
Draft Equality Action Plan 2021/22 and Building a Diverse and Inclusive Workforce Action Plan 2021/22

Overview Select Committee – 16th December 2021

Lead director: Miranda Cannon, Director of Delivery,
Communication and Political Governance

Useful information

- Ward(s) affected: All
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1 Summary

- 1.1 This report provides an overview of the draft refreshed Equality Action Plan (EAP) for 2021/22 and the related Building a Diverse and Inclusive Workforce Action Plan (BDIWAP) 2021/22.

2 Recommendations

- 2.1 That Overview Select Committee are asked to note and make comment on the draft action plans for 2021/22.

3 Background Information

- 3.1 In 2018, Leicester City Council agreed its [Corporate Equalities Strategy](#) which set out the council's commitment for progressing equality, diversity and human rights in Leicester over four years (2018 – 2022). This was followed up by signing up to the [Equality and Diversity Charter](#) in 2019.
- 3.2 Since the launch of the strategy an action plan has been agreed annually, which underpinned 4 priority areas for work as set out in the strategy.
- 3.3 Since 2018/19 the action plan has been based on key contextual factors such as the financial position of the Council, data and evidence such as local demographics and workforce analysis, national research findings and guidance, best practice examples, the knowledge and experience of the equalities team in their day to day work across the organisation and, importantly, employee engagement findings, as their understanding and actions shape the extent to which we are able to meet our Public Sector Equality Duty.
- 3.4 Following 2020, we have also been in the midst of the coronavirus pandemic, during which time a number of further issues have highlighted even greater need to concentrate on equalities. During this time, the Black Lives Matter movement gained further prominence, health inequalities became even more apparent, the gap in educational attainment for children from some communities over others increased even more, the suppression and loneliness of people from LGBT backgrounds increased, mental health has reached pandemic levels itself, some people with disabilities became increasingly isolated and women's rights came to the fore with the sad deaths of Sarah Everard and Sabina Nessa. With all of these in mind, the importance of embedding equalities in our practice has become even more important and these issues have also informed this action plan which has aimed to build on previous plans and react to known current issues.
- 3.5 It has also been recognised that there was a need to separate key issues around the workforce so it has been decided to capture those actions in their own action plan in order to give them a specific focus so that a more targeted approach is adopted. This action plan is being led by HR and Organisational Development.

4 Detailed Report

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

- 4.1 The first area for further work under this priority is to build upon the work that we have done to develop capacity within the organisation to robustly assess the equalities impacts of service or policy change. Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs) and the subsequent mitigating actions remain the best way to ensure that we as local authority are compliant with the Equality Act 2010 and the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) and ensure that we have given 'due regard' to equalities implications to those with protected characteristics.
- 4.2 The first three actions in the plan are all aimed at increasing staff confidence and have been developed as a more targeted approach. The training sessions have become more streamlined 2-hour session to appeal to more people and have become more focussed based on previous feedback. EIA training has been complemented with a shorter equality briefing that is aimed more at frontline staff. The EIA process continues to develop, and we will also look to embed the duty of due regard in relation to the Armed Forces community when the Armed Forces Covenant Bill becomes law in 2022.
- 4.3 The Equality Team continue to support officers to complete EIAs and also regularly provide equality implications to decision reports. This day to day work contributes to supporting the organisation to achieve positive equalities outcomes and builds capacity within the organisation, as the team takes a coaching and supportive approach to working in partnership with other services on equality impact assessments and other projects. This has become all the more relevant as a number of projects and policies have changed during the coronavirus pandemic, with the need to consider equalities implications becoming ever more important.
- 4.4 The 'City Listening, Women Talking' project has been completed since the last action plan and the outcomes of this project and its recommendations have been shared across the council and been shared at scrutiny commissions. The recommendations have been embedded as part of the workforce plan but there are also some actions that need to be embedded in other departments so an action to review the recommendations from this project has been included.
- 4.5 Actions are also included under this priority to ensure that equalities are embedded into reviews that are designed to make efficiency improvements and budget savings. As the position of government funding it still unknown it is key to consider the impacts on people with protected characteristics at an early stage.
- 4.6 Issues around equalities are forever evolving and there will be other organisations and areas that develop programmes and practices that react to these issues and we as an organisation can learn from this and potentially adopt these. We will continue to horizon scan and work with counterparts in other organisations to remain aware of ways in which we can improve.

EAP Priority 2: Raise awareness of equalities issues and tackle prejudices, both internally and externally

- 4.7 There has been positive progress made in raising awareness within the organisation in relation to hidden disabilities and a number of case studies from staff with hidden disabilities were promoted, detailing some of the common misconceptions and raising awareness of some of the Council's support mechanisms as part of this. The aim is to

build on this work next year to pilot a 'lived experience' event and continue to raise awareness of disabilities, both visible and hidden with a refreshed communications plan.

4.8 We also want to build on another previous success which is the pilot of the 'Don't judge a book by its cover' (human library) event which encouraged staff with different backgrounds, identities and characteristics to share their stories with attendees at the event in order to tackle stigma and prejudices. The feedback from this event was excellent, although there were small numbers involved. We plan to expand on this concept and consider how we can reach a greater number of people. Allowing people to share lived experience is key in order to help understanding and promote inclusion.

4.9 The remaining actions from this priority are aimed at raising awareness of equalities issues, with particular focus on LGBT+ and disabled communities and staff. We want to undertake some work to improve the support we give around awareness raising and enhance our commitment to empower and support people to have a voice. The aim is to have an embedded communications plan which helps to publicise awareness days but also delves deeper into the needs of LGBT+ and disabled communities and how we can best support them as an organisation.

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

4.10 As mentioned earlier we have developed a specific plan to concentrate on workforce issues (see 4.13 below) and we also have the Race Equality Action Plan which are both aimed at supporting a diverse and inclusive workspace. We have opted not to duplicate these actions but acknowledge both plans and will continue to monitor the progress being made.

EAP Priority 4: Provide a working environment where employees are treated with fairness, dignity and respect

4.11 Under this priority we need to continue to progress previous actions to support managers in understanding their responsibilities and how they can best support staff. This includes increasing understanding of the Access to Work and reasonable adjustment process for managers and employees and supporting services delivering the mental health offer to staff. We will continue to support the employee groups to raise awareness and understanding of issues employees face and encourage them to help us in identifying ways to strengthen and improve what we do as an organisation.

4.12 We will also continue to work across the council to ensure that equalities are embedded in key work programmes. We have advised and supported on issues and EIAs for new ways of working and the survey of Leicester as examples and will continue to emulate this amongst other programmes.

Building a Diverse and Inclusive Workforce Action Plan (BDIWAP) 2021/22

4.13 This plan has allowed for a more focussed approach to equalities actions related to the workforce. The plan has been informed from a number of different areas such as the workforce profile data, Race Equality Listening session themes conducted by senior directors open to all staff in their directorate, the Race Equality Steering Group and subsequent task & finish groups, employee groups, exit questionnaires/Glassdoor feedback and recommendations from the City Listening, Women Talking project.

4.14 The plan is devised around three key commitments:

- We continue to grow a fair, open & transparent culture. There is two-way communication. We listen to the employee voice and make improvements based on feedback.
- We practice Inclusive Leadership through role modelling Leicester City Council Values and Leadership qualities.
- We continue to create a diverse workforce [where employees are treated with fairness, dignity and respect] that represents the City of Leicester

BDIWAP – Actions in progress

- 4.15** Race equality listening sessions are being rolled out where Directors are holding sessions to engage staff and seek their views with the aim of informing a review of relevant policies/procedures/support and culture and identifying further areas for action.
- 4.16** Workforce profile data briefings have been conducted with employees to share the current profile of the workforce by showcasing the data around the diversity and demography of staff. This data is also available to support senior leaders to inform and drive improvement in equality, diversity and inclusion. Actions in the plan are also very much informed by this including ongoing work relating to the recruitment approach.
- 4.17** Communications and engagement activities are also being continued to ensure awareness raising and discussion amongst staff. This will be complemented by sessions as referred to earlier to allow staff to share their lived experience and listen to one another.
- 4.18** We will continue to champion employee groups by supporting employee group Chairs in the organisation. This includes Directors being available to chair employee group forums every other month and affording Chairs the time to do their role effectively and listening to their thoughts and feedback to influence organisational culture.
- 4.19** Leadership qualities and quality conversations have already been embedded and we encourage conversations with leaders on how they are demonstrating leadership qualities: their strengths and their development areas. These quality conversations will ensure that learning and development is a focus in regular 1-2-1s and enables employees to gain experience and exposure, build confidence skills, behaviours and knowledge to apply in their current and future roles.
- 4.20** The leadership development framework and inclusive leadership programme have been launched and offered to all managers and leaders. It is hoped the sessions will support staff to share insights and encourage conversations about applying inclusive practice. Leaders are also signposted to support mechanisms that exist.
- 4.21** All recruitment exercises must recruit internally first to allow existing employees the opportunity to progress in the council before going out to external recruitment if the role can't be filled.
- 4.22** A new starters questionnaire is being tested with new employees and will be launched this December. The Leavers questionnaire had been refreshed and will include more questions relating to Equality, diversity, and inclusion. A healthy workplace survey has been conducted which included questions relating to harassment and discrimination, and the survey outcomes have also been analysed on the basis of different protected characteristics to identify where further work is needed to support particular staff groups.

BDIWAP – Upcoming priorities

- 4.23** As mentioned earlier we want to roll out listening sessions with employees and encourage Listening Mates. The idea of a Listening Mate will be to encourage employees to speak to a dedicated person on equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) concerns who will listen to and coach employees – enabling them to decide what course of action they want to take. They will also sign post employees to the appropriate policies and resources.
- 4.24** Reverse mentoring has taken place in the Adult Social Care department, but we want to expand this across the council and encourage mentors to discuss race, disability and LGBT issues with mentees. The aim is for all of the Corporate Management Team to be involved.
- 4.25** We will conduct succession planning for senior leader roles, focussing on equal and fair succession planning and personal development planning processes and conversations across all Heads Of service roles between directors/ Heads of Service (and Service leads). It is hoped this will help underrepresented groups to gain experience and preparedness to apply for senior roles when the opportunities arise.
- 4.26** We hope to expand our organisational values to more directly include EDI and then roll this out to all staff to strengthen our commitment to equalities and inclusion.

Other areas

- 4.27** The actions outlined in the Action Plans are not exhaustive and there is considerable work going on to ensure equality and inclusion is embedded in the foundations of all work across the authority. It is important to add that we encourage other departments to include equalities as part of their work and action plans and you will already see this in work such as hate crime, domestic violence, anti-poverty, etc.

5 Details of scrutiny

- 5.1** The report and action plans have been to CMT and CMB.

6 Financial, legal, equalities, climate emergency and other implications

6.1 Financial implications

The next steps outlined in the report do not have any apparent significant financial implications. However, the costs and funding of any specific actions that may arise should be carefully considered at the time.

Colin Sharpe, Head of Finance, ext. 37 4081.

6.2 Legal implications

There are no legal implications that arise from this report.

Mona Nansi, Solicitor, (Commercial Property and Planning Team)
Legal Services, ext. 4698

6.3 Climate change and carbon reduction implications

There are no significant climate change implications associated with this report.

Aidan Davis, Sustainability Officer, Ext 37 2284

6.4 Equalities implications

Under the Equality Act 2010, public authorities have a Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) which means that, in carrying out their functions, they have a statutory duty to pay due regard to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation, to advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who don't and to foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who don't.

In addition, the council has responsibilities as an employer under the Equality Act 2010.

Protected Characteristics under the Equality Act 2010 are age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation.

The equality strategy and the supporting action plan support our work to not only ensure that we meet our statutory duties but also that we work to implement best practise where potential for improvements have been identified across a wide range of areas. The strategy and action plan are not exhaustive and does not aim to include all of the work that takes place across the council and city of Leicester, merely key areas of focus for the coming year. It is important that we continue improve our usual day to day activities, as well as making progress against actions identified in the plan in order to achieve positive equalities outcomes.

Kalvaran Sandhu, Equalities Manager ext. 37 6344

7 Background information and other papers

Appendix 1 – Equality Action Plan 2021/22

Appendix 2 – Building a Diverse and Inclusive Workforce Action Plan 2021/22