



FOR PUBLICATION

DERBYSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

CABINET

Thursday, 21 September 2023

Report of the Interim Director of Organisation Resilience, People and Communications

Diverse Council Declaration
(Cabinet Member for Health and Communities)

1. Divisions Affected

1.1 County-wide

2. Key Decision

2.1 This is not a Key Decision

3. Purpose

3.1 To outline and to seek approval to create a cross-party working group to consider the wide-ranging matters outlined in the Diverse Council Declaration Motion presented at Full Council on 12 July 2023 providing recommendations back to Cabinet as appropriate.

4. Information and Analysis

4.1 On 12 July 2023, Full Council heard a Motion entitled Diverse Councillor Declaration and it was requested that the Motion is referred to Cabinet to establish a cross-party working group to discuss and debate the wide-ranging matters covered in the Motion.

4.2 The Motion proposed that the Council commits to being a Diverse Council and it agrees to:

1. Provide a clear public commitment to improving diversity in democracy and benchmark our current position in line with established good practice
2. Demonstrate an open and welcoming culture to all, promoting the highest standards of behaviour and conduct.
3. Set out a local Diverse Council Action Plan ahead of the next local elections. Including:
 - Appoint Diversity Ambassadors for each political group on the council to work with each other and local party associations to encourage recruitment of candidates from under-represented groups.
 - Encourage and enable people from under-represented groups to stand for office through the provision of activities such as mentoring and shadowing programmes and information and learning events for people interested in standing as official candidates.
 - Proactive engagement and involvement with local community groups and partner organisations supporting and representing under-represented groups
 - Ensure that all members and candidates complete a candidates' and Councillors' survey distributed at election time.
 - Set ambitious targets for candidates from under-represented groups at the next local elections.
4. Work towards the standards for member support and development as set out in the LGA Councillor Development Charter and/or Charter Plus.
5. Demonstrate a commitment to a duty of care for Councillors by:
 - providing access to counselling services for all Councillors having regard for the safety and wellbeing of Councillors whenever they are performing their role as Councillors.
 - taking a zero-tolerance approach to bullying and harassment of members including through social networks.
6. Provide flexibility in council business by:
 - regularly reviewing and staggering meeting times
 - encouraging and supporting remote attendance at meetings
 - agreeing recess periods to support Councillors with caring or work commitments.
7. Ensure that all members take up the allowances and salaries to which they are entitled, particularly any reimbursement for costs of care, so that all members receive fair remuneration for their work and that the role of member is not limited to those who can afford it.
8. Ensure that the council adopts a parental leave policy setting out members' entitlement to maternity, paternity, shared parental and adoption leave and relevant allowances.

9. Ensure that Councillors from under-represented groups are represented whenever possible in high profile, high influence roles.
- 4.3 Ensuring the involvement of, and supporting Elected Members across the Council to be representative of their communities is an important aspect of the expectations of the Public Sector Equality Duty and helps build confidence within communities across Derbyshire. In line with the Public Sector Equality Duty, the Equality Framework for Local Government also places requirements upon Councils in relation to the role and leadership in respect of equality, diversity and inclusion by Elected Members. As such the motion should also be considered in the context of the Council's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Strategy, which is currently being reviewed and refreshed.

5 Proposed approach

- 5.1 In taking forward the current refresh of the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy, the creation of a cross-party working group will enable further Member engagement and involvement in the development of the approach to discuss and debate the wide-ranging matters covered in the Motion.
- 5.2 It is recommended that a politically balanced working group is established comprising of Elected Members and the appropriate officers. This should ideally include a diverse range of Members which will enable a range of different perspectives and levels of experience to be considered.
- 5.3 Should the proposal to create a cross-party working group be agreed, a terms of reference will be defined including the composition of the working group. Consideration will also be given to the interdependencies with the existing EDI Board and the Member Development Group.
- 5.4 A proposed timetable for the formation of the cross-party working group and to provide recommendations to Cabinet is outlined below.

Action	Timescale
Cabinet consideration of the 'Diverse Council Declaration' report	21 September 2023
Cross-Party Working Group Established	29 September 2023
Cross-Party Working Group meetings	Regularly throughout October and November 2023

6 Consultation

- 6.1 The recommendations of the proposed cross-party working group will inform the refresh of the Equality Diversity and Inclusion Strategy. Having a cross-party working group will enable this work to link in with the various programmes operated by UK political parties, for example, to address the diversity of candidates.

7 Alternative Options Considered

- 7.1 The alternatives would include taking no action, however it is appropriate to ensure and support diversity and equality of opportunity amongst Elected Members. Ensuring that Elected Members are representative of the different communities of Derbyshire helps build confidence and the reputation of the Council and is reflective of the public sector equality duty.

8 Implications

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

9 Background Papers

- 9.1 None identified.

10 Appendices

- 10.1 Appendix 1 – Implications

11 Recommendation(s)

That Cabinet:

1. Note the content of the report and the proposals to respond to the Diverse Council Declaration Motion following Full Council on 12 July 2023.
2. Agree to establish a cross-party working group to consider the wide-ranging matters contained in the Diverse Council Declaration Motion.
3. Receive a further report to outline recommendations from the cross-party working group aligned to the review of the Equality, Diversity and Inclusions Strategy.

12 Reasons for Recommendation

12.1 This report provides a method for considering the wide-ranging matters within the Motion. Providing the opportunity for involvement of Elected Members across all parties will maximise the experience, skills, knowledge and diversity to help inform any future recommendations and the refresh of the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy.

13 Is it necessary to waive the call in period?

13.1 No

Report Author: Pete Buckley,
John Cowings,
Sarah Eaton

Contact details: pete.buckley@derbyshire.gov.uk,
John.Cowings@derbyshire.gov.uk,
sarah.eaton@derbyshire.gov.uk

Implications

Financial

1.1 None.

Legal

2.1 The proposed actions are supportive of the Public Sector Equality Duty created by the Equality Act 2010. The Public Sector Equality Duty was developed in order to harmonise the equality duties and to extend it across the protected characteristics. It consists of a general equality duty, supported by specific duties which are imposed by secondary legislation. In summary, those subject to the equality duty must, in the exercise of their functions, have due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act.
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

These are sometimes referred to as the three aims or arms of the general equality duty. The Act explains that having due regard for advancing equality involves:

- Removing or minimising disadvantages suffered by people due to their protected characteristics.
- Taking steps to meet the needs of people from protected groups where these are different from the needs of other people.
- Encouraging people from protected groups to participate in public life or in other activities where their participation is disproportionately low.

The actions detailed in the report support the aims detailed above.

Human Resources

3.1 None

Information Technology

4.1 None

Equalities Impact

- 5.1 This action will have a positive equality, diversity and inclusion impact, supporting Elected Members and developing further their role as champions for equalities within their communities, within Council business, and within decision-making.

Corporate objectives and priorities for change

- 6.1 Strong links are already made between the EDI Strategy and the Council Plan and Department based Service Plans. The refresh of the EDI Strategy offers a real opportunity of translating corporate improvement and addressing inequalities within these key corporate plans. It can also ensure that action taken by the Council to deliver its strategic priorities on Enterprising Council, Thriving Communities and the revised Vision Derbyshire approach reflect upon likely equalities impact and ensure fairness and inclusion within resulting programmes and projects.

Other (for example, Health and Safety, Environmental Sustainability, Property and Asset Management, Risk Management and Safeguarding)

- 7.1 None