

<b>CITY OF WOLVERHAMPTON COUNCIL</b>	<b>Cabinet</b> 19 January 2022
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<b>Report title</b>	<b>Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Strategy 2022-2024</b>	
<b>Decision designation</b>	AMBER	
<b>Cabinet member with lead responsibility</b>	Councillor Paula Brookfield Governance and Equalities	
<b>Key decision</b>	Yes	
<b>In forward plan</b>	Yes	
<b>Wards affected</b>	All Wards	
<b>Accountable Director</b>	David Pattison, Chief Operating Officer	
<b>Originating service</b>	Equality, Diversity and Inclusion	
<b>Accountable employee</b>	Jin Takhar	Head of Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion
	Tel:	
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<b>Report to be/has been considered by</b>	Cabinet Member	4 October 2021
	Strategic Executive Board	12 October 2021
	Our Council Scrutiny Panel	30 June, 12 October, 17 November 2021

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**Recommendation for decision:**

The Cabinet is recommended to:

1. Approve the Council's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2022-2024 as attached in Appendix 1.

## 1.0 Purpose

- 1.1 To invite Cabinet to approve the Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Strategy following detailed consultation with our workforce and residents.
- 1.2 To provide a summary of the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy priorities /objectives and inform the Council of provisional timescales for publication of the strategy following Cabinet's approval.

## 2.0 Background

- 2.1 The Council is fully committed to ensuring fairness and inclusion throughout its actions both internally and externally and this forms one of the key principles underpinning the Relighting the City Plan adopted by the Council in September 2020.
- 2.2 The Equality Strategy 2022-24 is a statutory document setting out the Council's vision, ambitions and proposed objectives for promoting equality, diversity and inclusion over the next three years.
- 2.3 Regulation 5 of the Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties and Public Authorities) Regulations 2017 requires public bodies to publish one or more equality objectives at up to four-year intervals to support the key aims of the public sector equality duties, namely to a) eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation; b) advance equality of opportunity between different groups, and c) foster good relations between different groups.
- 2.4 The Strategy draws out our key commitments, current activities, and future activities in relation to equality and diversity.
- 2.5 It recognises that our equality and diversity vision is fundamental to our overall vision of *'to be a fairer, inclusive and a more equal city, where no-one is left'* and highlights the synergies between equality, diversity, inclusion, and inclusive growth.
- 2.6 It brings together all key actions required and highlights all different activities that are likely to have direct or indirect positive equality impact under ten directorate equalities action plans.

The Strategy takes a holistic approach, recognising that true commitment to equality and diversity goes beyond just the nine protected characteristics, with a strong focus on positive socio-economic outcomes.

- 2.7 The scheme is also fully aligned with the Council's corporate plan priorities.
- 2.8 We acknowledge that the Council has a key role to play to promote a fair and more equal society by putting equalities considerations central to the decisions we make about service delivery, contract arrangements and employment. The Council has made substantial progress in its work on equalities, building on a strong position, previously

having achieved excellence in the Local Government Association (LGA) equality framework for Local Government in October 2018.

- 2.9 The need for a renewed focus on Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Strategy (EDI) was highlighted following the murder of George Floyd, Black Lives Matter, the release of disparity reports and Covid-19. As a result, phase one consultation involved the engagement of the staff equality forums, meetings were held in July – Dec 2020 where employees were consulted on what the priorities of our EDI strategy should be. Phase two consultation (June – September 2021) involved engaging with our residents and key community partners, leaders, and organisations.
- 2.10 A number of priorities and actions have emerged and have informed the final strategy as attached in appendix 1.
- 2.11 Impact of Phase Two Consultation – As a result of the consultation we have made the following changes:
- We have revised our EDI Policy to incorporate our responsibilities on meeting the needs of employees, service users and residents with hidden disabilities
  - We have updated the Governance Equality Plan to include the review of our British Sign Language (BSL) offer and explore local providers
  - We have updated the Governance Equality Plan to include the review of our interpretation and translation contract and explore local providers
  - We have updated the Public Health Equality Plan to include the review of the perceived concerns on the disproportionate levels of infant mortality amongst Black African/Caribbean women.
- 2.12 Please note that the majority of issues identified and raised during the consultation process in relation to our services (Education, ASC/Mental health, Employment, Financial Inclusion, Digital Inclusion, Funding Support for community groups) had already been identified and already incorporated into the relevant Service Equality Plans.
- 3.0 Progress to date**
- 3.1 The Council's final Equality Strategy is structured around four key objectives – three are internal, focusing on the organisational culture and leadership, the workforce and organisational development and one which is externally focused, looking at ensuring services continue to remain accessible, inclusive, and responsive.
- 3.2 The Council's Equality Strategy objectives comprise several themes and deliverables and is accompanied by ten directorate equality plans to support positive equality outcomes for employees, service users and residents.

3.3 The priorities/objectives are outlined below:

- **Priority one:** Our handling of equality and inclusion through visible leadership, strong organisational culture and partnerships will reach the high standards we expect of ourselves and others will look to us as a source of good practice.
- **Priority two:** To be an inclusive employer and build an inclusive organisation where the workforce reflects the diversity of the city we serve, ensuring our commitment to address the disproportionately at senior levels is a top priority.
- **Priority three:** To build an inclusive workplace culture where everyone can thrive and flourish and reach their full potential through training and development, where employees from across all equality groups show high levels of engagement and satisfaction with the council as an employer and where colleagues feel confident about being themselves at work.
- **Priority four:** To provide inclusive, responsive and accessible services which actively seek to address inequality and exclusion and enable all of Wolverhampton Citizens to realise their potential and to live safely. This includes tackling discrimination and longstanding inequalities that significantly and disproportionately impact on marginalised communities.

3.4 The Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy as well as the consultation findings have been previously considered by:

- Our Council Scrutiny Panel – 30 June 2021, 12 October 2021, 17 November 2021
- Cabinet Member – 4 October 2021
- Strategic Executive Board – 12 October 2021

#### 4.0 Evaluation of alternative options

##### **To consider approving the EDI Strategy from 2022 to 2024.**

4.1 This would result in clear direction and guidance on actions we will undertake to build an inclusive culture within our workforce and organisation. The strategy will also set out how we continue to shape services to actively address inequality and exclusion as well as address the progressive building of good relations between different communities. This will positively impact residents across the City who share protected characteristics as well as residents who do not share protected characteristics.

##### **To not approve the EDI Strategy 2022-2024**

4.2 The implications of taking this decision would be the removal of the four key priorities outlined in the strategy and the outline of how equalities will be embedded in the daily business of the Council.

- 4.3 We are aware that the City includes some of the most deprived areas in the country with significant inequalities facing certain neighbourhoods and communities of identity. This is why it is imperative that we work hard to ensure that the right services meet diverse needs at the right times, in the right ways.
- 4.4 Should this decision be taken, it would negatively impact the ability to do the above.
- 4.5 Under the Equality Act 2010 we are required to publish our equality objective. If this decision was taken we would not be fulfilling our duty under this act and would not be compliant.

## **5.0 Reasons for decision**

- 5.1 The City of Wolverhampton is committed to equality, diversity and social inclusion. Promoting and advancing equality, tackling all forms of discrimination and harassment as well as fostering good relations is at the heart of our goals as a Council.
- 5.2 While we are a diverse city that pulls together to celebrate our differences, we know that many residents still face disadvantage and discrimination.
- 5.3 This Strategy therefore aims to guide us in our understanding of the different community needs, enable us to act to tackle inequality, discrimination and disparities where they exist and look to strengthen good relations between our different local communities to bring better outcomes for the people we serve.
- 5.4 Should this Strategy be endorsed it will help us ensure we maintain our Excellent status and further embed equality, diversity and inclusion into our daily policies, practices and procedures.

## **6.0 Financial implications**

There are no financial implications associated with the recommendation in this report.  
[MH/10012022/I]

## **7.0 Legal implications**

- 7.1 There is a clear legal duty to comply with the equality duty under s.149 of the Equality Act 2010 – this provides that public authorities are now required, in carrying out their functions, to have regard to the need to achieve the objectives set out under s.149 of the Equality Act 2010 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.

7.2 In addition to ensure transparency, and to assist in the performance of this duty, the Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties) Regulations 2011 require public authorities, named on, to publish equality objectives, at least every four years and information to demonstrate their compliance with the public sector equality duty. The proposed Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy will meet those duties.  
[TC/06012022/B]

## **8.0 Equalities implications**

8.1 The aim of this strategy is to ensure that fairness and inclusion are embedded into all the functions of the Council and that is the intention of the authority.

8.2 The Strategy is likely to have positive impact on the Equality Act protected characteristics as outlined in the main body of the document and the accompanying action plans.

## **9.0 All other implications**

9.1 There are no other implications

## **10.0 Schedule of background papers**

10.1 Previous reports on the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2022-2024 presented to:

- [Our Council Scrutiny Panel](#) - 30 June 2021, 12 October 2021, 17 November 2021.

## **11.0 Appendices**

11.1 Appendix 1: Corporate Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2022 – 2024.