

Name of meeting: Council

Date: 16 March 2022

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 approve the Council’s Inclusion and Diversity (I&D) Strategy 2021-23, and note the Inclusion and Diversity Annual Report 2020-21 and in particular note the progress made. The strategy outlines the proposed approach for addressing the key strategic issues on I&D for the Council. This new strategy replaces the previous strategy as part of the Council’s Policy Framework. It is presented with the 2020-21 Annual Report setting out progress on the last strategy as it comes to an end.

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| 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: 4 March 2022 |
| Is it also signed off by the Service Director for Finance? | Eamonn Croston, Service Director – Finance: 4 March 2022 |
| Is it also signed off by the Service Director for Legal Governance and Commissioning? | Julie Muscroft, Service Director – Legal, Governance and Commissioning: 4 March 2022 |
| Cabinet member <u>portfolio</u> | 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 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; and
- (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 (as defined by the Equality Act 2010), bluntly exposing pre-existing inequalities. There have also been several 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 as set out in the Council Plan, 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 for the Council to better serve its communities and workforce. To address this, the strategy proposes four key themes to run throughout our areas of action:

- **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 strengths of individuals and communities.

- **Understanding and working with the community** - continuing 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 by working with 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** - building on our targeted interventions such as the Black, Asian and Ethnic Minority Leadership programme and Project Search for people with learning disabilities as well as developing cultural confidence training for all employees and achieving an appropriate equality accreditation.

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

This new strategy replaces the previous strategy as part of the Council's Policy Framework.

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 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 (enclosed) 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 potential for bias in the shortlisting process.

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

The Movement gained support from over 500 organisations and community allies across West Yorkshire and Harrogate and saw six local districts (Bradford 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 Black, Asian and Ethnic Minority leadership programme

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

➤ The Kirklees Inclusion and Diversity Awards

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

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

This is a group of employers and businesses in Kirklees 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

This marked the anniversary of a widely applauded act of solidarity with the local LGBT+ community, which was facing police harassment in the form of an attempt to close a Huddersfield venue, the Gemini Club. The attendant publicity saw the club keep its licence and several 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 ethnic minority communities for generations.

The Annual Report also outlines the range of work that has taken place across the organisation as part of a broader 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 the project is being evaluated by the University of Huddersfield and will be available in Autumn 2022.

- The Council as an Inclusive Employer

The aim is 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 – a community organisation led by and for young people, developed 'Breaking Barriers' in conjunction with the 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 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 Cabinet, Overview Scrutiny and Management Committee, each Directorate's 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

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

6. Officer recommendations and reasons

Based on the considerations above, Council is asked to:

- approve the Council's Inclusion and Diversity (I&D) Strategy 2021-23
- note the Inclusion and Diversity Annual Report 2020-21 and in particular note the progress made

7. Cabinet Portfolio Holder's recommendations

The new I&D Strategy (2021-23) was agreed at Cabinet on 14 December and the Annual Report (2020-21) was noted. The Strategy is now referred to Council for approval and the Annual Report to be noted.

8. Contact officer(s)

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

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

9. Background Papers and History of Decisions

The new I&D Strategy was agreed at Cabinet on 14 December 2021:

[Inclusion and Diversity report - Recovery Through Inclusion Strategy and Annual Report](#)

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

Andy Simcox, Service Director for Strategy and Innovation