

Name of meeting: Cabinet

Date: 14 December 2021

Title of report: New Inclusion and Diversity Strategy 2021-23 *Recovery through Inclusion* and Inclusion and Diversity Annual Report 2020-21

Purpose of report:

To seek approval for the Council’s Inclusion and Diversity (I&D) Strategy 2021-23, and to note the I&D 2020-21 Annual Report. The strategy outlines the proposed approach for addressing the key strategic issues on I&D for the Council. This version is presented with the 2020-21 Annual Report setting out progress on the last strategy as it comes to an end.

Key Decision - Is it likely to result in spending or saving £250k or more, or to have a significant effect on two or more electoral wards?	Yes Has a significant effect on two or more electoral wards
Key Decision - Is it in the <u>Council’s Forward Plan (key decisions and private reports)?</u>	Yes Private Report/Private Appendix – No
The Decision - Is it eligible for call in by Scrutiny?	Yes
Date signed off by <u>Strategic Director</u> and name	Rachel Spencer-Henshall, Strategic Director for Corporate Strategy, Commissioning and Public Health: 1 November 2021
Is it also signed off by the Service Director for Finance?	Eamonn Croston, Service Director – Finance: 1 November 2021
Is it also signed off by the Service Director for Legal Governance and Commissioning?	Julie Muscroft, Service Director – Legal, Governance and Commissioning: 1 November 2021
Cabinet member portfolio	Leader of the Council

Electoral wards affected: All

Ward councillors consulted: No

Public or private: Public

Has GDPR been considered? Yes. The Strategy and Report contain no personal information relating to individuals. Pictures are GDPR compliant.

1. Summary

The Equality Act 2010 requires the Council to have regard to have due regard to the need to:

- (a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Equality Act 2010;
- (b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
- (c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

As part of the Equality Act there is the Public Sector Equality Duty which requires the Council to set out its equality objectives, at least every four years. One of the ways in which we put the duty into practice is by setting out our Inclusion and Diversity strategy and identifying our key strategic objectives for inclusion and diversity in Kirklees.

Our existing strategy, entitled *From Equality to Inclusion*, expires this year. Much has changed since the last strategy was published, not least the global pandemic, which has had a disproportionate impact on equality groups, bluntly exposing pre-existing inequalities. There have also been a number of national and international incidents which have shone a light particularly on gender or race inequalities. The proposed new strategy, *Recovery through Inclusion*, recognises the adverse impact of the pandemic and focuses on the recovery phase we are now in, ensuring we have the correct strategic focus to support both communities and our workforce who have endured the greatest impact over the past 18 months.

The strategy has an emphasis on key elements of our processes that need fixing, which will help us support communities and employees more effectively. It is predicated on the need to embed inclusion throughout everything we do and to proactively consider the equality implications for our citizens and employees, from the inception of new areas of work right through to their conclusion.

This new strategy builds upon a strong foundation of inclusion being given an organisational priority, and a variety of projects that have sought to tackle long-standing inequalities. The annual report outlines the outcomes from these projects and sets out the impact those activities have had on inclusion across the organisation and in communities.

The 2020-21 Annual Report reflects on the progress made over the past 12-18 months, building on areas of improvement from 2019-20 and outlines the work undertaken under the Council's Tackling Inequalities programme over the past year.

2. Information required to take a decision

There are fundamental internal processes that need to be improved in order for the Council to better serve its communities and workforce. The draft strategy is proposing four key themes to help address these:

- **Collecting and sharing information** - making better use of data and insight to improve service development and project plans to tackle inequalities and promote inclusion more effectively. This intrinsically links to work on a new Council Data and Insight Strategy which will support the effective and efficient delivery of services, help identify opportunities for creating better ways of working and building new products and support the better understanding of the needs and assets of individuals and communities.

- **Understanding and working with the Community** - continue our approach to learning from communities via lived experience, co-producing solutions and place-based working. The aforementioned better use of data will help the organisation to understand its communities' needs more effectively. However, we need to go further than this and build on the recent work that has taken place to understand the lived experience of some communities, which helps us to tackle inequalities via co-production and enabling community-led solutions. This enhanced qualitative data will augment the quantitative data we already have and provide an evidence base for delivering change.
- **Responsive services and customer care** - mainstreaming inclusion into service planning and using tools such as Integrated Equality Impact Assessments to maximise the impact for communities. This is particularly pertinent to how we develop responsive services and continuously improve customer care to all our communities.
- **Diverse workforce development** - build on our targeted interventions such as the BAME Leadership programme and Project Search for people with learning disabilities as well as develop Cultural Confidence training for all employees and achieve an appropriate equality accreditation.

In addition to the key areas already mentioned, there are four priority action areas outlined in the draft strategy – namely: Inclusion First; Project Search; Culturally Confident Colleagues; and Inclusion Allies. As with last year's priority actions, these four are aligned to our seven shared outcomes and they are areas of work we can immediately start to work on.

Duration of the Strategy

It is proposed that the duration of the strategy is 2021-23, matching that of the Council Plan approved at Council in October 2021, with its recovery focus.

Action Plan

The Strategy will have a detailed supporting action plan (the basic outline of which is in Appendix D of the draft strategy) and as with the existing strategy an I&D Annual Report will be produced each year reviewing progress at the same time.

Annual Report (2020-21)

The annual report (attached) focuses on **Achievement, Impact, and Areas for Improvement**. It firstly looks back at the following key themes from the current strategy 'From Equality to Inclusion: 2017-2021':

- A committed and diverse workforce
- Taking a positive and inclusive approach to everything we do
- Zero tolerance on abuse, harassment, bullying and violence
- Demonstrating our commitment through the way we do things in Kirklees
- Inclusive policies
- Spreading the word about inclusion and diversity
- Listening and acting for ongoing improvement

Some highlights include:

- The introduction of name blind recruitment

Applications for Council vacancies do not show names or any other personal characteristics to the recruiting panel. This removes any potential for bias in the shortlisting process.

➤ West Yorkshire and Harrogate Health and Care Partnership Anti-Racism Movement

The Movement garnered support from 584 organisations and community allies across West Yorkshire and Harrogate and saw six local districts (Bradford district and Craven; Calderdale, Kirklees, Leeds and Wakefield) make their own commitments to becoming anti-racist organisations. The Leader of the Council, Cllr Shabir Pandor is the Movement's Ambassador

➤ A BAME leadership programme

This helps to address long standing areas of under-representation at middle-senior management level (Grades 13 and above)

The Kirklees Diversity Awards

The inaugural Kirklees I&D Awards took place in February 2020 celebrating the work of community groups, business and individuals.

➤ The growth of the partnership-based Diversity = Innovation Network

This is a group of employers and businesses in the Kirklees district that is focused on reaping the opportunities of the diversity advantage in the labour market and enterprise.

➤ LGBT Pride and the 40th anniversary of London Pride coming to Huddersfield

The anniversary marked a widely applauded act of solidarity with the local LGBT+ community, which was facing police harassment in the form of an attempt to close down a Huddersfield venue, the Gemini Club. The attendant publicity saw the club keep its licence and a number of charges being dropped against members of the LGBT+ community.

➤ South Asian History Month

The inaugural Sangam festival took place in July and August 2021 as a community festival celebrating South Asian arts, culture and heritage that brought people together to enjoy heritage and multi-arts events in a spirit of celebration, positivity and harmony.

➤ The Iroko Project

An innovative eight-month community-led initiative seeking to uncover inequalities and racism, improve the relationship between the council and Black and African Caribbean communities and build a framework to continue these relationships and identify systemic changes that will benefit Black and minority ethnic communities for generations.

The Annual Report also outlines the range of work that has taken place across the organisation as part of a tackling inequalities programme, focusing on:

- The Health Checks pilot project

The pilot's focus is on increasing access for groups less likely to take up the NHS Health Check and who are at most risk of poor health outcomes. The impact of project is being evaluated by the University of Huddersfield and will be available in Autumn 2022.

- The Council as an Inclusive Employer

The aim has been to attract and retain a workforce which represents the communities we serve. A workforce who are supported, well managed, developed and rewarded as individuals who respond with pace and innovation as we transform the way we work. Achievements have included: the introduction of name blind recruitment; virtual work experience; improvements to apprentice recruitment; the introduction of Project Search.

- The Breaking Barriers project.

In October 2020, Conscious Youth developed Breaking Barriers in conjunction with Kirklees Council. The suite of projects (Voices to Action Campaign; Conscious Boys; Stepping up and Stepping out; and Back To Our Roots) was designed to educate, inform, and involve young adults in developing their life skills, cultural knowledge, leadership, potential and aspirations to want better for themselves. The programme is aimed at black communities but remains open to all that are interested.

3. Implications for the Council

3.1 Working with People

The essence of the new strategy is about improving outcomes for people who live and work in Kirklees, particularly those who are impacted by inequalities.

3.2 Working with Partners

Although the strategy places an emphasis on addressing deficits in internal processes, it also recognises that partnership working will be crucial to the effective implementation of the strategy – not least in terms of utilising partnership-based data and intelligence.

3.3 Place-based Working

If we are to better understand the needs of our communities and work more collaboratively with them on solutions to inequalities, this must be done in a place-based manner, given the district's diversity.

3.4 Climate Change and Air Quality

Climate change is an integral part of our Integrated Equality Impact Assessment process and revising and embedding this will be crucial to the success of inclusion becoming more of a reality in service planning and delivery.

3.5 Improving outcomes for children

As age is one of the protected characteristics, the strategy and its priorities will incorporate actions that will benefit children across the district when implementing new services, projects and programmes of work.

3.6 Other (e.g., Legal/Financial or Human Resources)

The implementation of the strategy will be taken forward within existing budgets and draw upon the established capacity across the organisation.

The I&D Strategy is a statutory plan which forms part of the Council's Policy Framework under Article 4 of the Constitution. It requires full Council to approve or adopt it following Cabinet's approval and recommendation to full Council.

4. Consultees and their opinions

The development of the strategy has involved active engagement with Overview Scrutiny and Management Committee, each Directorates' senior leadership team, the cross-service Inclusion and Diversity Hub, the Council's Employee Networks and the Tackling Inequalities Programme Board. The key pieces of feedback from this engagement include the need to:

- Embed I&D more across all services, so it becomes everyone's responsibility.
- Make learning and development on I&D mandatory throughout an employee's time with the Council, i.e., from induction onwards.
- Ensure Integrated Equality Impact Assessments are an expectation for all services to complete and are built into service planning, project management and decision-making processes, with data and outcomes fed back to service areas.
- Ensure Employee Networks are supported with additional time and capacity to help to continue to deliver their outcomes, and to explore the idea of 'allyship'.
- Develop a culturally confident workforce that understands the needs of different equality groups and can provide support as well as feel able to have "difficult" conversations when the need arises.
- Construct a communications plan to regularly update residents and partners on new developments in line with the Strategy.

5. Next steps and timelines

19 January 2022: Council

Subject to approval by Cabinet and Council, the I&D Strategy and Report will be published on the Council's website.

6. Officer recommendations and reasons

The proposed new I&D Strategy and Report requires full Council approval and the report is for information and to note. Cabinet is asked to:

- Agree the new Inclusion and Diversity Strategy 2021-23 and the priority areas set out within and recommend it to council for approval
- Note the Inclusion and Diversity Annual Report 2020-21 and in particular note the progress made on Inclusion and Diversity, as outlined in the report and recommend it to Council information and noting.
- Refer both reports to Council on 19 January 2022 for approval and noting respectively.

7. Cabinet Portfolio Holder's recommendations

That the new I&D Strategy be approved by Cabinet and recommended to full Council for approval, and for the Annual Report to be noted and referred to full Council.

8. Contact officer(s)

David Bundy, Corporate Policy Officer, Policy, Partnerships and Corporate Planning

Sarah Harris, Strategic Lead, Inclusion and Diversity, Policy, Partnerships and Corporate Planning

9. Background Papers and History of Decisions

The current I&D Strategy is available on the Council's website:

[Inclusion and Diversity Strategy 2017-21](#)

The previous Strategy was approved by Council on 13 September 2017.

[Decision on previous strategy](#)

10. Service Director responsible

Naz Parkar, Service Director for Homes and Neighbourhoods