



Agenda Item

FOR PUBLICATION

DERBYSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

IMPROVEMENT AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - RESOURCES

3 MARCH 2021

Report of the Managing Executive Director

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2022 - 2025

1. Purpose

- 1.1 To present the Council's final draft Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2022-2025 for consideration following consultation.
- 1.2 To enable Elected Members to explore additional opportunities to be further involved in the development of key priorities as set out in the Strategy and identified workstream activities over the forthcoming period.

2. Information and Analysis

2.1 Background

The Public Sector Equality Duty requires all councils to develop and publish their equality and diversity objectives and regularly report on progress. The Council's existing Equality and Diversity Strategy was put in place in 2018 and sets out the Council's key priorities for 2018-2021.

The Council Plan 2021-25 sets out the Council's ambitions in relation to equality, diversity and inclusion with the development of a new strategy to reduce discrimination and tackle inequalities being highlighted as a key deliverable to be in place by March 2022.

2.2 Final Draft Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2022-2025

Over recent months work has been taking place to develop the Council's new Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy. A wide range of engagement has taken place with internal stakeholders which has involved reviewing the Council's approach and identifying the key challenges and opportunities for the Council and Derbyshire moving forward.

A report to Resources Improvement and Scrutiny Committee on 2 December 2021 set out the work that had been undertaken on the development of the draft Strategy and sought feedback in advance of consultation with the public. Feedback from the Committee particularly in respect of developing identified actions and deliverables have been fed into the development of the final draft,

The engagement that has taken place has shown a real appetite for the Council to become more ambitious and to put equality, diversity and inclusion at the heart of everything it does.

The final draft Strategy recognises that the Council has worked hard on equality and diversity issues and that this work has resulted in significant changes to services, employment practices and approach. However, there is a recognition that more work needs to take place, particularly in the context of key demographic and economic challenges and wider societal events and issues including the coronavirus pandemic, increased focus on race equality, the increasing violence against women and girls and social mobility amongst many other issues.

The final draft Strategy sets out the Council's vision and values for equality, diversity and inclusion and five key priorities to direct activity over the forthcoming three-year period as follows:

- Create a diverse and confident workforce
- Ensure fair access to employment, skills and business support
- Engaged communities able to influence decisions
- Healthy and supported people
- Safe and inclusive places for everyone

Work has also been taking place to develop action plans to support delivery of the Strategy through the five equality, diversity and inclusion workstreams. This has resulted in the development of one, two and three-year deliverables and a number of success measures that will be put in place to monitor progress.

It is recognised that the five workstream action plans will develop and evolve over the forthcoming year as the new approach is embedded across the organisation. As a result, the Delivery Plan supporting the implementation of the Strategy is separate document to the main Strategy. This will enable actions and progress against the Delivery Plan to be updated on a regular basis separate to the annual refresh and review of the Strategy document itself.

Approval of the final draft Strategy will be sought from Cabinet at its meeting on 10 March 2022. Following adoption, the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2022-2025 will then be published in accordance with the Public Sector Equality Duty which requires the Council to set out and publish its equality objectives.

2.3 Next Steps

In taking forward the implementation and further development of the Council's work on equality, diversity and inclusion Elected Members are asked to explore through discussion potential opportunities to be further involved in the development of key priorities and workstream activities as set out in the report

The Strategy has been structured around 5 workstreams or main themes. One of these, "Engaged communities able to influence decisions" includes a focus on improving participation by under-represented groups and communities in consultation and participation in public life, and will seek to support Elected Members to champion equality, diversity and inclusion across Derbyshire, growing links with diverse groups and populations.

By working with the Resources Committee, it is hoped that the knowledge, existing experience and skills of Elected Members can be harnessed to help progress such work, and in the process, provide more support to those Members to reach and engage with communities that they may not have close links with at present.

2.4 Implementation and Monitoring Progress

Implementation will be overseen by the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Board and reporting will align with the Council's business monitoring processes. An Equalities Report will be published annually which will outline the activities the Council has undertaken each year and the progress made.

3. Consultation

- 3.1 A six-week period of consultation was undertaken between 13 December 2021 and 21 January 2022. The consultation enabled communities, employees and organisations to comment on the draft Strategy. The consultation was promoted using a range of methods including the “Have Your Say” webpages and social media. In addition, a range of groups, representing the wide range of protected characteristic groups in Derbyshire, were invited to take part in the consultation.

Consultation on the draft Strategy elicited 50 responses. The majority of respondents agreed with the identified challenges and the priorities that have been highlighted as the areas the Council will focus its attention over the coming period. No major gaps in coverage were identified or highlighted and as such no significant changes are required.

The main issue emerging from the comments received as part of the consultation process is the importance of the Council taking action and implementing the Strategy and ensuring that there are clear measures in place for monitoring progress.

4. Alternative Options Considered

- 4.1 Alternative Option 1 – Retain the existing Equality and Diversity Strategy - this option is not recommended due to the significant changes and challenges emerging in society over the last four years.
- 4.2 Alternative Option 2 - Do not have a separate equality strategy and incorporate equality, diversity and inclusion activity in other Council strategies - this option is not recommended as it is not best practice and could lead to legal challenge.

5. Implications

- 5.1 Appendix 1 sets out the relevant implications considered in the preparation of the report.

6. Background Papers

- 6.1 None identified.

7. Appendices

- 7.1 Appendix 1 - Implications.
- 7.2 Appendix 2 – Final Draft Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2022-2025

8. Recommendations

That the Committee:

- a) Note the final draft Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2022-2025 which will be considered for approval by Cabinet at its meeting on 10 March 2022.
- b) Explore how Elected Members can further support the development of key actions set out in the Strategy including work to improve community participation and participation in public life as outlined in the report.

9. Reasons for Recommendation(s)

- 9.1 To ensure Members are aware of the final draft Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2022-2025 and the activity that have been undertaken to reach its current state of development.
- 9.2 To seek views and further explore involvement in the work to deliver the Council's Strategy for Equality, Diversity and Inclusion 2022-2025 as outlined above.

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Implications

Financial

- 1.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from the draft Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2022- 2025 at this point in time. Key to delivering this strategy will be aligning resources to deliver positive outcomes, as far as is practicable to ensure equality, diversity and inclusion is at the heart of everything the Council does.

Legal

- 2.1 The Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2022-2025 supports the Council to demonstrate compliance with the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) set out in the Equality Act 2010. The PSED is made up of a general equality duty which is supported by specific duties. The specific duty requires the Council to:
- Publish annual information to demonstrate how it is complying with the Public Sector Equality Duty. This information must relate to people who are affected by the Council's policies and practices such as service users and employees
 - Prepare and publish equality objectives at least every four years.

Human Resources

- 3.1 Equality, diversity and inclusion is integral to our workforce processes, policies and practices, and is at the heart of the Council's People Strategy approved in July 2021 with our people ambition of becoming an employer of choice. The Council continues to make positive progress towards having a workforce that reflects its community and where inclusivity is embedded in our practice, with plans being developed aligned to the People Strategy to further strengthen our approaches.

Information Technology

- 4.1 None identified

Equalities Impact

- 5.1 The Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2022- 2025 seeks to understand the issues and challenges faced by the people of Derbyshire in order to create a place of opportunity where everyone can

belong, addressing the needs and aspirations of all those who live and work in the county.

- 5.2 The strategy has been developed by gathering information from a range of impact and needs assessments and involving a range of internal and external stakeholders to identify key challenges and priorities and to confirm these.
- 5.3 Once the Strategy and Delivery Plan have been fully developed, an Equality Impact Analysis will be undertaken to ascertain the potential impact the Strategy and associated Delivery Plan will have on groups that share protected characteristics.

Corporate objectives and priorities for change

- 6.1 The development of the Council's new Equality, Diversity and Inclusion strategy is a key deliverable set out in the Council Plan 2021-2025 to be completed by March 2022.