

Divisions Affected – Not applicable

Performance and Corporate Governance Scrutiny Committee – 17 June 2022

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan 2022-23

Report by Corporate Director Customers, Organisational Development and Resources

RECOMMENDATION

1. **The Committee is asked to comment on the draft Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) action plan 2022-23 prior to consideration by Cabinet.**

Executive Summary

2. This report sets out how the EDI action plan for 2022-23 has been developed to support the Council's EDI Framework known as 'Including Everyone'. The report invites comment from the Performance and Corporate Governance Scrutiny Committee on the draft action plan which is attached at annex 1 and notes the intention to revise the framework over the next year. For reference, the current 'Including Everyone' Framework is included as annex 2 to this report.

Background

3. Under the duties of the Equality Act 2010, all local authorities must produce a four-year equalities framework or strategy and an annual action plan. Our EDI framework was agreed in November 2020 and is called 'Including Everyone'. The 2021-22 action plan has been reported to members as part of the Business Management and Monitoring report twice a year. This report presents the draft 2022-23 EDI action plan for Scrutiny to comment on prior to consideration by Cabinet in July, with the full draft plan attached as annex 1.
4. To develop the second action plan, the Council has taken a different approach to the previous year, building on the adoption of the Council's new values and behaviours through the 'Delivering the Future Together' programme. 'Equality and Integrity in All We Do' is one of the new values and to embed this, actions have been developed through Service Delivery Plans. This builds on the ambition in the Including Everyone Framework that inclusion is everyone's responsibility. An updated foreword for the Including Everyone Framework will be developed ahead of consideration by Cabinet.

5. The draft action plan has been reviewed by the internal Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Steering Group which is comprised of Senior Leadership Team, Extended Leadership Team and Staff Network representatives.

Commitments from 2022-23

6. Key learning from the 2021-22 action plan was the need to ensure that actions are more specific and measurable which has been reflected in the commitments for this year's plan. New actions proposed for this year include:
 - Create a more digitally inclusive website that proudly promotes our commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion
 - Offering additional support to 104 additional asylum-seeking children and young people through the National Transfer Scheme by March 2023
 - Develop community insights into healthy weight and physical activity with a focus on inequality
 - Review the support we offer through our Armed Forces Covenant following recent legislation changes and look for ways to improve our support to this community group
7. The action plan will also be updated to reflect the recent motion passed at Council calling for greater recognition and understand of trans and non-binary identities once Cabinet has considered a response to the motion.
8. The Council recognises the importance of listening and learning from those with lived experience. The Framework was developed during the height of the Covid-19 pandemic and this year we will be looking to engage in greater depth with communities on the issues that they face.

Future Plans:

9. At the end of this year, the Council will have reached the mid-way point in the Including Everyone Framework. It is recognised that the Council has a long-term vision to tackle inequalities across the county and so the Framework will be updated during this year in order to capture the short, medium and long-term aims for the Council's inclusion agenda. Scrutiny will be invited to input into the development of this outcomes framework.
10. The Framework will also be updated to reflect the need to foster equity in addition to equality, diversity and inclusion. Equity relates to the need to create equal outcomes for all community members, whereas equality relates to having equal status, rights and opportunities.

Highlights from 2021-22

11. A more detailed summary of the achievements in 2021-22 will be included in the Annual Performance Report which will appear elsewhere on the agenda for this meeting. However, achievements of particular note were:

- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion calendar: this has been developed within Strategy, Communications and Insight to plan communications around key religious, inclusion and corporate priority days across the council. The first year of the calendar tied communications to the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic, however this year there is a greater focus on telling first person stories to highlight the lived experience that staff have of events and occasions.
 - Reciprocal mentoring pilot scheme: A nine-month reciprocal mentoring scheme was completed with members of the Council's senior leadership team and representatives from the Council's Racial Equality and Cultural Heritage Staff Network. An evaluation report of the scheme being prepared, however the mid-point review highlighted that the scheme had been received positively from those participating
 - Updated policies and procedures: During the staff consultation in developing the framework, staff said that policies and procedures for reporting bullying and harassment were not as clear as they could be. Human Resources have since re-designed and publicised these policies, which are now known as the 'Zero Tolerance' and the 'Anti-Bullying, Harassment and Discrimination' policies.
12. Additionally, the Council was shortlisted for a Diversity and Inclusion award by the Local Government Chronicle award for the development of the Including Everyone Framework.
13. It is important to note that these actions will now form part of the Council's business as usual and so have not been included in this years action plan.

Corporate Policies and Priorities

14. The EDI action plan intersects with a number of the Council's Strategic Priorities in particular:
- Tackling inequalities in Oxfordshire
 - Prioritise the health and wellbeing of our residents
 - Support carers and the social care system
 - Create opportunities for children and young people to reach their full potential
 - Play our part in a vibrant and participatory democracy
 - Work with local businesses and partners for environmental, economy and social benefit

15. The goals and ambitions are an established part of the framework that was agreed in 2020. The Framework will be reviewed as we reach the mid-point during the course of this next year as it is acknowledged that a more detailed and measurable Outcomes Framework for Equality, Diversity and Inclusion will better reflect the Council's ambitions in this area.

Financial Implications

16. There are no direct budgetary implications associated with the action plan. Any budgetary implications that arise from actions will be managed within individual Directorates and Service areas as required.

Legal Implications

17. The development of the action plan seeks to support the Council's obligations under the Public Sector Equality Duty which are as follows:
 - (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.Comments checked by:

Staff Implications

18. The delivery of actions within the action plan will be delivered within existing council resources.

Equality & Inclusion Implications

19. The development of the action plan will have a positive impact on equality, diversity and inclusion both people with protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010 and more widely.

Sustainability Implications

20. The action plan will have a positive impact on sustainability and contains specific actions in relation to engaging with a diverse range of groups when developing climate action plans

