
Meeting of the Cabinet – 24th March 2022

Report of the Chief Executive

Equality Strategy 2022-25

Purpose

1. To consider and approve the Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) strategy for the 3-year period April 2022 - March 2025.

Recommendations

2. It is recommended that Cabinet approve the Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion strategy 2022-2025 and refers the action plan, for delivery against the strategy to Future Council Scrutiny for further consideration.

Background

3. The Public Sector Equality Duty, which is known as the General Equality Duty in section 149 of the Equality Act 2010, requires the council to consider how we can positively contribute to the advancement of equality and good relations and demonstrate that we are paying 'due regard' in our decision making in the design of policies and in the delivery of services.
4. The EDI strategy sets out the council's equalities commitments and how we intend to achieve our public equality duty. The previous strategy for the period 2016-19 was extended beyond March 2019, with a commitment to undertake an independent review of the council's provision for equalities and to implement recommended actions. This review, which was completed in 2020 also assessed our progress in developing and embedding equality and inclusion practice across the Council. It also recommended a 17 point action plan focused on the following 4 key areas.
 - Strengthen senior officer/political leadership and organisational commitment and capacity
 - Develop and strengthen the Council's approach and commitment to equality and Inclusion through the drawing up of a new equality and inclusion strategy
 - Review data collected and published to meet the requirements of the specific public sector equality duties.
 - Workforce

5. The development of a new 3-year EDI equality and inclusion strategy was identified as one of the actions in the 17 point plan and builds on this work. It also reflects recommendations from the recent independent review into race equality across the council completed in 2021 by BRAP (Birmingham Race Action Partnership).
6. The strategy sets out Dudley Council's vision for equalities of "Putting Equality at the heart of everything we do" recognising that to achieve this we need to advance equality and inclusiveness in all aspects of the Councils work and our responsibilities as:
 - **A service provider** - providing appropriate services that meet the differing needs of our local people regardless of their protected characteristic.
 - **The Boroughs largest employer** - ensuring fair recruitment, having a diverse and inclusive workforce, and providing a working environment that is safe, accessible, and free from bullying, harassment, and discrimination.
 - **Community leaders** - through our elected members, working with communities and partners in the statutory, voluntary, and private sectors to improve quality of life for Dudley Metropolitan Borough residents
7. There are 4 priority themes contained within the strategy, each with identified actions and details of how we intend to achieve these, these themes are as follows;
 - Understanding our diverse customers and residents
 - Demonstrate Inclusive leadership and accountability for delivering EDI outcomes across the organisation.
 - Ensuring the integration of equality objectives into the commissioning, procuring and delivery of services.
 - An engaged workforce that reflects the diverse community we serve

The EDI Strategy 2022-25 is attached at appendix 1 together with the plan on a page at appendix 2.

8. The commitments within the strategy will be realised through an annual delivery plan overseen by the Corporate Equalities board, which is chaired by the Chief Executive. This will be subject to scrutiny through the Future Council Scrutiny Committee and the action plan is tabled for consideration in the first meeting of the municipal year.

Finance

9. Any costs associated with implementing the annual action plan will be met within existing budgets.

Law

10. The Equality Act 2010 provides a comprehensive framework of anti-discrimination legislation. The general public sector equality duty under the Act requires public authorities to pay due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations covering the protected characteristics of age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.

Risk Management

11. The EDI strategy 2022 -25 and annual workplan provides mitigation against the risk of the Council failing to deliver our public sector duty as defined in the Equality Act 2010.

Equality Impact

12. The EDI Strategy and annual work plan supports the Council’s vision and reflects our values and is intended to go beyond legal compliance to help us achieve our aspirations to put equality at the heart of everything we do.

Human Resources/Organisational Development

13. Successful delivery and implementation of our EDI strategy and action plan is reliant on effective collation, analysis and reporting of equality data via the councils Workforce intelligence function. Equally important is the regular review of relevant people policies, procedures, and practice. They must implement policies and systems that challenge discrimination and stereotypes across all aspects of our work. The work will require a dedicated cultural change programme that will benefit everyone in the Council.

Commercial/Procurement

14. As one of the four themes within the EDI strategy focuses on procuring and commissioning services, further consideration is required if we are to achieve the commitment to ensuring equality is reflected in the services we procure and commission.

Council Priorities

15. The EDI Strategy, and subsequent annual action plan 2022-2023, has a clear link to goal in the borough vision to support “stronger and safer communities”. The strategy indirectly supports this, by reducing social isolation in our place of work, through improved people policies and staff networks, creating an environment where it is safe to speak up.



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Appendices

Appendix 1 – EDI Strategy 2022-25
Appendix 2 –EDI Strategy on a page

