

Committee Name and Date of Committee Meeting

Cabinet – 10 July 2023

Report Title

Equalities Annual Report

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

No, but it has been included on the Forward Plan

Strategic Director Approving Submission of the Report

Jo Brown, Assistant Chief Executive

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Ward(s) Affected

Borough-Wide

Report Summary

Publishing an annual equalities report is part of the Council's Public Sector Equality Duty. The purpose of the report is to highlight the progress made over the past year towards the equalities, diversity and inclusion agenda, as well as outlining next steps. The report covers key achievements and case studies from across the Council.

The 2023/24 action plan attached as Appendix 2 provides a forward look to the 2023/24 Year Ahead Delivery Plan commitments that will deliver Equality, Diversity and Inclusion outcomes. In addition, there are actions within the plan that will help our journey towards 'excellent' on the Equality Framework for Local Government.

Recommendations

1. That Cabinet:
 - a) Note the progress made over the past 12 months towards the equalities agenda.
 - b) Note the next steps outlined within the Equalities Annual Report and action plan for 2023/24.

List of Appendices Included

Appendix 1 Equalities Annual Report – 2022/23

Appendix 2 2023/24 Equalities Action Plan

Appendix 3 Equalities Annual Report – Initial Equality Screening Assessment

Appendix 4 Equalities Annual Report – Carbon Impact Assessment

Background Papers

Year Ahead Delivery Plan 2023/24

Consideration by any other Council Committee, Scrutiny or Advisory Panel

Overview and Scrutiny Management Board – 05 July 2023

Council Approval Required

No

Exempt from the Press and Public

No

Equalities Annual Report

1. Background

- 1.1 Publishing an annual equalities report is part of the Council's Public Sector Equality Duty. The purpose of the report attached in Appendix 1 is to highlight the progress made over the past year towards the equalities agenda, as well as outlining some next steps. The report covers key achievements and case studies from across the Council.
- 1.2 Each year, as part of the Council's commitments under the Public Sector Equality Duty, an Equalities Annual Report is published. This takes account of the achievements over the last year, in the main from the Year Ahead Delivery Plan (YADP) and forward look to 2023/24 YADP commitments. The forward look also includes actions that will help our journey towards 'excellent on the Equality Framework for Local Government. This is the first annual report to be presented since the adoption of the current Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy (EDI) in June 2022.

2. Key Issues

- 2.1 The Equalities Annual Report is structured around the four objectives and direction of the EDI Strategy as follows:
- 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.

2.2 The report highlights what the latest data reveals about equality and diversity in Rotherham building on the most recent information from the 2021 census, alongside other local intelligence. This helps to drive actions through the Council's leadership on EDI, working with partners and communities, and the Year Ahead Delivery Plan to embed addressing EDI into all that the Council is engaged in.

2.3 The report also highlights strategy development around:

- Thriving neighbourhoods.
- Developing the Rotherham Plan 2025.
- Safer Rotherham Partnership Plan 2022-2025.
- Inclusion and social value.
- The Workforce Plan 2022-2025.

2.4 Additional challenges have been presented to delivering equalities and inclusion over the past year resulting from the cost-of-living crisis. Tackling increased deprivation driven by high energy costs and price of basics including food have placed many households in hardship and this has been a major part of addressing inequalities. Local actions including energy and food support and along with advice and "warm welcome" access has helped the most vulnerable households.

2.5 Recognising real life experience and learning is an important aspect of producing the annual report. This is about capturing outcomes from actions set out in the action plan last year with case studies covering impacts from the actions taken. Sample studies are produced covering all four objectives

of the EDI strategy. This year the report includes learning from a range of activity including:

- Children’s Capital of Culture.
- ‘Exemplar’ status for tenant engagement.
- Summer Reading Challenge.
- ‘Places to Go and Things to Do’ – a new universal youth offer for young people in Rotherham.
- Carers Week.
- Most improved council in the country.
- Employability sessions.
- ‘Living my best life’, the new Castle View facility.
- Intergenerational arts and health programme.
- Women’s workforce group.
- Involvement In international women’s day.

2.6 The action plan for 2023/24 provides a forward look to identify the 2023/24 YADP commitments that will deliver EDI outcomes. In addition, there are actions within the plan that will help our journey towards ‘excellent on the Equality Framework for Local Government.

2.7 The report highlights major areas of work for the coming year that will help to drive the equalities agenda. These include actions under each of the strategy objectives. Examples include:

- Refresh ward profiles to update and improve ready availability of data at the local level.
- An action plan for digital inclusion.
- Work with partners in collaboration to deliver the Council Plan commitments to tackle inequality and disadvantage.
- Improve workplace equality and diversity through the delivery of the Workforce Plan 2022-2025.

3. Options considered and recommended proposal

3.1 This report is for information and reflects on progress made in the last year to deliver the Council’s Equalities Strategy and actions to continue to deliver this in 2023/34. There are no other options at this point.

3.2 It is recommended that Cabinet:

- a) Note the progress made over the past 12 months towards the equalities agenda.
- b) Note the next steps outlined within the Equalities Annual Report and action plan for 2023/24.

4. Consultation on proposal

4.1 This report is for information and therefore, no decision is required, and no consultation needed.

5. Timetable and Accountability for Implementing this Decision

5.1 Not applicable. This report is for information and no decision is required.

6. Financial and Procurement Advice and Implications

6.1 This report is to highlight the progress made over the past 12 months towards the equalities agenda, as well as outlining some next steps. It is an update report and as such there are no direct financial implications as a result of the recommendations of this report.

6.2 Procurement will continue to support the work around equalities when undertaking procurement projects and through the activity being undertaken in line with the Council's Social Value Policy and commitments.

7. Legal Advice and Implications

7.1 The Council is required to comply with the Public Sector Equality Duty as set out within the Equality Act 2010 in carrying out their functions and must have regard to the need to achieve the objectives set out under Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 to:

- (a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Equality Act 2010;
- (b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
- (c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

7.2 In accordance with Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties) Regulations 2011, the Council is required to publish information to demonstrate their compliance with the public sector equality duty every 12 months. This report is drafted in compliance with that legal obligation.

8. Human Resources Advice and Implications

8.1 Significant progress has been made to further embed equalities into workforce and organisational development. During 2022, a revised Workforce Plan was launched, underpinned by equality and diversity activity.

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9. Implications for Children and Young People and Vulnerable Adults

9.1 The report covers examples of key achievements where the Council has worked with children and young people and vulnerable adults to support the equalities agenda.

10. Equalities and Human Rights Advice and Implications

- 10.1 This report is focussed on how the Council has worked to progress the equalities agenda over the past year. As outlined, publishing an annual report forms part of the Council's compliance with the Public Sector Equality Duty.
- 10.2 The report also sets out some of the key next steps that will be taken to advance the equality agenda. Where required, full equality analyses will be undertaken.

11. Implications for CO2 Emissions and Climate Change

- 11.1 This report has no significant implications for CO2 emissions and climate change. However, certain protected characteristic groups, such as older or younger people or those with physical disabilities, are likely to be more vulnerable to the effects of climate change.

12. Implications for Partners

- 12.1. Engagement with partners is integral to tackling inequalities and deprivation. Several examples included within this report refer to partnership initiatives, where the Council has worked with local partners towards the equalities agenda.
- 12.2 Developing improved networking around equalities with partner organisations and communities is an important next step in equalities work.

13. Risks and Mitigation

- 13.1 No substantial risks have been identified in connection with this annual report.

14. Accountable Officers

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Approvals obtained on behalf of Statutory Officers: -

	Named Officer	Date
Chief Executive	Sharon Kemp	26/06/23
Strategic Director of Finance & Customer Services (S.151 Officer)	Judith Badger	22/06/23
Assistant Director, Legal Services (Monitoring Officer)	Phil Horsfield	22/06/23

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