



Report to: Policy and Resources Committee, 9th February 2021

Report of: Deputy Director - Governance

Subject: EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION: UPDATE

1. Recommendation

That the Committee:

- 1.1 Notes the contents of this report and the recommended actions to bring a renewed focus on equality, diversity and inclusion at the Council;**
- 1.2 Approves for publication the Council's Equality Objectives for 2021 as set out in section 3 below;**
- 1.3 Agrees that a Member working group should support officers in completing a self-assessment of the Council's performance under the Local Government Association's Equalities Framework facilitated by the Deputy Director Governance;**
- 1.4 Requests that the Personnel and General Purposes Sub-Committee oversee the work programme set out at section 3 and considers the scope of a new Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy for referral back to Committee later this year.**

2. Background

- 2.1 The Council's equalities strategy is due for renewal. This is timely because events of the last twelve months have served as a solemn reminder of the effect of individual differences, such as age and ethnicity, on health outcomes and economic outcomes. For the Council, it is a reminder of the importance of staying connected to, and understanding, the diverse communities of Worcester that it serves.
- 2.2 Equality, diversity and inclusion impacts on every individual in Worcester and responsibility is therefore universal. The list of characteristics protected under the Equality Act 2010 ("the protected characteristics") encompasses everybody and there may be an event in any person's life where they are subject to discrimination (less favourable treatment) or harassment or victimisation, on the basis of one of these protected characteristics:
 - Age
 - Disability
 - Gender Reassignment
 - Marriage and Civil Partnership
 - Pregnancy and Maternity
 - Race
 - Religion and Belief

- Sex
- Sexual Orientation

2.3 All businesses and employers are subject to the Equality Act prohibitions on discrimination, victimisation and harassment. In addition for the Council, there are enhanced obligations under the public sector equality duty, s149 of the Equality Act 2010. This places a specific statutory duty on public sector bodies to eliminate unlawful discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good community relations. The Council is also under a duty to collect and monitor information about the diversity of its population of customers as well as its workforce. Each year the Council must publish equality objectives, identifying the priority areas it has decided to focus on in order to meet its legal obligations.

2.4 Moving beyond the language of compliance, the concepts of diversity and inclusion are helpful to the Council in converting its legal duties into actions which can actually deliver measurable impacts and improve the Council's performance. A focus on how to recognise and increase diversity both amongst the users of Council services and also Council's workforce, should help the Council meet its legal obligations while improving levels of satisfaction and performance. Ensuring that services, policies and outcomes are designed in a way which is inclusive of a diverse population should mean that the Council can demonstrate it is actively listening and responding to the needs of Worcester people.

2.5 Last year Worcester City Councillors brought forward and unanimously approved two Motions to recognise specific inequalities facing the communities of Worcester:

Council Motion: Adoption of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) Working Definition of Anti-Semitism

That the Council will not tolerate anti-Semitic behaviour and therefore adopts the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance's definition of anti-Semitism, including all its examples, and include its application in the Members' Code of Conduct and in any governance relating to Council staff and officers.

Council Motion: Ethnic and Racial Inequality

That this Council values the cultural diversity of our city and commits to addressing ethnic and racial inequality in Worcester and agrees to call on officers to:

- *review the collection of data by the Council on race and ethnicity*
- *implement training to tackle racism*
- *work towards ensuring the City Council's workforce is representative of the community it serves*
- *ensure equality law is applied in relation to all policy areas and decisions*

in line with the Equality Act 2010.

2.6 Worcester usually has a busy calendar of community events, many of which are supported by the Council. The past 12 months have sadly forced many community events to be cancelled or moved wholly online. However, before the pandemic, in January 2020, the Council was privileged to host a talk from Mindu Hornick MBE, a Holocaust survivor. The event was very well attended by members of the public,

local organisations, school pupils and local councillors. The annual event Remembering Srebrenica took place in July outside the front of the Guildhall. In June a Black Lives Matter protest took place in Worcester.

- 2.7 The UK wide Census 2021 is scheduled to take place in March this year and will provide a timely update on the population make-up of the city of Worcester. In terms of the Council’s wider policy framework, the City Plan is due for renewal, as is the Council’s homes and communities strategy. In addition this year, the Council agreed community and economic recovery strategies in response to the impact of Covid-19. Worcester has submitted its Town Investment Plan to Government to secure funding towards levelling up economic prosperity and the Council has embarked on a programme of major capital investment in the city and is accountable to Government for outcomes which deliver measurable social economic and environment improvements. All of this activity must be informed by an up to date understanding of the challenges faced by different groups within the population and the barriers to accessing and participating fully in Worcester life.

3. Preferred Option

- 3.1 The preferred option is set out below; a workplan of activities is proposed over the next six months with the overall aim of bringing clarity to the Council’s priorities for equality, diversity and inclusion and provide a manageable plan for achieving them.

LGA Equalities Framework

- 3.2 The Local Government Association has developed a framework for evaluating and improving councils’ performance in equality, diversity and inclusion. The Equalities Framework is widely used by councils and the LGA offer a suite of resources to support it. It is intended to be used a tool for change and should be viewed as an ongoing process, rather than a policy document or a one-off exercise. The Equalities Framework enables councils to measure their performance across four standards which are set out in considerable detail but can be summarised are:

Understanding and Working with your Communities	Leadership and Organisational Commitment
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collecting and sharing information • Analysing and using data and information • Effective community engagement • Fostering good community relations • Participation in public life 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leadership • Priorities and working in partnership • Assessing equality impact in policy and decision taking • Equality objectives and annual reporting • Performance monitoring and scrutiny

Responsive Services and Customer Care	Diverse and Engaged Workforce
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commissioning and procuring services • Integration of equality objectives into service planning • Service delivery 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning and development • Health and wellbeing • Workforce diversity • Inclusive strategies and policies • Collecting, analysing and publishing workforce data

3.3 The Equalities Framework standards are scored using the following criteria:

Developing - The developing level criteria contain the basic building blocks for each priority. An organisation at the Developing level has made an organisational commitment to improving equality. It is putting in place processes to deliver on equality issues and is working towards meeting and exceeding the statutory requirements.

Achieving - An organisation at the Achieving level has policies, processes and procedures in place and is delivering some good equality outcomes. It is not only meeting, but can demonstrate exceeding statutory requirements.

Excellent - An organisation at the Excellent level has mainstreamed equality throughout the organisation and can demonstrate that it is delivering significant outcomes across its services that are making a difference in its communities. The organisation not only exceeds statutory requirements and it is an exemplar council for equality and diversity in the local government and wider public sector.

3.4 The proposal is to work through the Equality Framework and assess the Council's strengths and areas for improvement. The Deputy Director Governance supported by the Council's equalities lead officer will work with groups of officers and Members to achieve an honest and well-rounded view of the Council's current performance. It is proposed that a working group of Members, self-selected for their interest in equality, diversity and inclusion, will provide this input in the Equalities Framework self-assessment process and offer advice on what the approach to the Council's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy should be.

New Strategy

3.5 Officers will then draw together the findings and bring them forward to the Personnel and General Purposes Sub-Committee before onward referral to the Policy & Resources Committee. Any subsequent draft Strategy will be subject to a period of public consultation to ensure that the widest range of perspectives are considered.

3.6 This work programme needs to draw in the approved Motions and report back to Committee on specific actions taken to implement these and build them into any new Strategy.

Equality Objectives

3.7 In summary, this leads to a clear set of Equality Objectives for Worcester City Council 2021, as follows:

- (a) Undertake a self-assessment of the LGA Equalities Framework to understand the Council's strengths and areas for improvement;
- (b) Implement the Council's Motions on anti-Semitism and ethnic and race equality;
- (c) Develop a new Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy.

4. Alternative Options Considered

4.1 The alternative options are either to take no further action or to progress straight on with a new Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy without first exploring the Council's baseline level of performance and areas for improvement through the LGA self-assessment process. Neither of these options are recommended, for the reasons explained above.

5. Implications

5.1 Financial and Budgetary Implications

There are no significant financial and budgetary implications in the work programme proposed in this report. Any budget implications of a new Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy for the Council will be considered by the Committee in due course when the proposals for a new Strategy are brought forward.

5.2 Legal and Governance Implications

The legal and governance implications are described above.

5.3 Risk Implications

There are no significant risk implications identified in this report. Taking a systematic approach to equality, diversity and inclusion in the Council's decision-making process should have a beneficial impact on risk management.

5.4 Corporate/Policy Implications

The implications are as set out above.

5.5 Equality Implications

The implications are as set out above.

5.6 Human Resources Implications

The work programme and equality objectives set out in this report are intended to have positive implications for the Council's workforce.

A review of the Council's HR policies will need to take place as part of the work programme set out in this report.

5.7 Health and Safety Implications

There are no significant health and safety implications identified in this report.

5.8 Social, Environmental and Economic Implications

The implications are as set out above and will be further considered as part of any new Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy which is brought forward.

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