

# Bath & North East Somerset Council

MEETING	<b>Council</b>	
MEETING	<b>17<sup>th</sup> November 2022</b>	
TITLE:	<b>Equality Improvement Action Plan</b>	
WARD:	All	
<b>AN OPEN PUBLIC ITEM</b>		
<b>List of attachments to this report:</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Equality Improvement Action Plan (appendix 1)</li><li>2. Summary of Equality groups (appendix 2)</li></ol>		

## 1 THE ISSUE:

The Public Sector Equality Duty 2011 requires the Local Authority to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between different people. The Equality Improvement Action Plan (EIP) sets out how Bath and North East Somerset Council is committed to maintaining a focus on equality, diversity and inclusion.

The EIP was considered on 26<sup>th</sup> September 2022 by the Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel. Suggested amendments to the EIP format have been implemented.

## 1 RECOMMENDATION

### The Panel is asked to;

- 1.1 Agree the performance of the Council is measured against the highlighted performance indicators (below).
- 1.2 Adopt the Equality Improvement Plan as part of Council policy and practice

1.3 Note that Corporate Equality Diversity and Inclusion Steering Group is responsible for ensuring delivery on the EIP.

## **2 THE REPORT**

3.1 The council's bi-annual Corporate Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Steering Group (CEDIS), chaired by the Chief Executive agreed at its first meeting on 3<sup>rd</sup> November 2020 that the council should measure its equality progress against the [Equality Framework for Local Government](#), setting targets for improvement where needed. An audit was undertaken during Spring 2021 which measured the council's performance and equality activity against the recommendations of the Equality Framework for Local Government. This audit was reviewed at the CEDIS on 24<sup>th</sup> November 2021, and an improvement plan has now been agreed. The improvement plan gives the council strategic direction in its equality work, and at the same time includes the actions we need to take in order to meet the agreed targets. An annual review will ensure that the Council maintains the required statutory duties (Equality Act 2010, Public Sector Equality Duty 2011).

3.2 The objectives of the EIP are:

- To ensure and enable corporate oversight of equality and diversity issues within B&NES Council.
- To review and develop the Council's equality objectives and, with reference to the Council's Corporate Strategy, to develop an equalities improvement strategy
- To monitor progress against the equalities improvement strategy to ensure that we improve people's lives across all protected characteristics of the Equality Act 2010.
- To ensure a consistent approach to progressing our equality objectives across all service areas of the council.
- To provide a formal mechanism for the staff equality networks and member representatives to provide feedback and challenge

<b>Members of CEDIS</b>	
<b>Name</b>	<b>Job Title</b>
Will Godfrey	Chief Executive (Chair)
Cherry Bennett	Director of People & Policy
Mary Kearney-Knowles	Director of Children's Services and Education/DCS
Chris Wilford	Director of Education & Safeguarding and Deputy DCS
David Trethewey	Director – External Affairs
Rebecca Reynolds	Director of Public Health and Prevention
Tracey Long	Head of Digital & Customer Services
Jackie Vowles	Senior Manager – HR&OD Advisory
Samantha Jones	Inclusive Communities Manager
Rebecca Jones	Deputy Team Leader – Legal Services
Michael Hewitt	Head of Legal and Democratic Services and Monitoring Officer
Juliet Davies	Corporate Equalities & Diversity Officer
Jon Poole	Business Intelligence Officer
Sara Banks	Executive Support Assistant (Disabled Staff Network Chair)
Louise Madden	Project Co-ordinator (LGBT+ Staff Network Chair)
Dan Obi	Service Designer (Ethnic Minority Staff Network Chair)
Cllr Kevin Guy	Leader of the Council, Liberal Democrat Group Leader
Cllr Dine Romero	Children and Young People, Communities and Culture
Cllr Yuktेशwar Kumar	Member advocate for Ethnic Minorities
Cllr Karen Warrington	Chair of Corporate PDS panel, Conservative Party
Cllr Sarah Moore	Member advocate for Accessibility

### 3.3 The actions in the plan fall into the following four broad themes:

- A. Leadership and organisational commitment to equality and diversity - Lead Officer Will Godfrey
- B. Understanding and working with our communities – Lead Officer Chris Wilford
- C. Responsive services and customer care – Lead Officer Tracey Long
- D. An engaged and diverse workforce – Lead Officer Cherry Bennett

3.3.1 Each theme has a section lead and membership of these groups includes officers with appropriate knowledge and influence to be able to implement the actions they are responsible for. There is representation from a range of services across the organisation including the staff network groups and the corporate equalities officer on each section.

The strategic leadership team have a renewed commitment to prioritise the focus on Equality across the organisation and it is a key performance objective for senior colleagues.

3.3.2 The following points outline some of the highlights of the EIP. Members should be aware that progress against the delivery of the Action Plan has been hindered due to the release dates of the 2021 ONS Census data. (Equalities data was expected in early 2021 and is now scheduled for release in 2023 with no date given). Despite not knowing the specific up to date makeup of the population of B&NES good progress has been made, on other actions for instance:

#### **A Demonstrating leadership and partnership working**

- Corporate EDI group (CEDIS) – comprises strategic leaders from across the organisation and leadership is demonstrated by the Chief Executive chairing meetings and leading the work on this theme. Elected members attend.
- A Race Equality Schools task force has been set up and includes partner organisations (SARI, BFESG) schools and council officers. The Race Equality Charter has been introduced and 32 schools in B&NES have signed up and there is an aspiration for this to increase to 100% of schools in B&NES by the end of the academic year in 2023.  
<https://beta.bathnes.gov.uk/race-equality-charter-schools>
- Working with other West of England public bodies (local authorities, universities, NHS and blue light) via Partners in Procurement, the team encourage the Council to work with a range of companies and 3<sup>rd</sup> sector organisations who are committed to equality, diversity and inclusion.

#### **B Training, development and support**

- A strategy is in place for induction training, including mandatory equalities training, for elected members from the 2023 intake.

- There are a range of structures in place to enable active and effective two-way communication with our community, including the following equality related groups (appendix 2):
  - ❖ Staff Networks
  - ❖ CEDIS
  - ❖ Independent Equality Advisory Group
  - ❖ B&NES Council Race Panel
  - ❖ Race Equality Hate Crime Task Force
- We have staff network groups for Ethnic Minority, Disabled and LGBT+ staff. All network chairs are actively involved in CEDIS and each section of the EIP. They are working together to improve engagement, provide alternative perspectives and challenge across the organisation.
- Since 2018 – 18 women have completed the Springboard Women’s Development programme and 2 ethnic minority staff have completed the Stepping Up programme. We continue to promote opportunities such as these where appropriate.
- We have a set of 11 videos we are about to launch as part of our employer brand work, highlighting our inclusive and flexible working practices through interviews with a range of staff members.

## **C Evidence based practice, legislative compliance**

- The Council’s Strategic Evidence base has equality considerations incorporated within it and will inform the Health and Wellbeing Strategy, Economic Strategy and new Corporate Strategy.
- The Strategic Procurement Team has ensured that its webpages and intranet guidance (including templates and standard documentation) are up to date with relevant equalities legislation as well as providing regular guidance on any relevant procurement case law.
- We have new corporate Performance Management systems. This will enable quantifiable equality indicators to be captured within Director dashboards for the % of Equality Impact Assessments (EQIA) completed by their services.

## **D Identified areas for development:**

- Understanding the make up of our local population and being responsive to the needs within our communities (census data).
- Using this census data to develop targets to meet our vision to *“Ensure that the workforce is representative of the community and that everyone in the organisation feels a sense of inclusion and belonging”* (working title) and that the vision is embedded in our People Strategy
- Exploring how to assess our ethnicity pay gap, We need to increase the completeness of our employee data, which will help us assess our performance
- Increasing the number and quality of completed and published Equality Impact Assessments (EQIA). Data informs us that there has been a decline on the

completion of EQIA's however there is a drive within CEDIS to rectify this through the following actions:

- ❖ Service managers to identify and capture equality related issues early within the Medium Term Financial Strategy
- ❖ Systematic approach to identifying corporate/cumulative effects of policy development and service changes to ensure we identify where proposals, if implemented, could create disproportionate impact on people with protected characteristics.
- ❖ Develop staff competencies in the completion of EQIA in a thorough and robust way that considers all aspects of equalities and diversity.
- ❖ Updated budget template to include EQIA
- ❖ Service procurement templates have had EQIA added
- ❖ Updated templates accessible via the website
- Developing and engaging new staff networks, 62% of the staff identify as female, plans are in place to gauge interest in establishing a women's career staff network and a carers staff network.  
A menopause group is established and provides peer support both as a group and to individuals through regular meetings and a confidential Yammer group.

### 3 STATUTORY CONSIDERATIONS

3.1 The Council has statutory obligations re: The Equality Act 2010 and the Public Sector Equality Duty 2011

### 4 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS (FINANCE, PROPERTY, PEOPLE)

4.1 As stated in the report

### 5 RISK MANAGEMENT

5.1 A risk assessment related to the issue and recommendations has been undertaken, in compliance with the Council's decision making risk management guidance.

### 6 EQUALITIES

6.1 As stated in the report

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<b>Background papers</b>	n/a
<b>Please contact the report author if you need to access this report in an alternative format</b>	