

Committee Name and Date of Committee Meeting

Cabinet – 29 July 2024

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

Report Author(s)

Steve Eling

Policy and Equalities Manager

Assistant Chief Executive's Directorate

Steve.eling@rotherham.gov.uk

Ward(s) Affected

Borough-Wide

Report Summary

Publishing an annual equalities report forms 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 achieving the equalities objectives and outcomes set out in the Council's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2022/25.

The 2024/25 action plan provides a forward look aligned to the Year Ahead Delivery Plan actions that will deliver Equality, Diversity and Inclusion outcomes. In addition, there are actions within the plan that will help deliver outcomes on the journey towards 'excellent' under the Equality Framework for Local Government.

Recommendations

That Cabinet:

1. Note the progress made over the past 12 months towards achieving the equalities objectives and outcomes set out in the Council's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2022/25.
2. Note the next steps outlined within the Equalities Annual Report and action plan for 2024/25.

List of Appendices Included

- Appendix 1 Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion Annual Report 2023/24.
- Appendix 2 2024/25 Equalities Action Plan.
- Appendix 3 Equalities Annual Report – Initial Equality Screening Assessment.
- Appendix 4 Equalities Annual Report – Carbon Impact Assessment

Background Papers

Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties) Regulations 2011
Rotherham Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2022/25
Council Plan Update - Year Ahead Delivery Plan 2024/25
Rotherham Data Hub

Consideration by any other Council Committee, Scrutiny or Advisory Panel

Overview and Scrutiny Management Board – 03 July 2024

Council Approval Required

No

Exempt from the Press and Public

No

Equalities Annual Report

1. Background

- 1.1 Publishing an annual equalities report forms part of the Council's Public Sector Equality Duty. The purpose of the report, set out at Appendix 1, is to highlight the progress made over the past year towards achieving the equalities objectives and outcomes set out in the Council's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy (EDI) 2022/25, and to outline next steps for 2024/25.
- 1.2 The action plan attached as appendix 2 is mainly drawn from the Council's Year Ahead Delivery Plan. It also includes progress made against the requirements of the Equality Framework for Local Government (EFLG) as part of the journey towards excellent. Critically, the report demonstrates how EDI is an integral part of the activity undertaken by the Council and partners to benefit communities and residents across the borough.

2. Key Issues

- 2.1 The EDI Annual Report (attached as appendix 1) is structured around the four objectives of the Council's Strategy. Against each of these themes the report also provides a summary of some of the activity undertaken relative to the requirements of the EFLG. The four themes of the EDI Strategy and accompanying annual report are as follows:
 - Understanding, Listening to, and Working with Rotherham's Communities.
 - Providing Leadership and Organisational Commitment to Actively Promote Equalities.
 - Delivering Accessible and Responsive Services that Meet Diverse Needs.
 - Ensuring a diverse and engaged workforce.
- 2.2 Given the EDI journey that the Council is on to reach 'excellent' on the EFLG in 2025 and as a stepping stone reaching 'achieving' level in 2024, in this year's annual report progress and achievements are set out against each of the EFLG modules. This means that for the first time this year's report incorporates information on a number of core activities and processes within the Council on a range of issues including tensions monitoring and service planning.
- 2.3 The report also highlights the latest data covering equality and diversity in Rotherham, this incorporates a number of additional data sets that are now available from the 2021 census. This illustrates how the borough is changing and becoming more diverse. It also provides the available data on the different protected characteristics in the borough. Finally, given the non-statutory socio-economic duty, data is included on the scale of deprivation in the borough, reflecting the importance of the inclusion agenda, particularly

given the correlation between those with multiple protected characteristics and higher levels of deprivation.

2.4 The report highlights key achievements in 2023/24 around the four themes of the EDI Strategy, including:

<p>1. Understanding, listening to, and working with Rotherham’s communities</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Better understanding our communities and residents by collecting and analysing data and intelligence, with refreshed ward profiles and Joint Strategic Needs Assessment produced. • A strengthened approach to engagement on consultation and engagement, including additional training on best practice and as exemplified by the co-production approach implemented for the All Age Autism Strategy.
<p>2. Providing leadership and organisational commitment to actively promote equalities</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Championed a range of events that support equality and inclusion throughout the year • Worked with our partners to deliver the Safer Rotherham Plan. • Put in place a new voluntary and community sector infrastructure service level agreement, following the completion of a successful co-design process.
<p>3. Delivering accessible and responsive services that meet diverse needs</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continued to make progress on the social value agenda, with more money spent locally and greater outcomes unlocked through Council investment. • Designed and delivered services that meet the needs of our customers, including through the opening of Forest View school, implementing independent travel training for children and young people and taken a range of actions to improve customer experience.
<p>4. Ensuring a diverse and engaged workforce</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Three targeted events held in our communities, to remove barriers to recruitment and enable the Council’s workforce to reflect the population of the Borough more closely and three targeted events have been held to date. • The Employee Opinion Survey was undertaken in 2023, receiving the highest ever response rate and an engagement rate 8% higher than other benchmark local authorities. • The diversity of the workforce continues to be monitored through the Council Plan measures.

2.5 Each year, the annual report highlights real life experience and learning, capturing outcomes from actions and other initiatives undertaken in the last year across the four themes of the EDI Strategy. The 2023/24 report includes

learning from a range of activity, including but not limited to:

1. Understanding, listening to, and working with Rotherham's communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Holding the Charter Gold awards, where schools and educational settings from Rotherham celebrated their work championing inclusivity. • The development of the Wath library town centre scheme through consultation and engagement
2. Providing leadership and organisational commitment to actively promote equalities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delivering a campaign for new foster carers from all protected characteristic groups to care for children in Rotherham. • Working with partners to develop and implement a programme of learning events to support Safeguarding Awareness Week • Family Hub Breastfeeding Peer Supporter
3. Delivering accessible and responsive services that meet diverse needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offering work placements to student counsellors working towards their Counselling Diploma as part of the Rothacs contract • Delivering the inclusive digital action plan
4. Ensuring a diverse and engaged workforce	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Refreshing the Rotherham Values • Employee engagement through the Employee Opinion Survey and Staff Networks

2.6 Delivering the equalities agenda and tackling inequalities has continued to be against the background of the ongoing cost of living crisis. Tackling increased deprivation has been driven by high energy costs and the rising price of essential items including food, have placed many households in hardship and this has been a major part of addressing inequalities. Local actions put in place to support residents with energy costs and crisis food support, include targeted provision for children and care leavers has helped the most vulnerable households in the borough. A Humanitarian Action Plan has also been developed and agreed by partners to maximise impact in tackling multiple deprivation.

2.7 In reflecting on the progress and achievements made by the Council in 2023/24 on the EDI agenda, there are some clear and overarching themes that emerge from this, including:

- Strong leadership, organisation commitment and governance, with Council continuing to improve its focus on this area.
- There are positive examples of services embedding EDI into their core activity, improving opportunities for residents across the borough.
- Eight staff networks are now in place, with a reverse mentoring scheme in place linking them to the members of the EDI Board.
- There has been an improvement in Equality Impact Assessments completed across the Council.
- Learning and development is in place for all staff to cover EDI fundamentals.

- Enhanced and increased frequency of consultation and engagement training being offered to staff, with a particular focus on EDI.

2.8 To continue to make positive progress on the Council’s EDI journey there are a number of gaps and opportunities to drive forward in the coming year, including:

- Sharing and embedding best practice to ensure that case studies, examples and stories are shared across the Council to enable lessons to be learnt, facilitate continuous improvement and to enable achievements to be recognised.
- Developing understanding of language and terminology to ensure that Council staff are communicating in ways that resonate with communities, and that officers feel comfortable in talking about EDI.
- Prioritising EDI as an organisation to ensure that council staff see the way they are responsible for embedding and delivering EDI in their day-to-day work, and that the Council values EDI.

2.9 Building on the progress made so far on the Council’s EDI journey and as part of the steps to ‘excellent’ on the EFLG in 2025, an action plan for 2024/25 (see appendix 2) has been developed. This provides a forward look to identify the Year Ahead Delivery Plan actions that will deliver EDI outcomes, with significant milestones including:

Council Plan theme	Year Ahead Delivery Plan actions
Every neighbourhood thriving	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a new Community Safety Strategy for 2025 – 2028. • Deliver cultural events in varied locations throughout the borough. • Develop and approve the schemes to be delivered as part of Our Places.
People are safe, healthy and live well	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Start the building groundwork for Castle View Day Service, which will provide new day opportunities for people with high support needs. • Implement an engagement forum where residents can co-design adult social care services to ensure their experiences shape the future delivery of services. • Complete a review of the Domestic Abuse delivery model and set out next steps for Cabinet, including the lived experiences of victims and survivors accessing services.
Every child able to fulfil their potential	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commission, set-up and start roll out of Baby Packs Scheme to support families with essential items to promote attachment and child development. • Work with children and young people across the borough to co-produce and begin to deliver the Children’s Capital of Culture 2025 programme.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Start the new 3-year Children’s Playgrounds Programme and deliver the first scheme.
Expanding economic opportunity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support 400 residents to access support via our Employment Solutions services. • Agree with Rotherham Together Partners a 12-month plan to collectively drive the social value agenda and determine governance arrangements to support delivery.
A cleaner, greener local environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improving access to and unlocking socio-economic opportunities by improving public transport links through the development of the business cases for Rotherham Mainline Station and the new railway station at Waverley.
One Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deliver the Council’s improved equalities learning and development offer to the first group of staff to ensure the Council is fulfilling the Equality Duty • Embed equalities into the new Council Plan for 2025. • Launch programme to showcase RMBC work experience, supported internships, apprentices and graduate schemes to attract more diverse candidates.

2.10 In addition, to the Year Ahead Delivery Plan elements, the action plan includes a number of additional areas of work that will help to drive the equalities agenda. These include actions under each of the four EDI themes, such as:

- Hosting an annual celebration event in the autumn that reflects on the borough’s EDI achievements and highlights the lived experience of those with protected characteristics.
- Building and harnessing the knowledge and skills of community groups and local residents on EDI, to drive positive changes within the communities.
- Reviewing the equality objectives and producing an EDI strategy for 2025/28.
- Analysing workforce data, ensuring the Council identifies and understands disparities and areas for improvement includes cross-data analysis by leveraging from various sources.
- Working to ensure the workforce profile, including major providers of commissioned services, broadly reflects the community it serves and the local labour market.
- Fostering a culture of sharing and celebrating successful EDI practices across the Council to encourage continuous improvement and inspire others to adopt similar strategies.

2.11 It should be noted that as part of its manifesto that was published prior to the General Election, the Government committed to enact the socio-economic duty in the Equality Act. This duty would require public bodies to adopt transparent and effective measures to address the inequalities that result from differences in socio-economic status. Subject to the successful

completion of the legislative process to enact this duty, the EDI action plan will be revised accordingly to ensure that this is an integrated part of the Council's activity. Given the nature of its vision and objectives, the Council Plan and the relevant elements of the Year Ahead Delivery Plan would appear to provide a strong starting point for this due to its focus on inclusion.

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 There are no direct financial implications associated with the recommendations detailed in this report.

6.2 In the upcoming activity for 2024/25 there are projects where the Council proposes to / has engaged with third party suppliers and in these instances the Council must ensure all procurement activity is undertaken in compliance with the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 / Procurement Act 2023 or the Health and Social Care (Provider Selection Regime) Regulations 2023 (whichever is the appropriate legislation) as well as the Council's own Financial and Procurement Procedure Rules and wider policy commitments such as the Social Value Policy.

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 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 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.

8.2 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.

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 on the journey to excellent under the Equality Framework for Local Government. Where required, full equality analyses are 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. Examples are included in the annual report referring to partnership activity, 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 integral to the ongoing equalities work.

13. Risks and Mitigation

13.1 There are no substantial risks have been identified in connection with this annual report.

14. Accountable Officers

Fiona Boden
Head of Policy, Performance and Intelligence
Assistant Chief Executive's Directorate

Approvals obtained on behalf of Statutory Officers: -

	Named Officer	Date
Chief Executive	Sharon Kemp OBE	20/06/24
Strategic Director of Finance & Customer Services (S.151 Officer)	Judith Badger	19/06/24
Assistant Director of Legal Services (Monitoring Officer)	Phil Horsfield	19/06/24

Report Author: *Steve Eling*
 Policy and Equalities Manager
 Assistant Chief Executive's Directorate
 Steve.eling@rotherham.gov.uk

This report is published on the Council's [website](#).