

Equality Strategy 2018 - 2022

Foreword

We are very pleased to introduce Leicester City Council's new Equality Strategy which sets out our commitment for progressing equality, diversity and human rights in Leicester over the next four years.

The Strategy outlines how we will eliminate unlawful discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and promote good relations between all people regardless of age, disability, race, sex, gender identity, religion or belief, sexual orientation, pregnancy or maternity and marital or civil partnership status.

Leicester is a city with a rich and unique diversity. It is a city where a wide variety of people from different backgrounds live and work together. As a service provider and as an employer, it is crucial that we understand, respect and embrace this diversity.

However, we know that challenges lie ahead. These challenges include cuts to service provision, arising from financial pressures due to reductions in Government funding for local government services, the uncertainty around the possible impacts of Brexit and the pressures of welfare reform in a city which is already ranked as the 21st most deprived local authority in the country and with the rollout of Universal Credit full service planned for summer 2018.

Despite these challenges, we are confident that this new Strategy, and our Equality Action Plan, will help us to advance equality of opportunity; to improve outcomes for local people and to bring about real and lasting change in peoples' lives.

Our aims are to ensure that Leicester continues to be a place where people get along with each other and treat each other with dignity and respect, and to deliver excellent quality services which are inclusive of the needs of different people and communities.

We also know that we need a diverse range of employees who have an excellent awareness of equalities issues and who challenge prejudice and discrimination when they come across it. Equality and diversity is essential to making sure that we are able to attract, recruit, retain and progress the best people and in fostering a positive working environment, where difference is celebrated and valued.

Our Equality Action Plan sets out clearly how we plan to achieve these aims by working collaboratively across the organisation, as well as showing how we will monitor our progress. We have made a commitment to reporting on our progress regularly, in order to make sure that there is accountability for the actions that we have said we will take forward.

We would like to thank everyone who engaged with us to help us to develop the Strategy and Action Plan. We look forward to working together to make further progress in embedding equality and diversity into the work of Leicester City Council, for the benefit of citizens, service users, communities, visitors to Leicester and staff alike.

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Introduction

Leicester City Council has a continuing commitment to protecting the most vulnerable, with a plan to help improve living standards in Leicester, to tackle inequalities and to secure fairness. This continues to build upon the record of Leicester City Council's previous work to advance equality of opportunity, eliminate discrimination and foster good relations across a whole range of protected characteristics, as well as for other disadvantaged or vulnerable groups.

Whilst significant progress has been made to date, we must not become complacent in our ambition to further advance equality of opportunity for the people of Leicester and therefore, this Strategy sets out our approach for the next four years. It covers;

1. Scope of the Strategy
2. Our vision and values
3. Our commitment to equality and diversity
4. Our legal responsibilities
5. The current context and the challenges that we face as a city
6. Our approach to embedding the principles of the strategy across the organisation and how the strategy will be monitored
7. Governance arrangements

Scope

The purpose of this Strategy and the supporting action plan is not to capture everything that the Council does to address inequality, for example in addressing homelessness, child poverty, differences in educational attainment. The ways in which the Council works to address inequalities are reflected in the relevant individual strategies, plans and policies that are in place across the organisation. These specific strategies, plans and policies will themselves have assessed and identified the equality implications and desired equality outcomes that they wish to achieve, as part of the council's Equality Impact Assessment process.

The aim of the Strategy and supporting action plan is to embed good equalities practise across the organisation and to support services to robustly assess the impacts of any changes and to identify and put into place actions which will either reduce or eliminate any negative impacts on people arising from their age, disability, race, colour, ethnic or national origin, gender, gender identity, religion and belief, sexual orientation, marital or civil partnership status.

Our Vision and Values

Leicester City Council's overall vision (aim for the future) for the organisation is driven by values of equality and social justice.

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“Leicester City Council will operate with creativity and drive for the benefit of Leicester and its people.”

The values (our principles or standards of behaviour) that enable us to pursue this vision are: confidence, clarity, respectfulness, fairness and accountability. These values set out how we expect to work with each other in the council, with our communities and with our partners and stakeholders.

These values, in turn, reflect our commitment to equality.

Our commitment to Equality and Diversity

Leicester City Council is committed to equality of opportunity, elimination of discrimination and promotion of good relations between all people regardless of age, disability, race, colour, ethnic or national origin, gender, gender identity, religion and belief, sexual orientation, marital or civil partnership status.

We aim to be responsive and open, and to demonstrate both quality and equality to our citizens, to our service users and to our employees. It is our aim to ensure that people can fully participate in and benefit from the social, cultural, economic and environmental quality of life that the city has to offer.

We are committed to promoting equality in respect of:

- **Our role as service provider** - providing a range of facilities and services which meet the differing needs of local people.
- **Our role as employer** - ensuring fair recruitment, having a representative workforce, and providing a working environment that is safe, accessible and free from harassment and discrimination.
- **Our role as community leaders** - through our democratically elected Members, working with communities and partners in the statutory, voluntary and private sectors to improve quality of life for the people of Leicester.

Our legal responsibilities

The Equality Act 2010 (Service Provision)

Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 (Public Sector Equality Duty) requires the council, in the exercise of its functions, to have due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Act.

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- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and people who do not share it.
- Foster good relations between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not share it.

The protected characteristics covered by the Public Sector Equality Duty are:

- Age
- Disability
- Religion and belief
- Gender reassignment
- Marriage and civil partnership (but only in respect of eliminating unlawful discrimination)
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Race – this includes ethnic or national origins, colour or nationality, religion or belief
- Sex
- Sexual orientation

The general duty supports good decision-making by requiring public bodies to consider how different people will be affected by their functions, helping them to deliver policies and services which are efficient and effective, accessible to all and which meet different people's needs.

The public sector equality duty is made up of the general equality duty above and is supported by specific duties.

The specific duties require public bodies:

- to publish relevant, proportionate information demonstrating their compliance with the Public Sector Equality Duty
- to set themselves specific, measurable equality objectives it thinks it should achieve to meet Section 149 (the general aims of the Public Sector Equality Duty)

The Equality Act 2010 (Employment)

Leicester City Council also has legal responsibilities as an employer.

Our legal responsibilities, as set out in statutory codes of practice, help us to make sure that people with the protected characteristics set out in the Act are not discriminated against in employment, when seeking employment, or when engaged in occupations or activities related to work.

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There are also some provisions in the Act relating to equal pay between men and women. These provisions aim to ensure equality in pay and other contractual terms for women and men doing equal work.

The Human Rights Act 1998

The Human Rights Act 1998 protects the fundamental freedoms of everyone in the United Kingdom. It acts to ensure that public authorities, such as Leicester City Council, treat everyone with dignity, respect and fairness. It also protects people's right to express their thoughts and ideas openly and to peacefully protest if they disagree with government policies or actions.

The articles of the Human Rights Act 1998 are:

- Article 2 Right to life
- Article 3 Freedom from torture and inhuman or degrading treatment
- Article 4 Freedom from slavery and forced labour
- Article 5 Right to liberty and security
- Article 6 Right to a fair trial
- Article 7 No punishment without law
- Article 8 Respect for your private and family life, home and correspondence
- Article 9 Freedom of thought, belief and religion
- Article 10 Freedom of expression
- Article 11 Freedom of assembly and association
- Article 12 Right to marry and start a family
- Article 14 Protection from discrimination in respect of these rights and freedoms
- Protocol 1, Article 1 Right to peaceful enjoyment of your property
- Protocol 1, Article 2 Right to education
- Protocol 1, Article 3 Right to participate in free elections
- Protocol 13, Article 1 Abolition of the death penalty

Everyone who works for a public authority must act in a way that is compatible with the Act. By providing services in a way that is consistent with the Act, Leicester City Council not only meets its duties, but can make a positive difference to people's lives.

The current picture

The challenges we, as a city, face

We face many challenges in the next few years. The challenges detailed within this section of the strategy have provided us with the context to help us to focus our equalities strategy and objectives over the next four years.

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Financial Pressures

The council is continuing to make budget cuts to our service provision because of continuing reductions in Government funding for local government services. The Council is enduring the most severe period of spending cuts ever experienced. On a like for like basis, government grant has fallen from £289.2m in 2010/11 to an estimated £167.0m by 2019/20. As a consequence of these cuts, the Council's budget (on a like for like basis) has fallen from £355.7m in 2010/11 to an estimated £280.5m in 2019/20. Despite this, spending on social care is demand led, and numbers of older people requiring care and looked after children have increased over this period. As a consequence, spending on all other services will fall from £192m to an estimated £85m. We know from reports of the Institute of Fiscal Studies and our own analysis that government cuts have disproportionately hit the most deprived authorities (such as Leicester).

Since 2014/15, the Council's approach to achieving these substantial budget reductions has been in-depth review of discrete service areas (the "Spending Review Programme"). The approach has been to build up reserves, in order to "buy time" to avoid crisis cuts and to manage the Spending Review Programme effectively. This approach has helped us to continually postpone the maximum impact of government cuts. Since 2016/17, however, budgets have planned to take money from reserves rather than add to them. Reserves are consequently running out.

Because of the spending review approach, the Council has been able to balance the budget in 2018/19, making use of most of the remaining reserves. However, the outlook beyond 2018/19 is extremely difficult, as reserves will inevitably run out before 2020. Medium term budgets cannot be balanced without additional, deep, cuts. Therefore, a further round of spending reviews has commenced. This has allocated target savings of £20m across departments, and work to identify and achieve this level of saving is taking place.

These cuts will be difficult. We continue to face growth in social care costs, and it is possible that these services will consume an increasing proportion of the budget. Government intentions for social care funding beyond 19/20 are not known.

Budget cuts, as a result of the financial pressures arising from a reduction in funding, are likely to have significant equalities implications which will need to be continually assessed as part of the Spending Review Programme.

The impact of Brexit

Leaving the EU does not affect our rights under the European Convention of Human Rights, as this comes from the Council of Europe, not the European Union (EU). The UK will still be bound by the European Convention of Human Rights and people will

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still be able to bring cases to the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg. In addition, the European Convention of Human Rights will still be integrated into UK law under the Human Rights Act 1998, which means that people will still be able to make a formal complaint in UK courts if they think that their convention rights are being breached. Although, Brexit will not have a direct impact in this respect, leaving the European Union might make it easier for the UK to withdraw from the European Convention of Human Rights in the future.

Generally, the impact of Brexit will depend on the laws that are passed after Britain's exit from the EU. Many protections in EU law have already been written into UK law by legislation. This will stay the same unless the legislation is withdrawn by Parliament.

The Government published a White Paper on a Great Repeal Bill on 30 March 2017¹. The White Paper provides some further information about how equality and human rights concerns will be addressed:

- existing EU law in place at the point the UK leaves the EU will be preserved 'wherever possible'
- the protections in the Equality Acts 2006 and 2010 will be retained after we leave the EU
- worker's rights that arise from EU law will continue to be available in the UK
- current European Court case law will be preserved, but the Bill will not provide any role for the European Court in the interpretation of new laws and will not require our courts to consider future European Court's case law
- the Charter of Fundamental Rights will be removed from UK law

If the above are brought into law, many existing protections under EU law will be maintained.

Non-discrimination in employment on grounds of sex, race and disability and non-discrimination in the provision of goods and services already existed in UK law and the Public Sector Equality Duty comes from domestic law.

Therefore, the most significant effect of Brexit on equality and human rights are likely to be:

- the loss of the Charter of Fundamental Rights (which includes some rights that are not included in the Human Rights Act, for example the general right to non-discrimination and the rights of a child.) The Charter provides a more robust way of enforcing human rights, in some instances, than the Human Rights Act.

¹ Department for Exiting the European Union (2017, May 15) The Repeal Bill: White Paper. Retrieved from <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-repeal-bill-white-paper> [Accessed 2017, December 05]

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- the loss of the assurance for equality rights which has been provided by EU law. As a result of Brexit, a future government could seek to pass laws which retract or weaken our current rights².

Brexit and equalities related employment rights

In terms of equalities related employment rights, e.g. maternity, parental leave rights, the UK already gives employees greater rights than the minimum required by EU law. Therefore, the consequences for UK employment law of Brexit are unlikely to be significant in the short term, given the complexities involved and the uncertainty it would bring. Any changes to employment law are likely to be slow and incremental.

Brexit and broader equality issues

There are broader equalities issues arising from Brexit, for example there may be impacts arising from changes to immigration and the principle of free movement of people and there may be impacts in relation to the withdrawal of European funding from third sector organisations. There was also an increase in reported hate crime following the EU referendum (reports of hate crime in Leicestershire almost doubled in the weeks following the referendum). It may be the case that there are further fluctuations in the levels of hate crime, particularly at the point at which Britain leaves the European Union.

Deprivation including welfare reform

The UK is one of the most unequal industrialised countries³. The wealthiest 1, 000 families have a combined wealth of £658bn, up almost 15% from last year, representing 6% of total UK wealth of £11.1tr. The general backdrop of increasing reliance on food banks, rising homelessness, differences in educational attainment for some young people and the Grenfell tragedy has increased focus on widening social inequalities in UK society.

Many Leicester residents continue to experience deprivation and the city is ranked as the 21st most deprived local authority in the country and is the 14th most deprived local authority of the 152 upper tier authorities. This is exacerbated by the ongoing implementation of the Government's welfare reforms which continue to reduce the incomes of many households in the city.

² The Equality and Human Rights Commission (2017, July 20) What does Brexit mean for equality and human rights in the UK? Retrieved from <https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/our-human-rights-work/what-does-brexit-mean-equality-and-human-rights-uk> [Accessed 2017, December 05]

³ The Sunday Times Rich list 2017 (2017, May 21) Rich List 2017 The Division of Wealth. Retrieved from <https://nuk-sto-editorial-prod-staticassets.s3.amazonaws.com/SundayTimesGraphics/Rich-List/2017/rich-list-2017/division-of-wealth/index.html> [Accessed 2017, December 20]

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The Equality and Human Rights Commission research report ⁴ on the impact of tax and welfare reforms between 2010 – 2017 summarises the first set of results from a research project which looks at the effect of tax, welfare, social security and public spending.

The report focuses on protected characteristics, as set out in the Equality Act 2010, as well as other categories.

The evidence from the investigation shows that the reforms will actually boost the incomes of the top fifth of those surveyed, while substantially reducing those in the bottom half. In cash terms, those in the bottom half of income distribution, lose more than those in the top 10 per cent. The findings to date show that the contrast is even more striking for policy decisions taken in the 2015-17 Parliament, with many of the impacts expected still to come.

Overall the analysis, while subject to further refinement, shows clearly that a range of people who share certain protected characteristics will be significantly adversely impacted by the reforms. In particular, Ethnic minority households will be more adversely impacted than White households, with average losses for Black households about 5% of net income, more than double that for White households.

In addition, households with one or more disabled member will be significantly more adversely impacted than those with no disabled members. On average, tax and benefit changes on families with a disabled adult will reduce their income by about £2,500 per year; if the family also includes a disabled child, the impact will be over £5,500 per year. This compares to a reduction of about £1,000 on non-disabled families.

In terms of gender, women lose more than men from reforms at every income level. Overall, women lose around £940 per year on average; more than double the losses of around £460 for men.

The biggest average losses by age group, across men and women, are experienced by the 65-74 age group (average losses of around £1,450 per year) and the 35-44 age group (average losses of around £1,250 per year).

With this evidence in mind, it is important to acknowledge that one of the challenges which Leicester will be facing from 2018 is the rollout of Universal Credit full service. The introduction of Universal Credit Full Service is one of the biggest changes to the benefits system for working age people in the last 30 years. The change to the system brings together the main six working age benefits (Job Seekers Allowance

⁴ Equality and Human Rights Commission Research report, Distributional results for the impact of tax and welfare reforms between 2010-17, modelled in the 2021/22 tax year Interim findings, November 2017 Jonathan Portes, Aubergine Analysis and King's College London, Howard Reed, Landman Economics. Retrieved from <https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/sites/default/files/impact-of-tax-and-welfare-reforms-2010-2017-interim-report.pdf> [Accessed 2017, December 20]

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(JSA) Income Support (IS) Employment Support Allowance (ESA) /Working and Child Tax Credits and Housing Benefit (HB) under one combined Universal Credit (UC) and will affect approximately 20,000 Leicester residents. One of the main challenges which Universal Credit poses (in addition to the possible financial pressures on claimants) is the requirement for claimants to fill out their application for Universal Credit online.

Demographic changes, new arrivals and 'hard to reach' communities

Public Health England's Profile of Migrant Health Data in the East Midlands (2016) showed that Leicester has the largest long term, non-UK born population in the East Midlands. The City continues to become more diverse, in part due to inward migration.

There are at least three different groups of recent, new arrivals; the asylum seekers and refugees from Afghanistan, the Balkans, Iran, Iraq, sub-Saharan Africa and Turkish Kurds who first began to arrive in the 1990s, economic migrants arriving primarily from Eastern Europe and people from a Somali background who arrived from Sweden, Denmark and the Netherlands in the 2000s.

There has been a degree of unpredictability in the number of people seeking asylum in Leicester, however we do know that the numbers are increasing. In 2016, there were consistently more than 1,000 asylum seekers in the City. Although a significant proportion of migrants become long term Leicester residents, there is a relatively high rate⁵ of short term migration and turnover of new arrivals⁶. 10% of non-UK born migrants who are residents of Leicester have been living in the city for less than 2 years. It is also estimated that there could be as many as 3,000 'hidden' people living in the city, many of whom will be failed asylum seekers or illegal immigrants but could include people who have been trafficked.

Leicester has a particular issue with English language skills with 7.5% of people who cannot speak English well or at all, compared to an average of 1.4% across the East Midlands.

All of these factors mean that it is important that we are flexible in our approach to delivering services and are able to respond to the fluctuating diversity of the population of Leicester.

How will we respond to the challenges?

⁵ Public Health England, 2016, *ibid*

⁶ British Medical Association (BMA), 2002. *Asylum seekers: meeting their healthcare needs*. London: British Medical Association.

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The challenges that the city faces, in terms of the financial context, deprivation and demographic changes require the council to be strategic in its role as community leader and service provider, prioritising and allocating available resources to best meet identified local needs. Underpinning these decisions will be consideration of equality implications of those residents affected by our decisions, as reflected in our statutory Public Sector Equality Duty.

In terms of the possible impacts of Brexit, Leicester City Council will continue to assess the possible impacts, as the negotiations to leave the European Union progress and following Britain's exit from the European Union, in order to respond appropriately to any issues that arise locally.

A significant amount of work has already been done to prepare for the rollout of Universal Credit full service. Leicester City Council are committed to continuing to assess the impacts as Universal Credit full service is rolled out. Leicester City Council is committed to putting mitigations into place, where possible, to reduce any negative impacts arising from the rollout of Universal Credit full service, as far as the constraints of the system and the council's remit will allow. This will include working to increase the digital skills of residents living in the City and ensuring that people are signposted to the information and support that they require.

Whilst the purpose of this Strategy and the supporting action plan is not to directly address all of the inequalities which may exist, the aim is to embed good equalities practise across the organisation and to support services to robustly assess the impacts of any changes and to identify and put into place actions which will either reduce or eliminate any negative impacts on people who have any particular protected characteristic.

Despite the challenges that we face, the city of Leicester is one of the most diverse cities in the country, and the council seeks to understand and engage with its diverse communities to ensure that it is able to address their continually changing needs over time. We are proud of and actively celebrate our city's diversity.

Our approach

Equality and Diversity Charter

Our **Equality and Diversity Charter** outlines the commitments that Leicester City Council has made to achieve the general aims of advancing equality of opportunity, eliminating discrimination and to developing positive community relationships. It sets out what residents can expect from us in our day to day practise. Our day to day contact with service users, local residents and visitors to the city will determine how well we as a city and as a council understand, respect and respond to their diversity.

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- We are proud of, and celebrate, our city's diversity.
- We recognise that people have differing needs.
- When allocating resources we will be clear on how we have prioritised individual and community needs.
- We will treat people with respect.
- We will provide accessible information on our services, community activities and events we support.
- We will aim to deliver services that are accessible and culturally appropriate to those using them.
- When making important decisions about local public services we will engage with local residents and communities.
- We will work with our employees to ensure that equality is embedded in the workplace.
- We have developed this equality and diversity strategy which reflects this commitment.

Priority Areas for work

In addition to the general commitments made in the Equality and Diversity Charter we have identified **four priority areas** to focus on over the coming four years.

The action plan does not contain everything that the Council hopes to achieve over the coming year and does not cover activities which we would consider to be 'business as usual', but rather highlights areas of priority which need a more specific focus and identifying ways in which we can further embed good equalities practise across the organisation.

1. Design, commission and deliver services that are accessible, inclusive and responsive to the needs of people and communities in Leicester

This means that we will work to make sure that we meet the needs of people living in Leicester across all protected characteristics. One specific area of work which we would like to focus on is making digital technology more accessible to people who experience barriers in relation to a protected characteristic (for example, a disability, their age or people for whom English is not their first language) by ensuring that the technology that the City Council uses is designed in an accessible way and by supporting people to develop basic IT skills.

Although we have identified areas which require a greater focus under this priority, the Strategy and supporting action plan does not capture everything that the Council is doing which might help to address inequalities, for example work on educational attainment, child poverty and homelessness. There are a range of strategies, plans and policies in place to support a range of areas of work which

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work to address inequalities which have taken into account the equalities implications and desired equality outcomes via an Equality Impact Assessment.

2. Raise awareness of equalities issues and tackle prejudices, both internally and externally

This means that we will work to increase peoples' knowledge and understanding about specific equalities issues. We want to focus on areas where there may be a stigma attached or areas where people don't always realise that they are protected by the law, for example, hidden disabilities and mental ill health. We will work with staff, members of the public, service users, community groups and voluntary sector organisations to achieve this.

3. Attract, recruit, retain and progress a diverse range of employees in a culture which celebrates diversity and inclusion

This means that we will look at how we make sure that we have people with a diversity of different characteristics and backgrounds working for the City Council. Having a diverse work force is important to make sure that we represent the people that we serve. The council also benefits from being able to draw upon a range of different approaches and points of view. One area that we would like to focus on is making sure that there are people with a diversity of different characteristics and backgrounds in Senior leadership positions within the Council. We will also prioritise our work to improve the retention of younger people employed by the Council, particularly through our graduate and apprenticeship level entry schemes and are committed to supporting looked after children into employment, as part of our corporate parenting responsibilities.

4. Provide a working environment where employees are treated with fairness, dignity and respect

This means that we will promote a culture where positive relationships are built and where people are confident to be themselves and are supported to develop their full potential. It is also about making sure that the work environment is free from any bullying and negative behaviour. One area that we would like to focus on is further embedding the [Dignity at Work Policy](#) across the organisation.

Embedding the strategy

The four priority areas identified above are supported by an **Action Plan** which contains SMART actions [insert link to action plan]. Each action is assigned a 'Lead Officer' who is accountable for implementing the action and providing progress updates. Many of the actions require collaboration across a number of service areas.

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The action plan will help us to make progress in our priority areas and to embed the principles of the Strategy across the organisation. Quarterly monitoring of progress against the action plan will be submitted to the Director of Delivery, Communications and Political Governance and the Assistant City Mayor for Communities and Equalities. An annual report will be provided to the Executive and Scrutiny which will detail progress against the previous years' action plan and with an updated action plan with new areas for work and specific actions identified for the forthcoming year.

We will also continue to produce and publish an annual workforce report setting out the profile of our workforce across a range of protected characteristics, including comparisons against other local authorities where appropriate and highlighting year on year trends. In addition, we have a duty to publish information on the gender pay gap annually.

Governance

The City Mayor and the Executive provide the strategic direction for the council's equality and diversity policies and practices. The Assistant City Mayor for Communities & Equalities has a specific responsibility to ensure that equality is embedded in all the work of the council and to champion the work of the council's employee equality groups.

The Corporate Management Team maintains a corporate overview of the implementation of the council's equality and diversity policies and practices and approves operational proposals for new equality and diversity practice.

The Overview Select Committee regularly reviews actions undertaken by the council in meeting its Public Sector Equality Duty and on occasion, establishes specific task forces to examine particular issues in depth.

All decision-making reports contain an equalities implications section to highlight issues for consideration by those making the decisions and by those reading about the decisions being made.