

CABINET - THURSDAY, 9 MAY 2024

Report of the Head of Transformation, Strategy and Performance Lead Member: Executive Member Leader of Council

Part A

EQUALITY, DIVERSITY, AND INCLUSION STRATEGY 2024-2028

Purpose of Report

To set out, following a period of public consultation, Charnwood Borough Council's Equality, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI) Strategy (2024-2028) for consideration and approval.

Recommendations

1. That the Council's Equality, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI) Strategy (2024-2028) and associated Equality Action Plan (2024-2026), attached as an Annex A and B, be approved.
2. That, if approved at Council on the 22nd April 2024, Charnwood Borough Council treats care experienced people as if they were a protected characteristic whilst recognising that the needs of people with legally defined protected characteristics will take precedence if there is a conflict.

Reason

1. To enable the Strategy, which seeks to improve how the organisation promotes equality in all services delivered by Charnwood Borough Council and in how it employs and manages staff, and to assist the Council in meeting its corporate objective to consider its customers' needs, be approved following public consultation.
2. To continue to support care experienced people who face significant barriers that impact them throughout their lives and to adhere to the Public Sector Equality Duty that requires public bodies, such as councils, to have due regard of the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, and victimisation of people with protected characteristics.

Policy Justification and Previous Decisions

The Council is required to produce an EDI Strategy to evidence how it is meeting its statutory duties regarding equality, diversity and inclusion. Various equality strategies, schemes and plans have previously been approved by Cabinet. This revised Strategy builds upon each of these and strengthens the Council's existing approach to equality, diversity and inclusion. The current Strategy was approved by Cabinet in December 2020.

The legislative requirements within the Equality Act 2010 and associated Public Sector Equality Duty requires Charnwood Borough Council to revise its Priority Equality Objectives by 2024 (this duty must be completed every four years). This

revised Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Strategy is therefore necessary to reflect such changes.

The Strategy has been developed, in line with the Council's revised Corporate Strategy 2024-2028. It has been informed by the opinions of individuals and community groups which were captured via the Council's residents' survey that was conducted in 2023.

The Council's Corporate Strategy contains a framework for the delivery of services which focuses on areas that residents identified as priorities and those areas that the Council recognises as requiring additional support, with the intention of being beneficial for many of those within the community who need the Council the most. This EDI Strategy supports the aims and priorities set within the revised Corporate Strategy 2024-2028 to meet the Council's aim of achieving fairness and respect for everyone in all that it does.

Implementation Timetable including Future Decisions

The decision will come into effect immediately (subject to Call-in).

Report Implications

Financial Implications

There are no financial implications arising from this report at this stage. All activities will be covered within existing budgets.

Risk Management

The risks associated with the decision Cabinet is asked to make and proposed actions to mitigate those risks are set out in the table below.

Risk Identified	Likelihood	Impact	Overall Risk	Risk Management Actions Planned
Failure to assess the impact of our policies and to deliver fair and equitable services could result in the council facing a legal challenge and result in damage to its reputation.	(2)	(2)	Low (4)	Undertaking Equality Impact Assessments on policies and key decisions to analyse the impact on different equality groups, should reduce the risk of this occurring.

Equality and Diversity

An Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) has been prepared for this Strategy; however, the whole purpose is to ensure that the Council complies with the statutory duty to give due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act.
- Advance equality of opportunities for all.
- Foster good relations between all individuals.

Climate Change and Carbon Impact

None identified.

Crime and Disorder

There are actions contained within the plan which specifically relate to crime and disorder in relation to supporting the PREVENT action plan and multi-agency Leicestershire and Rutland PREVENT steering group and working directly with partners, local organisations and community groups to deliver the Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland Hate action plan.

Wards Affected

All Wards.

Publicity Arrangements

The final Strategy and action plan will both be made publicly available on the Charnwood Borough Council website.

Consultations

Key to the development of this Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Strategy was consultation with, and the engagement / involvement of various internal and external stakeholders.

A Residents Survey was completed in 2023, this informed development of the Council's Corporate Strategy (2024-2028), responses generated through this consultation were also taken on board and reflected in the final EDI Strategy.

Links to the Corporate Strategy

Caring for the Environment	Yes
Healthy Communities	Yes
A Thriving Economy	Yes
Your Council	Yes

Key Decision: N

Background Papers: Cabinet, Item 8. 10th December 2020 – Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2020-2024.

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Part B

Background

The current EDI Strategy was adopted by Cabinet in December 2020. It was agreed that the Strategy would be reviewed after four years and refreshed to take account of the Council's legislative requirement to revise its Priority Equality Objectives for 2024, as prescribed in the Equality Act 2010 and associated Public Sector Equality Duty.

The Equality Act 2010 and the associated Public Sector Equality Duty require authorities to work towards a much broader definition of equality and inclusion and to provide a greater focus on achieving positive equality outcomes. This includes placing a stronger emphasis on the need to evidence 'due regard' by strengthening the Council's approach to Equality Impact Assessments. The expectation is that authorities make much more explicit what they are doing in relation to equalities and inclusion via the EDI Strategy.

This EDI Strategy (2024-2028) considers the Equality Act 2010 and the Council's legislative requirements within the Public Sector Equality Duty, development in relation to the contents of the previous Strategy and the authority's equality-related work over the course of the last four years. As such the Council's Priority Equality Objectives very much form the focus of this new EDI Strategy.

The EDI Strategy (2024-2028) sets out the Council's objectives and approach to promoting equality and inclusion, good relations and in tackling discrimination and harassment. It recognises that specific actions are needed to address different equality issues whilst also acknowledging many people experience more than one type of disadvantage or discrimination (multiple discrimination).

Focus of the EDI Strategy is themed around employment practice, decision-making and developing policies, access to services, culture, working with services and buying services from others, it contains objectives that will address these areas. It supports the aims and priorities set within the revised Corporate Strategy 2024-2028 to attain the Council's aim of achieving fairness and respect for everyone in all that we do.

The new equality action plan 2024-2026 will be used as supplementary information which will support delivery of the Strategy. The action plan will be revised every two years.

The Council has an Equality Working Group with representatives from across the Council. The aim of the group is to ensure effective and co-ordinated action across the Council to reduce disadvantage, discrimination and inequality of opportunity, and promote equality in terms of the people it serves, its workforce, the partners it works with and the services it delivers. This group have approved the revised Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy and associated action plan.

Consultation Approach

Numerous consultation activities have taken place to support development of this Strategy. This includes engagement with both internal and external stakeholders. Internal consultation has included the Equality Working Group, Staff Forum, staff focus sessions and engagement with the Senior Leadership Team.

External engagement has taken place with hard-to-reach groups, the Citizens Panel, local students and a public online consultation. The results of this activity have been used to develop the final Strategy.

The EDI Strategy will be made available through the Council's website.

Care Experienced People

A joint motion is due to be approved at Council on the 22nd April 2024 in relation to support for care experienced people. This motion can be seen below:

(i) This Council notes that:

(a) Care experienced people face significant barriers that impact them throughout their lives;

(b) Despite the resilience of many care experienced people, society too often does not take their needs into account;

(c) Care experienced people often face discrimination and stigma across housing, health, education, relationships, employment and in the criminal justice system;

(d) Care experienced people may encounter inconsistent support in different geographical areas;

(e) The Public Sector Equality Duty requires public bodies, such as councils, to have due regard of the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, and victimisation of people with protected characteristics.

(ii) This Council therefore resolves that:

(a) It recognises that care experienced people are a group who are likely to face discrimination.

(b) It recognises that co-production and collaboration can help ensure that the needs and aspirations of all people are at the heart of decision making;

(c) Future decision, services and policies made and adopted by the Council should be assessed through Equality Impact Assessments to determine the impact of changes on people with care experience, alongside those who formally share a protected characteristic.

(d) In the delivery of the Public Sector Equality Duty the Council will work towards including people with care experience in the publication and review of Equality Objectives and the annual publication of information relating to people who share a protected characteristic in services and employment;

(e) This Council will treat care experience as if it were a protected characteristic whilst recognising that the needs of people with legally defined protected characteristics will need to take precedence if there is a conflict;

(f) To continue proactively seeking out and listening to the voices of care experienced people when developing new policies based on their views

The Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2024-28 and supporting action captures actions in support of the motion above.

Appendices

Appendix A - Equality, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI) Strategy (2024-2028)

Appendix B - Equality Action Plan (2024-2026)

Appendix C - Equality Impact Assessment