEADLINE POSITION** | | |
|  | **Summary of report** | |
|  | This report sets out our plans to develop our equalities work, and specifically, proposes to consult widely in the Borough to ascertain local people’s views about some key equalities objectives for the Council. We last reviewed our Equality Policy in 2018 and it is always good practice to review and take stock, in a fast moving world, of what we should be doing to meet our obligations as a service provider, employer and commissioner of services for some of the most vulnerable people in the Borough. | |
|  | **Recommendation** | |
|  | It is recommended that Members agree for consultation the draft equalities objectives included in the report.  **DETAILED PROPOSALS** | |
| 3.1  3.2  3.3  3.4  3.5  3.6  3.7  3.8  3.9 | **What are the objectives of the report and how do they link to the Council’s priorities?**  The Council’s Corporate Plan, Our Flourishing Future, contains our vision, values and corporate priorities. Equality of opportunity is specified as one of the Council’s values – it should underpin everything we do. We have an Equality Policy which was last reviewed in 2018. It is our intention to review the policy in 2022 so that we can take stock of a changing world, not least the impact of Covid on our communities and the need to make sure that those communities that have suffered the most are supported as we emerge from the pandemic.  Although we are setting the policy review as a specific objective, a number of other objectives are proposed as set out in the report. The full set of objectives, and their associated actions, will allow us to understand more about the landscape from an equalities perspective, allowing that review to be thorough.  The list of objectives has been drawn up from within the Council, drawing on the expertise within our staff and management. Our front-line staff bring with them their own experiences of working with vulnerable people. All of our staff are from one of more of the key groups of people that the equalities policy is intended to support:   * People from different age groups * Men or women (around two-thirds of our workforce are women, one-third men) * Women who are pregnant or have recently given birth * People have undergone, proposing to, or undergoing gender reassignment * People with disabilities or carers * People from different religions, belief or faith (including those with no belief) * People of different race or ethnicity * People who are lesbian, gay or bisexual * People who are either married or in a civil partnership * Looked after children\* * People and families on lower incomes\* * People and families who are homeless\* * People who have served in the armed forces\*   This list covers the “protected characteristics” as set out in equalities legislation, as well as other groups that the Council considers important to be included in equalities work (marked\*).  As a local authority, we have a legal duty to:   * Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation * Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and people who do not share it, and * Foster good relations between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not share it   As a local authority, we have wide ranging responsibilities as a service provider (often to some of the most vulnerable people in our Borough), a commissioner of services to local people, as well as a community leader.  As a Borough, we are one of the least ethnically diverse Boroughs in England which makes it doubly important for us to carry out, and be seen to carry out, our legal duties. Smaller communities, not just black and minority ethnic communities, may be more isolated than in other Boroughs and require even stronger community leadership from us to help identify where there are problems and challenges and act accordingly to address them.  Following consultation, proposed to commence in January, we will ensure the objectives are embedded in the Corporate Plan Implementation Plan so that progress can be captured and reported as part of our performance management processes, including regular reports to Cabinet and Scrutiny & Improvement Committees.  **Draft list of Equality Objectives for 2022**   1. Review the Council’s Equality Policy in line with latest legislation, guidance and the other actions we will undertake in 2022. This action will be led by the Strategic Policy Lead and will be completed by December 2022. 2. Identify a lead Cabinet Member for Equalities. Each of the portfolio roles includes a shared responsibility for equality but it is now necessary for one senior Cabinet Member to take a lead role in ensuring the consultation is robust and to ensure the actions we commit to get done and impact across all portfolios. This action can be completed as a matter of urgency and no later than the end of the calendar year 2021. 3. Implement a new approach to equalities impact to support Member decision-making. Members’ decisions must be made using full information, so we aim to introduce a cross-cutting approach to highlighting the impacts of decisions not just from an equalities perspective, but also consider other key priorities such as climate change and the environment as an integrated approach. The lead for this action will be the Governance Director and a new approach will be implemented by March 2022. 4. Implement the Local Government Association’s (LGA) Equalities Framework for Local Government. The framework helps local councils to meet their obligations under the Equality Act 2010 including the Public Sector Equality Duties (the duties set out in paragraph 3.5). It is a self-assessment tool and will help us to identify our strengths and areas for further development, thus informing future action plans. We are awaiting publication of the LGA’s revised framework. If it is released early in 2022, we plan to implement it by September 2022 and report the findings back to Members. The lead for this action will be the Strategic Policy Lead. 5. Agree a plan for, and commence delivery of, a programme of culture change, education, training and development covering equality, diversity and inclusion – for Members and officers. There is likely to be a cost to delivering something on this scale, aimed at all Members and officers. The lead for this will be the Governance Director and a costed plan will be brought forward to Cabinet for consideration no later than June 2022. 6. Review the content of our published (staff) equalities data and identify areas for improvement and development. We publish data annually but we need to ensure the information is as useful as possible to inform policy and decision-making, and staff recruitment, training and development practices. The Strategic Policy Lead will lead a review of the data and report back to Members by April 2022. 7. Identify a single consultation and engagement list of groups and organisations covering internal and external equality, diversity and inclusion interests. This would help us to ensure that, for a whole range of consultations the Council undertakes, we are more confident of reaching the views of as many disadvantaged or potentially disadvantaged groups as possible. In turn, this will ensure we can plan and deliver and commission better, more effective services, and be a better community leader for everyone. The lead for this will be the Strategic Policy Lead with a target date of February 2022. | |
|  | **What options have been considered** | |
|  | The selected options for equality objectives 2022 are drawn from a range of alternatives and a final decision on objectives / actions for 2022 will be taken once consultation is concluded. The actions are based on the knowledge of officers. Consultation will potentially identify other potential objectives which may be added to this list or held for future years. | |
|  | **Impact assessment** | |
|  | |  |  | | --- | --- | | **Type of Risk/ Implication** | **Details** | | Climate Emergency Impact | n/a | | Health and Safety | In terms of employment of staff, any equalities objectives and associated actions may have health and safety implications. These are likely to be positive as staff from one or more of the “protected characteristics” are likely to feel more valued and supported as a result. | | Social Value | n/a | | Legal | Local authorities must comply with the Equality Act and the Public Sector Equality Duty (listed in the report). | | Financial | Most of the actions will be undertaken within existing financial resources although it is recognised that the education, training, development and culture change programme is likely to have a cost which will be considered before it is implemented. | | Human Resources | Training and development for all our staff will ensure we better meet the needs of all our communities, and ensure all staff feel valued. | | Equality and Diversity | This report is fundamentally about equality and diversity and thus the implications will be positive. | | |
|  | **Implementation Plan**   |  |  | | --- | --- | | **Implementation Plan** | **Comment** | | Timetable for implementing decision. | Each objective and action has a suggested completion date | | Lead officer | The lead officer for each objective and action is identified. | | Reporting progress | As actions will be embedded into the Corporate Plan Implementation Plan, we will track progress and report it on a quarterly basis to Members, including through Scrutiny and to Cabinet. | | Communications Plan | A report with the outcome of consultation will be presented to the first available Cabinet meeting after the close of consultation with the public / communities. | | |
| 7.1  7.2 | **Consultation and Engagement**  Consultation so far: There have been a range of discussions within directorates to arrive at a set of proposed objectives. These have been shared with Cabinet Members.  Consultation planned: Officers are currently drawing up a list of local groups and organisations that are either based in the Borough or, for those with a wider geographical remit (e.g. Tees Valley). This will be developed through our community development teams, user groups of some of the Council’s own services, voluntary and community sector “umbrella organisations” such Redcar & Cleveland Voluntary Development Agency, and more. It is not intended to attach a fixed closing date as there might be some groups that need more time, but we would aim to conclude as much consultation as we can by the end of February 2022. We may need to make suitable adjustments which incur a cost in order to carry out some consultation, e.g. information in alternative formats, signers, or interpreters.  Elected Members will have a wealth of knowledge about local groups that have a keen interest in equalities issues, and Members’ suggestions are most welcome. | |
| 8.1 | **Appendices and background papers**  None. | |
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