

Committee Name and Date of Committee Meeting

Cabinet – 20 June 2022

Report Title

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy (2022/2025), Action Plan (2022/2023) and Annual Report (2021/2022)

Is this a Key Decision and has it been included on the Forward Plan?

Yes

Strategic Director Approving Submission of the Report

Jo Brown, Assistant Chief Executive

Report Author

Steve Eling

Policy and Equalities Manager

Assistant Chief Executive's Directorate

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Ward(s) Affected

Borough-Wide

Report Summary

The Council Plan 2022/2025 sets out the Council's ambition to create an inclusive borough for people to live, work and enjoy. A borough where nobody is left behind and where all are welcome and treated fairly.

The Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy sets out the commitments that the Council is making to support those outcomes. It ensures that equality objectives truly underpin the themes of the Council Plan to ensure that achieving equality outcomes are embedded in everything that the Council does. It also commits to achieving the highest national standards set out in the Equality Framework for Local Government.

Each year, as part of the Council's commitments under the Public Sector Equality Duty, an Equalities Annual Report is published. This provides an overview of equalities activity and achievements over the last year and forward commitments taking forward the priorities of the new EDI Strategy.

This report presents the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2022/2025, action plan 2022/2023 and Equalities Annual Report 2021/2022.

Recommendations

1. That the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2022/2025 be approved.
2. That the Equalities Annual Report 2021/2022 be received.
3. That the Equalities 2022/2023 action plan and Equality, Diversity and Inclusion consultation findings report be noted.

List of Appendices Included

- Appendix 1 Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2022/2025
- Appendix 2 Equalities 2022/2023 action plan.
- Appendix 3 Equality, Diversity and Inclusion consultation findings report.
- Appendix 4 Equalities annual report 2021/2022
- Appendix 5 Equality Screening (Form A).
- Appendix 6 Equality Assessment (Form B).
- Appendix 7 Carbon Impact Assessment.

Background Papers

Equality Act 2010 (c. 15)

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/contents>

The Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties) Regulations 2011 (SI20112260)

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2011/2260/contents/made>

The Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties and Public Authorities) Regulations 2017 (SI20170353)

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2017/353/contents>

Consideration by any other Council Committee, Scrutiny or Advisory Panel

Name of Committee – Click here to enter a date.

Name of Committee – Click here to enter a date.

Council Approval Required

No

Exempt from the Press and Public

No

Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy (2022/2025), Action Plan (2022/2023) and Annual Report (2021/2022)

1. Background

- 1.1 The Council Plan 2022/2025 sets out the Council's ambition to create an inclusive borough for people to live, work and enjoy. A borough where nobody is left behind and where all are welcome and treated fairly.
- 1.2 The Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy (EDI) sets out the commitments that the Council is making to support those outcomes. It ensures that equality objectives truly underpin the themes of the Council Plan to ensure that achieving equality outcomes are embedded in everything that the Council does. It also commits to achieving the highest national standards set out in the Equality Framework for Local Government.
- 1.3 Each year, as part of the Council's commitments under the Public Sector Equality Duty, an Equalities Annual Report is published. This provides an overview of equalities activity and achievements over the last year and forward commitments taking forward the priorities of the new EDI Strategy.

2. Key Issues

- 2.1 The Equality Act 2010 (c. 15) (the Act) requires the Council to be compliant with the Public Sector Equality Duty, by having due regard to the need to:
 - Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Act.
 - Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.
 - Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.
- 2.2 The Council delivers against its statutory obligations by publishing a set of equalities objectives at least every four years, which are documented within the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy.
- 2.3 The EDI Strategy 2022/2025 has been prepared to underpin the Council Plan to embed equalities into everything the Council does.
- 2.4 The Strategy is built on four equality objectives which are delivered through a set of Council wide projects and actions. These in turn inform Directorate service plans to embed equalities into daily activity. The four equality objectives with their supporting actions are:
 - Understanding, Listening to, and Working with Rotherham's Communities.
 - Listening to residents and service users through consultations and feedback to improve the evidence base that informs service delivery.
 - Enhancing the way that we engage with communities including those with protected characteristics, to ensure that all voices are heard and there is an opportunity to provide lived experience.

- Sharing and presenting information in appropriate and accessible formats.
- Developing joint partnership approaches and activity including the use of intelligence to tackle inequalities, promote equalities and good community relations that have a positive impact.
- Delivering Accessible and Responsive Services that Meet Diverse Needs.
 - Communicating and engaging with residents so that they feel informed about council services and how to access these.
 - Listening to service users through consultations and complaints to produce evidence-based analysis that informs service design and delivery.
 - Strengthening digital infrastructure and supporting skills' to enable access for all.
 - Working together in partnership and in collaboration to deliver the Council Plan commitments to tackle inequality and disadvantage.
 - Continuing to improve the use of Equality Assessments in service design and delivery, capturing challenges and opportunities at the very beginning, ensuring barriers are considered and mitigated where possible.
- Providing Leadership and Organisational Commitment to Actively Promote Equalities.
 - Continuing to work with a range of partners, including statutory bodies, to address issues around community safety including addressing hate crime, whilst taking a zero-tolerance approach to prejudice and discrimination.
 - Working in partnership with services, partners and communities to promote equality and good community relations.
 - Supporting awareness and understanding across communities to promote good relations across the range of protected characteristics.
 - Celebrating diversity within our communities and marking events.
- Ensuring a diverse and engaged workforce.
 - Ensuring all of our policies are up to date and reflective of our diverse needs and situations.
 - Flexible, fair and transparent pay and benefits.
 - Removing barriers to flexible working wherever possible.
 - Supporting staff with caring responsibilities.
 - Staff development and career progression that reflects individuals' needs and learning styles.

2.5

- The Council has set out its commitment to achieving and demonstrating the highest standards in equality, diversity and inclusion through aspiring to reach "Excellent" in the Equalities Framework for Local Government (EFLG), which is the national standard. The New EDI Strategy and objectives support the achievement and then the maintenance of the "Excellent" standard. Appendix 2 brings forward an action plan to support this, across the four modules that are contained in the EFLG standard: Understanding and working with your communities.

- Leadership and Organisational Commitment.
- Responsive Services and Customer Care.
- Diverse and engaged workforce.

2.6 In addition to the quarterly report to Cabinet on the Council Plan KPIs and Year Ahead Delivery Plan progress, the monitoring and review of the EDI Strategy and action plan will be undertaken through the Equalities Annual Report. This will continue to be presented in June of each year.

2.7 The Equalities Annual Report will also continue to provide case studies to promote best practice both within the Council and with partners.

2.8 The Annual Report provides a review of achievements over the last year following the decision to structure these around the four modules of the EFLG. It includes key data and specific actions that demonstrate progress across all areas of equalities and includes case studies of good practice.

2.9 Looking ahead, the Annual Report sets out areas of actions taking forward the equalities action plan. Each year, the looking ahead section will form a cycle of review and forward planning over the lifetime of the EDI Strategy ensuring that actions are always informed and current.

3. Options considered and recommended proposal

3.1 The recommended option covers compliance with the Council's statutory duties and supports delivery of the Council Plan's priorities whilst striving for excellent under the Equalities Framework for Local Government (EFLG).

3.2 The alternative option is to choose not to participate in the EFLG and as a result, to not undertake an external assessment of our progress.

4. Consultation on proposal

4.1 An extensive consultation process has been undertaken seeking views on three initial, draft objectives along with key actions and the approach to taking forward the EDI Strategy. The consultation responses have helped to shape the final four objectives and this is described further below.

4.2 The consultation involved:

- An online form available for anyone to engage via the Council's website.
- External focus groups around protected characteristics.
- Consultation towers and forms at libraries and community venues.
- Eight sessions through community organisations helping people to engage with completing the consultation.
- Over 30 VCS and faith organisations involved.
- Internal staff group sessions covering:
 - Women.
 - LGBT+.
 - Carers.
 - Disability.

- Faith.
 - BAME.
- 4.3 The Survey sought responses on a scale of “strongly agree” to “strongly disagree” together with the option of “neither agree nor disagree”. It also provided for comments on each of the priorities too. The survey responses show overall support for the proposed priorities (objectives) and key actions with 85% showing agreement with all priorities and 6% against.
- 4.4 For each of the three priorities, the responses were as follows:
- Priority 1 - To understand, listen and engage across all communities, 84% either agreed or strongly agreed.
 - Priority 2 - Deliver fair, inclusive, and accessible services, 85% either agreed or strongly agreed.
 - Priority 3 - Empower people to engage and challenge discrimination and to promote good community relations, 87% either agreed or strongly agreed.
- 4.5 In addition to the headline survey results, specific views were sought from both external focus groups and staff group meetings. These provided some extra context for taking forward the priorities and delivery of key actions.
- 4.6 Specific issues raised through external groups covered actions needing to be specific and asking about how the Strategy will be monitored and who will be accountable.
- 4.7 Issues around engagement were raised. These included the need for continued dialogue and exchange going forward together with more feedback. Views were also expressed on the importance to build on and facilitate the work of community organisations and partners.
- 4.8 A number of views were expressed about accessibility. These included issues around transport, toilets, leisure facilities and being aware of multiple barriers / intersectionality. Digital exclusion also featured as a concern. People expressed a desire to be involved in conversations on accessibility.
- 4.9 Visible support / celebrations were raised with people expressing views about how it was important for Council to show outward support for diverse communities including Pride.
- 4.10 Training and support for staff was seen as an important issue including awareness of issues, neurodiversity, LGBT+ issues, race. Hate crime was seen as serious issue, as well as lack of funded grassroots support for LGBT+ residents and other groups – many are volunteer led with limited capacity.
- 4.11 Internal consultation largely raised issues around disability / long-term health conditions, women and carers. These included adjustments and flexibility along with understanding of equality issues and organisational culture.
- 4.12 Taking account of the consultation outcomes, a fourth equality objective has been added into the Strategy to cover workforce and staffing along with some

emphasis changes to the other three objectives. This leads to four objectives as follows:

- Understanding, listening to and working with Rotherham's communities.
- Delivering accessible and responsive services that meet diverse needs.
- Providing leadership and organisation commitment to actively promote equalities.
- Ensuring a diverse, supported and engaged workforce.

A report on the consultation process and outcomes has been produced and is attached as an appendix to this report.

5. Timetable and Accountability for Implementing this Decision

- 5.1 Progress and review of actions in delivering the strategy will be included in the Equalities Annual Report, presented to Cabinet in June each year.
- 5.2 Equalities progress will be monitored and reported as part of the Council's Performance Management Framework.
- 5.3 The Overview and Scrutiny Management Board will undertake review and challenge progress, including receiving equality screenings and assessments. This also contributes to the standards set out in the EFLG Leadership and Organisational Commitment Module.

6. Financial and Procurement Advice and Implications

- 6.1 There are no readily identifiable direct financial implications arising from this report. In the event that any costs are subsequently identified in future, these will be highlighted and addressed within the Council's budget processes.
- 6.2 Achieving equalities outcomes through commissioning and procurement is taken forward by the Council's Social Value policy and accreditation as a "Living Wage Employer".

7. Legal Advice and Implications

- 7.1 The Equality Act 2010 (c.15) sets out the statutory provisions of the Public Sector Equality Duty along with protected characteristics and other related matters.
- 7.2 The Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties) Regulations 2011 (SI20112260) make statutory provisions for publication of information relating to the Public Sector Equality Duty and adoption and publication of equality objectives.
- 7.3 The Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties and Public Authorities) Regulations 2017 (SI20170353) make statutory provision for the publication of the gender pay gap.

8. Human Resources Advice and Implications

- 8.1 Equality, Diversity and Inclusion are underpinning themes that will support successful delivery of the Council's updated Workforce Plan. In addition, HR will be supporting delivery of key actions linked to the workforce aspects of the Equality Framework for Local Government. This includes monitoring and taking action on workforce diversity, delivering inclusive strategies and policies, analysing and publishing workforce data, ensuring relevant learning and development provision is in place and ensuring health and wellbeing is supported across the organisation.

9. Implications for Children and Young People and Vulnerable Adults

- 9.1 The EDI Strategy, underpinning the Council Plan, will support equality outcomes in theme three of "Every child able to fulfil their potential".
- 9.2 Age is a protected characteristic under the provisions of the Equality Act, which applies to children and young people as it does to other age groups.

10. Equalities and Human Rights Advice and Implications

- 10.1 Ensuring that the Council meets its equalities and human rights duties and obligations are central to how it manages its performance, sets its priorities and delivers services. This new Strategy aims to set out these duties and obligations within a single, corporate document and it will be important to ensure an ongoing focus on advancing the EDI agenda by services.

11. Implications for CO2 Emissions and Climate Change

- 11.1 There are no direct implications for CO2 Emissions and Climate Change.

12. Implications for Partners

- 12.1 Partnership working is a central part to the Corporate Equality and Diversity Strategy. The Council's aim with regard to equalities and diversity is to make sure, that all people have the same right of access to services and employment and benefit from them equally well. It is important that we remove barriers that prevent or limit people from accessing services; or from participating in employment; learning opportunities; social and leisure activities; or community and public life.

13. Risks and Mitigation

- 13.1 Risks arising will be addressed through the corporate risk management and performance management processes.

14. Accountable Officer

Steve Eling
Policy and Equalities Manager

Approvals obtained on behalf of Statutory Officers: -

	Named Officer	Date
Chief Executive	Sharon Kemp	03/06/22
Strategic Director of Finance & Customer Services (S.151 Officer)	Judith Badger	31/05/22
Assistant Director, Legal Services (Monitoring Officer)	Phillip Horsfield	01/06/22

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