

Report to Cabinet

Subject: Equality and Diversity Policy, Framework and Action Plan

Date: 31 January 2024

Author: Interim Corporate Director

Wards Affected

All Wards

Purpose

To seek approval to launch a consultation on changes to the Council's Equality and Diversity policy 2024-27 and to update Member's on the ongoing equality and diversity work.

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) Agrees to a public consultation on the Council's updated Equality and Diversity Policy 2024-2027.

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.

- 1.2 In summary, 70 equality related actions were included in the 2021-24 action plan, to date only 8 actions and 6 sub actions remain outstanding and are due for completion by 31st March 2024. This is considered to be 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.
- 1.4 Alongside the framework and action plan, work continues to improve equality and diversity in the performance of the Council's functions including awareness raising for staff in relation to menopause, with the roll out of webinars on a dedicated intranet page where staff can gain a better understanding about the impacts of menopause and how to support staff in the workplace experiencing menopause. In addition, a new changing places facility has recently opened in Arnold, providing new, accessible toilet facilities in the town. Also, with the establishment of the staff equality group, named the Gedling Inclusion Group Support or "GIGS", it is hoped that equality and diversity will become more embedded throughout the organisation with Gedling becoming a more inclusive employer.
- 1.5 The current policy and framework expires 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.
- 1.6 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."
- 1.7 In order 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.

1.8 The actions in the action plan will be set in order 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

1.9 In terms of the Equality and Diversity Policy for 2024-27 this has been reviewed and amendments can be seen in Appendix 1 to this report. It is proposed that this document, which highlights the new approach to the framework and action plan, be subject to a period of public consultation with a view to a new Policy being agreed for 1st April 2024.

1.10 As part of the consultation exercise, it is proposed that the public are asked for wider views on its approach to equality and diversity in service delivery and decision making. This will help guide service plan actions and ensure Council services are delivered in a way that is accessible to all. As part of ensuring wider Member engagement in equality work, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee at its meeting in January agreed to form a working group to participate in the consultation exercise.

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 Cabinet agree a period of consultation with the public on the Equality and Diversity Policy 2023-27 at appendix 1. The consultation will seek views on the policy as well as wider views on how we can improve. The consultation will run for a minimum of 4 weeks with responses brought back to cabinet as part of the consideration of the Equality and Diversity Policy for 2024-27.

3 Alternative Options

3.1 This information could not be reported to Cabinet however, it is considered important that Cabinet 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.

- 3.2 Cabinet could determine not to consult on the policy moving forward, however in order to effectively deliver on our equality and diversity commitments, a wider public view is important.

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 demonstrates 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. The consultation exercise will be run in a way to ensure it is accessible and support from Communications is being sought to ensure we gain wide views on how we can make our services accessible.

7 Carbon Reduction/Sustainability Implications

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

8 Appendices

- 8.1 Appendix 1 – 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 Executive to the work undertaken on the Council's Equality and Diversity Framework and Action Plan.
- 10.2 To involve the public on proposals for policy change.

Statutory Officer approval

Approved by:

Date:

On behalf of the Chief Financial Officer

Approved by:

Date:

On behalf of the Monitoring Officer