

Corporate Policy Committee

Date of Meeting: 3rd March 2022

Report Title: Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy – Progress Review

Report of: Jane Burns, Executive Director of Corporate Services

Report Reference No: CP/47/21-22

Ward(s) Affected: All

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|----------------------------------|--------------|---|---|
| Corporate Plan Priorities | Open | An open and enabling organisation | X |
| | Fair | A council which empowers and cares about people | X |
| | Green | A thriving and sustainable place | X |

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1.** The purpose of this report is to update members on progress against delivery of the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2021-2025.
- 1.2.** The strategy built upon significant progress already made in relation to equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) and outlined the council’s ambitions and plans to continue to promote and advance EDI throughout Cheshire East.
- 1.3.** The Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy is a key strategy for the Council as its ambitions pervade all that we do in relation to residents and staff. The strategy supports our corporate plan vision of an open, fair and green Cheshire East. It particularly promotes our “fair” vision of reducing inequalities, promoting fairness and opportunity for all and support for our most vulnerable residents.

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1** Progress has been made to implement the Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion strategy during 2020/21. The accompanying action plan contains 29 actions, 5 of these have been achieved (17%), 15 (52%) of these have been partially achieved and 9 (31%) have not yet been progressed.
- 2.2** Progress has been slower than anticipated due to the ongoing response to the coronavirus pandemic, impacting on the available resource to drive the strategy. A new Director in place to oversee the strategy, together with more available resource will ensure that the strategy can achieve its aims over the next three years.

3. Recommendation

- 3.1.** The Committee is asked to note progress in delivering the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy and highlight any areas of risk, challenge and good practice.

4. Reasons for Recommendations

- 4.1.** The EDI strategy outlined our ambitions to reduce inequalities and promote fairness for all and supports achievement of our Corporate Plan. Oversight of progress of implementation of the objectives of the strategy is part of the Council's commitment to openness and transparency.

5. Other Options Considered

- 5.1.** Not applicable.

6. Background

- 6.1.** The Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy was approved in April 2021 by the former Cabinet. It sets out refreshed ambition and objectives as part of the duty to comply with the Equality Act 2010 and to improve public services for everyone. The strategy set the vision to ensure that Cheshire East is an area of equal opportunity where everyone has a fair chance, and people from all backgrounds take part in community life.
- 6.2.** The EDI strategy sets out five key objectives, which are:
- Include – listen and involve all voices;
 - Inspire – celebrate and promote diversity and the positive opportunities it brings;
 - Integrate – deliver and promote accessible services for all; and
 - Inform – empower people to respectfully challenge discriminatory and poor behaviour
 - Impact – support and deliver meaningful change

- 6.3. A workplan was developed to document the key actions proposed to deliver the ambitions of the plan. The plan has been led collectively from officers across the council. Progress against the plan has been considered by the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Board. Membership of the board includes the Member Champion for Equality, Diversity and Inclusion.
- 6.4. A “stock take” review of the EDI strategy was undertaken in January 2021. This has provided an opportunity to assess progress made to date in delivering the identified actions to implement the ambitions of the strategy. This is captured in detail in **Appendix 1**.
- 6.5. The review of progress is to ensure that the actions are progressing to plan and are meeting the agreed aims and objectives of the strategy. The review also offers an opportunity to identify areas of good progress, and areas which may benefit from accelerated focus.
- 6.6. In summary, 17% of actions have been achieved, 52% have been partially achieved and 31% have not yet been progressed.
- 6.7. Highlights in the progression of the strategy after the first year are as follows:

Include

The council have an Equality Champions network in place and staff network peer groups. Since the strategy was launched an additional staff group for men, called “The Circle” has been established. A Young Persons network is being developed as an additional staff group to support young employees.

The Council has recently launched its Customer Experience, Workforce and Digital strategies, all of which support our EDI objectives.

Inspire

Local events and awareness days have been greatly impacted by the coronavirus pandemic. Where possible in 2021, online events were held, such as the Virtual Pride events. A list of Awareness Days for 2022 has been agreed by the EDI Board and an accompanying activity plan is under development to support these campaigns. This will be shared with members when confirmed.

The Census 2021 data will be reviewed by the Business Intelligence team and will be used to update our profiling information. The publication of first results by the Office for National Statistics is due in late spring 2022, with the final release of all census data outputs scheduled for March 2023.

Integrate

The council continues to conduct Equality Impact Assessments for key decisions, projects, and strategies. An equality impact assessment was recently produced for the review of the Medium Term Financial Strategy. During 2022/23 this process will be reviewed to ensure that it remains robust and reflects best practice.

Inform

The council continues to offer a range of training and development activities to staff through its “Learning Lounge” system. Courses such as unconscious bias, helping disabled customers, supporting carers in the workplace, Time to Change and mental health awareness have taken place, and been fully booked, during 2021. An upcoming development will enable staff to create their own learning plan and use this to support their personal development review conversations.

Impact

The council is committed to publishing an Annual Report on Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion. All of the data and intelligence gathered through progression of the strategy will be reported and published in 2022. This report will be presented to the Corporate Policy Committee.

- 6.8.** The implementation of the EDI strategy has coincided with a period where the Council is continuing to respond to the coronavirus pandemic. The pandemic response continues to have significant impacts across service areas and available resources, this impact is reflected in the pace of progression during the first year of the strategy.

7. Consultation and Engagement

- 7.1.** Consultation was undertaken to inform the Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Strategy in 2020/21. The outcome of the consultation can be found via the following link:

[Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Consultation Results](#)

- 7.2** Consultation and engagement with the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Board, to inform this report, took place in January 2021.

8. Implications

8.1. Legal

The strategy, and its associated workplan, have been developed in the context of our obligations under the Equality Act (2010) and the Public Sector Equality Duty.

The Public Sector Equality Duty (Equality Act 2010) requires the council to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Equality Act 2010.
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

8.2. Finance

There are no direct financial implications of this report. Areas identified for acceleration will be subject to a Business Case being submitted, in order to provide any necessary funding.

8.3. Policy

The equality, diversity and inclusion strategy is a key policy document for the council.

8.4. Equality

The EDI strategy sets the vision and objectives for the council's approach to equality, diversity and inclusion.

8.5. Human Resources

There are no direct human resources implications of this report.

8.6. Risk Management

There are no key risks identified in relation to the Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion strategy. There have been some low-level risks identified in relation to the pace of progress. Risks continue to be managed by the EDI Board and mitigating actions developed to manage emerging risks.

8.7. Rural Communities

The "integrate" objective of the EDI strategy focuses on delivering and promoting accessible services for all. Rural communities should be positively impacted by implementation of the strategy.

8.8. Children and Young People/Cared for Children

Children and Young People and Cared for Children should be positively impacted by the implementation of the EDI strategy. They are particularly considered in relation to the "include" objective, which refers to "listen and involve all voices".

8.9. Public Health

Progression of the EDI strategy promotes and supports public health. The strategy commits to strive to provide equal life opportunities for all residents. These include not only those with protected characteristics but also those who may be disadvantaged through socio-economic factors, such as employment opportunities, physical and mental health and access to educational opportunities.

8.10. Climate Change

The EDI strategy was developed in accordance with the “green” priority of the Corporate Plan.

| Access to Information | |
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| Contact Officer: | Sarah Bullock, Director of Policy and Change Sarah.bullock@cheshireeast.gov.uk 01270 686414 |
| Appendices: | Appendix 1 – EDI Strategy Progress Review |
| Background Papers: | Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Strategy 2021-2025 http://moderngov.cheshireeast.gov.uk/ecminutes/documents/s84312/Equality%20Objectives%20-%20report%20final.pdf |