

## **Report to Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

**Subject:** Equality and Diversity Policy, Framework and Action Plan

**Date:** 15 January 2024

**Author:** Interim Corporate Director

### **Wards Affected**

All Wards

### **Purpose**

To update members on the progress made across the Council on the Equality and Diversity Framework and action plan for 2021-2024 as well as other work undertaken in relation to improving equality and diversity in the provision of Council services since the adoption of the Equality and Diversity Policy in 2021.

To establish a working group to consider the proposed amendments to the Equality and Diversity Policy 2024-27 and new approach to the framework and action plan as part of a wider public consultation.

### **Key Decision**

This is not a key decision.

### **Recommendation**

#### **THAT Members:**

- 1) Note the work undertaken on the Equality and Diversity Framework and Action Plan and the wider work undertaken by officers and members to strengthen the Council's approach to equality and diversity in the performance of its functions from 2021-2024.
- 2) Establishes a working group to consider the proposed changes to the Council's Equality and Diversity Policy for 2024-27.

## **1 Background**

- 1.1 In October 2021, Cabinet approved the Council's Equality and Diversity Policy document along with the Equality and Diversity Framework and Action Plan for 2021-2024. These documents were approved following two rounds of public consultation. In October 2023, Cabinet received an update on the work undertaken under the framework since its adoption and this report can be found at Appendix 1 with the current policy and framework documents attached as appendices to that report.
- 1.2 In summary, 70 equality related actions were included in the action plan, to date only 8 actions and 6 sub-actions remain outstanding. This is an excellent achievement for all involved. The action plan has been monitored closely by the Strategic Equality and Diversity Group (SEDG) which is a cross party group with membership consisting of the Leader and Deputy Leader, Portfolio Holder and Policy Adviser with responsibility for equalities, a member from each opposition group, the Chief Executive and Director responsible for Equalities.
- 1.3 The SEDG is supported by an Officer's Equality Group and more recently a group of staff volunteers who have come together to support delivery of our equality objectives. This group is currently establishing itself and its remit but is much more focused on equality impacts for staff and customers at an operational level.
- 1.4 The current policy and framework expire in March 2024, as such, the policy has been reviewed and a new approach put forward to SEDG for the framework and action plan from April 2024.
- 1.5 The Council's current Equality and Diversity Framework and Action Plan is derived from the Local Government Association Equality Framework for Local Government, which categorises organisations through a self-assessment process into developing, achieving or excellent categories. Our original framework for 2021-24 was aimed at the Council becoming a "developing" organisation as it was recognised that equality and diversity had not necessarily been a strong corporate priority. All actions against that framework are set to be completed by April 2024, and following further self-assessment in December 2023, the Council has now largely achieved the developing category and is seeking to progress to "achieving" and ultimately "excellent."
- 1.6 To further embed equality and diversity into our organisational practices and processes, for 2024-27, the Council is proposing a new approach to delivering equality actions. Each year a set of equality actions will be agreed as part of the service planning process. The actions may be main actions or sub-actions within service plans but will fully integrate into service planning and performance monitoring of those plans by SLT, Cabinet and the Strategic Equality and Diversity Group.

- 1.7 The actions in the action plan will be set to aim for “achieving” levels against the LGA framework and are split into 4 categories as set out in the LGA framework:
- Understanding and Working with Communities
  - Leadership, Partnership and Organisational Commitment
  - Responsive Services and Customer Care
  - Diverse and engaged Workforce
- 1.8 In terms of the Equality and Diversity Policy for 2024-27 this has been reviewed and amendments can be seen in Appendix 2 to this report. It is proposed that this document, which highlights the new approach to the framework and action plan, be taken to Cabinet in January 2024, to agree a period of public consultation with a view to a new Policy and framework approach being agreed for 1 April 2024.

## **2 Proposal**

- 2.1 It is proposed that Committee note the work undertaken by officers and members in relation to the Council's Equality and Diversity Policy, Framework and Action Plan for 2021-24.
- 2.2 It is proposed that this Committee establish a working group to feed into the consultation process on the updated Equality and Diversity Policy and action plan approach for 2024-27 and report any feedback to Cabinet. It should be noted that Cabinet have not yet agreed the amended policy to go out to consultation, but this is expected later in January. At this stage the policy at Appendix 2 is draft, any amendments made prior to consultation launch will be provided to the working group.

## **3 Alternative Options**

- 3.1 This information could not be reported to Committee; however, it is considered important that this Committee are informed of the progress against the Equality and Diversity Framework and Action Plan and are involved in the preparation of the future policy and framework/action plan approach.

## **4 Financial Implications**

- 4.1 In terms of the financial implications, there are no direct financial implications arising from this report.
- 4.2 As indicated, there is no dedicated resource associated with the equality agenda and the work and associated budgets form part of approved budgets within service areas.

## **5 Legal Implications**

- 5.1 The Council has a statutory duty to comply with the requirements of the Equality Act 2010. The policy, framework and action plan demonstrate how the Council seeks to comply with its Public Sector Equality Duty and deliver on its Equality objectives as set out in the Gedling Plan.

## **6 Equalities Implications**

- 6.1 By its nature, this report seeks to update members of the Council's work to strengthen equality of access to services for residents and staff.

## **7 Carbon Reduction/Sustainability Implications**

- 7.1 There are no carbon reduction/sustainability implications arising from this report.

## **8 Appendices**

- 8.1 Appendix 1 – Cabinet report, Equality and Diversity policy, Framework and Action Plan 2021-24

Appendix 2 – Draft Updated Equality and Diversity Policy 2024-27

## **9 Background Papers**

- 9.1 [Equality Framework for Local Government \(EFLG\) 2021 | Local Government Association](#)

## **10 Reasons for Recommendations**

- 10.1 To alert the Committee to the work undertaken on the Council's Equality and Diversity Framework and Action Plan.

- 10.2 To involve this Committee on proposals for policy change.

### **Statutory Officer approval**

**Approved by:**

**Date:**

**On behalf of the Chief Financial Officer**

**Drafted by the Monitoring Officer**