

Report to: Policy and Resources Committee, 19th March 2024

Report of: Corporate Director – Planning and Governance

Subject: EQUALITY, DIVERSITY & INCLUSION STRATEGY – ANNUAL UPDATE 2023-24

1. Recommendation

- 1.1 That the Committee notes the progress at the end of year two of the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy and the actions and projects planned for 2024-25.**

2. Background

- 2.1 In March 2022, the Council approved a new Equality Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Strategy for a three-year period. The published Strategy is available in different languages and formats; it can be viewed on the Council's website at: <https://www.worcester.gov.uk/council/equality-inclusion>
- 2.2 The Council's Equality Objective, promoted as part of the Strategy, is to achieve Excellent, measured against the Local Government Association's framework. A structured approach to improvement is set out in the Strategy, organised under the four strands of the LGA framework (termed the "Excellence Aims" in the Strategy):

Understanding and working with our communities

- Collecting and sharing information
- Analysing and using data and information
- Effective community engagement
- Fostering good community relations
- Participation in public life

Leadership, partnership and organisational commitment

- 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

- Commissioning and procuring services
- Integration of equality objectives into service planning
- Service delivery

Diverse and engaged workforce

- Learning and development
- Health and wellbeing
- Workforce diversity
- Inclusive strategies and policies
- Collecting, analysing and publishing workforce data.

- 2.3 Council Officers have found it invaluable to have a Member Champion for EDI as a link between the Council's Members, officers, stakeholders and the wider community. Councillor Robyn Norfolk has met with EDI leads regularly since the launch of the Strategy and she has promoted the Strategy in a number of forums, including local organisations. She regularly meets with the EDI Officer Steering Group, which was launched in 2023 and meets quarterly.
- 2.4 It was agreed that the Policy and Resources Committee should receive an annual report on the progress of implementing the Strategy, with the Member Champion raising issues and championing causes across the committee system, from a councillor's perspective.
- 2.5 The Strategy aims to ensure the Council is fully compliant with the Equality Act 2010. The Council follows the legal position on rights-based issues and recognises that there are some complex debates underway in the current context. Through its civic functions, community engagement activities and local leadership, the Council has a strong track record in promoting civility and respectful debate and convening spaces to share a sense of belonging in Worcester. Individual initiatives are designed to promote integration and civic pride, and counter extremism.

3. EDI Strategy end of Year 2 - progress against Excellence Aims:

- 3.1 Under the four Excellence Aims, the following are examples of **new actions** which have occurred in year 2, i.e. since the last progress report in July 2023. The Council's regular EDI activities, and achievements previously reported against earlier years of the Strategy, are not repeated below.

Understanding and working with our communities	Leadership, partnership and organisational development
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workshop delivered to Members on understanding data from the Census, and other primary sources and explaining how Members can use data about their areas when decision making. Offering continued support with data. • Residents now involved in specific EDI issues at the Council via the annual survey. • Black History Month "Our Cultural heritage" day held at the Guildhall in October, facilitated by the 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Member Champion's report to full Council. • Officers have been running an innovative "Speak up!" Campaign inviting people in the community to come in and talk about their lived experiences of discrimination and the importance of non-discriminatory language. This has proved a powerful and popular experience and other agencies in the city are looking to join in with it.

<p>Council but driven by communities. Large attendance demonstrated appetite for future events.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The community marquee at Worcester Show was a big success and showcased some small migrant communities in Worcester, as well as other community groups. • The Mayor and his chosen charity Age Concern hosted a Christmas event in the Guildhall with music and food for older residents. • Development of a proposal for a Worcester City Faith Covenant to encourage strong working relationships between faith organisations and the Council. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health and wellbeing Member focus and liaison with local health groups. • Training provided to groups of officers and Members on EDI, LGBT and Gypsy, Roma and Traveller issues. • The Council has signed up to the White Ribbon Campaign and a small officer task force has been set up to drive the action plan. • Continuing to share experience ideas and best practice in EDI strategy with other policy officers from local authorities across the West Midlands. • Updated format for equality workforce monitoring report published on Council's website to make it more interesting to read.
<p>Responsive services and customer care</p>	<p>Diverse and engaged workforce</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promotion of the recently completed Changing Places Toilet in the Cornmarket, only the second such city centre facility. • Members agreed to make an all-ages accessible playground a priority project in the new Worcester Play Plan. • Continuing to work with the Elections team to ensure EDI matters at forefront of the planning and delivery process. • Learning from visual impairment charities about city centre accessibility including in relation to public realm and cycling layouts. • Specific accessibility questions in the Annual Survey. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New Equalities Policy, supporting both staff and customers. • Training and workshops delivered to officer teams on using up to date information and statistics on our local communities. • EDI Officer Steering Group now has workstreams and projects to deliver over the coming year, including engaging with young people and awareness about violence against women. • Assisting job applicants with CVs, applications and interviews. • Level 2 achieved in Disability Confident workplace standard. • Details of mental health support for employees was shared with Group Leaders.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Translating key documents into relevant languages. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ongoing review of all HR policies, including updated equalities sections.
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3.2 A photo montage of some of the above highlights is in **Appendix 1**.

4. Actions and projects for year 3

- 4.1 As can be seen from the list above, many actions are underway which will continue in the third year of the Strategy. Equally, some of the actions delivered will lead into specific new activities based on the experiences to date. At the present time, the priorities for the third year of the Strategy are as follows.
- 4.2 **Training:** a training course for all councillors will be provided after the May elections, as part of member induction. Staff training is ongoing and has a number of strands.
- 4.3 **Policies:** bringing to a conclusion the review of Council policies which support equality, diversity and inclusion.
- 4.4 **Speak Up!- publish findings:** taking all the learning from this successful initiative and converting it into some wider findings for organisations across the city, building on the Council's commitment to civility, respectful debate, and fostering good relations between communities.
- 4.5 **Young citizens:** a focus on young people's engagement with the Council will include improving the Council's work placement opportunities as well as offering something along the lines of a "youth parliament" day in the Guildhall, working in partnership with senior schools and councillors.
- 4.6 **Accessible Worcester:** building on the leadership of other local organisations and disability advocates in the city, the Council will look to lead a structured conversation about disability access, including through a conference and other methods of dialogue, to ask the questions: How accessible is Worcester? What needs to be better? Other agencies and organisations in the city will be invited to join in with this initiative.
- 4.7 **Play provision:** meeting a range of play needs for children and young people, as set out in the Worcester Play Plan. This includes provision which meets different needs according to, for example, age, gender and disability.
- 4.8 **The community marquee at Worcester Show:** building on the success of recent Shows in celebrating all the countries and communities who now live in Worcester, in a community marquee.
- 4.9 **Black History Month:** the popular Guildhall hosted, community-led event Our Cultural Heritage will be repeated on Saturday 5th October. There has been an excellent level of interest in organising the next event from a wide range of Black communities in Worcester. There are plans to involve schools too, subject to their capacity.

- 4.10 **Eurofest:** based on the popularity of the first Black History Month Guildhall event, the 7,000 people of European origin will be celebrated on Saturday 11th May in the first "Eurofest" community event. This will feature food, music and fun as well as information about the cultural social history of different people now living in Worcester.
- 4.11 **Museum Voices/Worcester Stories- an Arts Council funded exhibition:** in October the Museums Service is launched a specially curated exhibition celebrating the social history of Worcester's underrepresented groups through a new perspective on the objects in the Museum's large collections. The aim is to recreate the museum portion of the MAG as a community co-curated space, by working with groups that have very little self-representation in their local museum or have discovered barriers that prevent them from engaging in participation. By using current audience data, the Museums service has sought partnership with groups that are very underrepresented, and over the past 4 years, have been using their feedback to create new ways of working.
- 4.12 **80th anniversary of D-Day:** a day of events is planned which will celebrate the contribution of veterans and the oldest generation in our society who helped secure the peace that we enjoy in the UK today.

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Background Papers: All of our EDI information including our Strategy and key policies can be found on the Council's Dedicated EDI webpage:
<https://www.worcester.gov.uk/council/equality-inclusion>
There is also a dedicated email for members of the public to submit queries, or report issues, which is monitored by the Strategy, Performance and Development Team: equality@worcester.gov.uk

Appendix 1: Photo montage of project highlights