

PUBLIC

MINUTES of a meeting of **IMPROVEMENT AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - RESOURCES** held on Thursday, 29 February 2024 at Committee Room 1, County Hall, Matlock, DE4 3AG.

PRESENT

Councillor S Swann (in the Chair)

Councillors R Ashton, J Barron, , J Dixon, M Foster, A Hayes, J Innes, D Muller and D Murphy.

Also in attendance was Councillor Carol Hart .

5/24 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

6/24 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 22 January 2024 were confirmed as a correct record.

7/24 PUBLIC QUESTIONS

There were no public questions.

8/24 UPDATE ON REVIEW OF THE STRATEGIC APPROACH TO EQUALITY DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

Jen Skila, Director, People and Organisational Change, and Wes Downes, Policy Manager attended the meeting and provided members with a presentation to compliment the report on the update on the review of the Strategic Approach to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion which had been circulated in advance of the meeting and to ask the committee to note the recommendations of the Diverse Council Motion Cross Party Working Group.

The refresh of the approach comes at time of ongoing changes and challenges affecting the Council and local communities and aims to:

- Redefine the organisation's vision and priorities in relation to EDI, both internally and externally, and when considering the organisation's statutory obligations and organisation culture;

- Capture key developments in Adult Social Care, Childrens Services and the development of the Council's new organisational strategy;
- Consider what constitutes feasible action in relation to the make-up of the workforce, given the current challenges within the job market and the rate of change which can be achieved;
- Highlight any challenges regarding resources and/or the delivery of the approach across the Council; and
- Better engage senior leaders and Elected Members from all parties on EDI developments and the ongoing development of the strategic approach to EDI.

Over recent months, in addition to the initial engagement carried out with this Committee a number of additional engagement sessions on revising the Council's EDI approach had been held as follows:

- Internal stakeholders including senior leaders through the Shaping the Future Forum and feedback from Executive Directors;
- Two workshops with members of EDI Board and the existing EDI workstreams leads;
- A workshop EDI Board Members extended for frontline employees to consider and provide input on the proposed objectives;
- A survey and follow up discussion with Employee network leads; and
- Initial engagement has been undertaken with the BME Forum, the Youth Network and Derbyshire LGBT+ Network Alliance.

Stakeholder feedback from the above engagement sessions had highlighted key themes and issues around the current position which were detailed in the report and after recognising this feedback it had broadly indicated what the approach moving forward should be, which were again highlighted in the report.

As a result of the feedback received and in order to aid understanding, commitment and delivery of EDI ambitions across employees, Elected Members and stakeholders it was proposed to move away from having a separate EDI Strategy document and to move to the main EDI focus being on four equality objectives. This approach would, overall, enable the organisation to raise awareness around EDI issues and for the Council move towards applying an EDI "lens" as part of its day-to-day business and organisational culture, whilst simplifying the current approach and yet maintaining delivery of realistic outcomes.

As a result of the key issues expressed in the engagement to date, along with the aims of revising the strategic approach, it is proposed to take forward the Council's strategic approach around the following four draft key equality objectives:

1. Better understand our diverse communities and use that understanding to shape organisational policy and practice.
2. Lead by example on equality, diversity and inclusion.
3. Create a working environment that is inclusive where all colleagues feel that they belong and can be their best at work
4. Work alongside different equality groups to design, provide and deliver services that are accessible, inclusive and responsive to the needs of our residents and communities and reflect our organisational culture.

Each of the objectives would have several key areas of focus with specific annual implementation plans, along with associated outcomes. Appendix 2 to the report showed the proposed key areas of focus for each equality objective, and it should be noted that the EDI approach would evolve and be continually developed as opposed to being a static approach.

The EDI objectives will be supported by a short EDI statement with a provisional draft below. This is important to ensure that it is clear what EDI means to the organisation:

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion at Derbyshire means that all colleagues and our communities will have a voice, ensuring we listen and engage, shape and respond to enable an inclusive culture. As a result, our inclusive culture will enable improved delivery to our communities.

This statement was intended to reinforce that EDI should be part of our business as usual, and should also support in outlining the 'why'. The organisation needed to be clear on the business case for EDI as well as the legal or moral case (recognising it had duties to abide by), building delivery of EDI work into service delivery rather than our current 'additional' commitment to workstreams.

Key to embedding EDI objectives and activity in the work of the Council will be to consider how the equality objectives are integrated into key Council strategies and plans

Alongside the work to develop the revised EDI strategic approach and draft equality objectives, officers have supported, in an advisory capacity, the work of Elected Members as part of the Diverse Council Working Group. Following Cabinet agreement on 21 September 2023, the working group was set up to discuss and debate the wide-ranging matters covered in the Diverse Council Declaration heard by Full Council on 12 July 2023. Cabinet

agreed to receive a further report to outline recommendations from the cross-party working group.

The group met on three occasions and considered the current activity being undertaken, identified where more could be done and has agreed a set of recommendations in respect of the matters contained in the Diverse Council declaration. Many of the actions in the Declaration are for Political Groups and not for the Council to take forward, such as committing to appointing Diversity Ambassadors, setting ambitious targets for candidates from under-represented groups at the next local elections and promoting the talent and diversity of colleagues through mentoring and shadowing. Some elements of the Declaration can be promoted and supported by the Council. Many are already in place or underway with examples given in the report.

Whilst the activity detailed in the report, addressed many of the matters contained in the Declaration, the Working Group discussed and identified opportunities to complement and enhance the existing work being undertaken and the support available. Recommendations would be presented to Cabinet for consideration in March 2024.

If agreed, the recommendations would be incorporated within the refreshed strategic approach to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion and within the annual delivery plans.

In terms of next steps and as detailed in the report a key activity from April 2024 onwards would be work to reflect EDI objectives as part of the Council Plan 2025-2029 along with the organisation's strategic vision, the further development and refinement of the strategic objectives and operating model.

Members made a number of observations and asked questions which were duly noted or answered by officers.

RESOLVED (1) to note the proposed revised strategic approach to EDI and draft equality objectives as set out in the report as a basis for public consultation and further internal engagement; and

(2) that a further report be received by this committee on 9 May 2024 as set out in the timetable in the report.