

Committee Name and Date of Committee Meeting

Cabinet – 21 June 2021

Report Title

Equalities Annual Report – 2020/21

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)

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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 12 months towards the equalities agenda, as well as outlining some next steps. The report covers key achievements and case studies from across the Council.

Recommendations

1. Note the progress made over the past 12 months towards the equalities agenda.
2. Note the next steps outlined within the Equalities Annual Report.

List of Appendices Included

Appendix 1 Equalities Annual Report – 2021/22
Appendix 2 Equalities Annual Report – Initial Equality Screening Assessment
Appendix 3 Equalities Annual Report – Carbon Impact Assessment

Background Papers

None.

Consideration by any other Council Committee, Scrutiny or Advisory Panel

Overview and Scrutiny Management Board – 30 June 2018

Council Approval Required

No

Exempt from the Press and Public

No

Equalities Annual Report – 2020/21

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 12 months 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 It has been an exceptional year, with the Council's focus being on responding to and starting to recover from COVID-19. The pandemic has exacerbated existing inequalities, with the most disadvantaged communities being hit the hardest, and has also uncovered latent vulnerability within our communities. Throughout the response to the pandemic, equalities has remained an important priority for the Council, and this will continue to be a priority as the borough moves into recovery.
- 1.3 Equalities is an integral part of the Council's Year Ahead Plan which will continue to identify the interventions and activities needed to address inequality in the economy, health and community development. Equalities also remains an important part of the Council's outbreak management plan, ensuring that the Council's response is targeted to take account of different needs.
- 1.4 The Council has made a commitment to reach 'Excellent' within the LGA's Equality Framework by 2022. Work toward accreditation is underway and the council will seek to build on current good practice and to develop its approach further through engagement with elected members, Council officers, partners, and local communities. This will be linked to engagement around the new Council Plan.

2. Key Issues

- 2.1 The annual report is structured around four themes:
 - Understanding and working with our communities. This includes information on the Council's approach to collecting and analysing equalities data, as well as engaging with local people, fostering good relations within communities, and supporting local people to participate in public life.
 - Leadership and organisational commitment. This covers how the Council has approached equality and diversity in decision-making, communications, partnership working, priority setting and policy development.
 - Responsive services and customer care. This focusses on how equalities considerations have factored into the planning and delivery of in-house Council services, as well as commissioning and procurement.

- Diverse and engaged workforce. This includes information on how the Council's workforce has been supported over the past year, in terms of inclusive working practices, health and wellbeing support and learning and development around equalities.

2.2 In addition to reflecting on the key areas of progress against these themes over the past year, the report also outlines some of the next steps that will be priority areas of action to support the equalities agenda in 2021/22.

3. Options considered and recommended proposal

- 3.1 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.

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 Activity relevant to the workforce is set out under the 'diverse and engaged' workforce section of the report.

9. Implications for Children and Young People and Vulnerable Adults

9.1 Throughout the report, there are numerous 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 12 months. As outlined above, publishing an annual report is part of the Council's 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. These agendas are therefore, closely linked.

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.

13. Risks and Mitigation

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

14. Accountable Officers

Jo Brown, Assistant Chief Executive

Jackie Mould, Head of Policy, Performance, and Intelligence

Approvals obtained on behalf of Statutory Officers: -

	Named Officer	Date
Chief Executive	Sharon Kemp	07/06/21
Strategic Director of Finance & Customer Services (S.151 Officer)	Judith Badger	28/05/21
Head of Legal Services (Monitoring Officer)	Stuart Fletcher	02/06/21

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