

# Report of the Assistant Director to the meeting of Corporate Overview and Scrutiny to be held on 14th October 2021

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## **Subject:**

Progress report on the Council's Equality Plan 2021-2024

## **Summary statement:**

On 1<sup>st</sup> December 2020 the Council's Executive approved a new Equality Action Plan and instructed officers to report progress against the Plan to Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee on a regular basis. This report sets out the key actions and activities undertaken to date to progress delivery of the Council's Equalities Plan and the priorities for the year ahead that will ensure on-going delivery against our objectives.

Equality and social justice must be at the heart of everything the Council does as they are key to the successful and effective delivery of services, the achievement of better outcomes for everyone and the development of a sustainable and inclusive economy. Our Equality Objectives and the plans that sit alongside them are there to help ensure equality is mainstreamed throughout the organisation.

**EQUALITY & DIVERSITY:** This report sets out progress against the Equality Action Plan and therefore has equalities and diversity hardwired into its purpose.

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**Overview & Scrutiny Area:** Corporate

## 1. SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report provides an update on the progress made on the Council's Equality Action Plan 2021-24 and sets out priorities for future work.

## 2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Consultation on the Equalities Plan was undertaken in Autumn 2020 and it was agreed and adopted by the Council's Executive in December 2020. Executive required progress to be reported to Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee on a six monthly basis. Although the Action Plan came into formal operation from 1 April 2021, a significant amount of work had been undertaken since its approval and this report therefore reflects progress since December 2020.
- 2.2 Bradford District is diverse, a third of people are Black, Asian or Minority Ethnic (BAME); 20% are of Pakistani heritage and, at the 2011 census, 25% were of the Muslim faith. The District has long been home to people of East European heritage and significant minority populations also include those of Indian, Bangladeshi, African-Caribbean and Arab heritage. Significant communities of interest include people with disabilities and the LGBTQ+ community. Bradford is the UK's youngest city but it is also seeing growth among older age groups.
- 2.3 There are stark contrasts in outcomes with some areas displaying high levels of deprivation and many people are affected by intersectionality - a combination of different dimensions of inequality e.g. income, ethnicity, gender, disability. The COVID-19 pandemic has amplified and exacerbated existing inequalities with those on low incomes, ethnic minorities, people with disabilities, women and people in overcrowded households among the hardest hit.

Equality must be at the heart of decision making as we look to recover and build a better future.

- 2.4 The Equality Objectives for Bradford Council 2021-24 cover the following areas:

- Leadership
- Workforce
- Community
- Service Delivery

- 2.5 The plan covers four years and flexibility is built in to allow the completion of short-term actions and the identification of new actions during that period. Further details can be found at: <https://www.bradford.gov.uk/your-council/equality-and-diversity/bradford-council-s-equality-objectives/>

### 2.9 Leadership

**This objective aims to address the overall approach the Council takes in its approach to Equalities ensuring it is at the heart of all its decision making and provides opportunities for everyone in the district to achieve their full potential.**

Recognising the importance of leadership, the elected members approved a

significant investment to enable the work on equalities and engagement. There has been considerable progress in this area. The appointment of the Equalities Lead Officer in June 2021 has resulted in a number of actions some of which are highlighted within this report. The Lead Officer is in the process of meeting with DMTs to discuss departmental equalities - providing support and challenge.

A cross-council equalities officer group meets monthly which is chaired by the Assistant Director Office of the Chief Executive. The group includes Network Chairs and Departmental Equalities Champions. The Champions are the point of contact between the Equalities Group (who oversee the delivery of the plan), and departments. Members of the group have supported a number of recruitment processes and have developed the RESPECT campaign which is being launched in Inclusion Week.

The Council have commissioned an 'Equalities Peer Review' from the Local Government Association. This is due to take place in November 2021. This will enable the Council to identify areas of progress and where development is needed. It will also enable learning from best practice in other areas.

Equalities is a standing item on all Council Management Team agendas and Formal Committee reports are required to have a front page summary of equality implications.

Embedding Equality at the heart of all the Council does has been evident in the work it has undertaken. This includes the Council Plan published in 2021 with Equalities as a key cross-cutting principle informing all activity. The Council has also led the development of a District Plan which has equality as a fundamental guiding principle. The Council has now had the District Plan signed by partnership.

The leadership of the Council have made a commitment to the organisation to increase visibility of senior management listening to our workforce with lived experience of protected characteristics. Senior leadership have committed to being sponsors of the staff networks within the Council. Each staff network has one or in some cases two sponsoring directors. The directors provide them with senior leadership support and a direct reach to senior leadership with their ideas, perspectives and challenges.

(Special A and above) have a commitment to have at least one Equality Objective in their appraisal. These have now been set currently with 83% of senior staff with an equality goal in place. These are being monitored through one to one supervision and appraisal.

The council has committed to ensuring decision making is informed by engagement, consulted on appropriately and communicated clearly and underpinned by evidence. The initial stages of this work will begin with Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) training: A programme of support activities including training and development of EIA champions and an EIA task group is due to launch in Inclusion Week in September 2021.

In August 2021 the Equalities Lead Officer worked with colleagues from the local NHS to deliver the "Root out Racism" launch event in City Park. This was attended

by over 300 people who came together to make a public stand against racism. The event received very positive coverage and good reach in the media and social media.

## 2.10 Workforce

**This objective aims to ensure all employees feel equal and included and comfortable in who they are. That they are supported to achieve their potential and are not subject to any unfair disadvantage regardless of their background, protected characteristic and class and are representative of the communities they serve.**

Elected members have approved additional funding for the learning and development needs of Council staff in line with the actions set out in the Equality Plan. The Learning and Development plan includes a suite of initiatives aimed at supporting staff. Equalities and challenging inequality are a key part of how these programmes will be developed.

Leadership and development programmes that will develop and retain talent within the organisation are being revised and supported by the funding budget approved as detailed above.

Online equalities training has now been made mandatory for all new starters at the organisation. This sets a clear expectation for new starters that equalities are important to the organisation and they must seek to understand and address the underlying issues, however further training resources and opportunities will need to be developed. A Continuous Professional Development (CPD) programme has now been put in place in the workforce strategy with equalities as a major strand. The Equalities Working Group have committed to producing lived experience videos to be used as part of CPD and these will be launched in Inclusion Week.

In the spirit of fair and transparent recruitment, all recruitment panels are now more diverse and representative. HR have also provided staff teams with guidance and support in being able to achieve this.

Staff have been offered the opportunity to go on funded development courses such as Masters Level qualifications and there has been active promotion of these opportunities to staff from groups with protected characteristics.

Currently, 18.7% of staff at Special A and above are from BAME backgrounds. This includes two senior managers appointed at grade Special C and above in 2021. The overall proportion of senior managers from BAME backgrounds has increased over the last year.

It is recognised that work with LGBTQ+ groups needs to be taken forward. The organisation is working towards achieving the Stonewall Quality Standard which evidences the organisational commitment to work more confidently on issues relevant to LGBTQ+ groups both within and outside of the organisation.

The planning of the Allyship programme has begun. This will provide a structured programme of training and support for all staff enabling them to be effective allies to

colleagues who identify with a particular protected characteristic. This will include views from our staff networks and community partners such as Race Equality Network (REN) and MESMAC.

The RESPECT campaign being launched in Inclusion Week will be the overarching campaign that addresses and supports all staff and all protected characteristics in placing a positive emphasis on attitudes and behaviours for everyone. The campaign and the Allyship programme are the result of a collaboration between the Staff Networks, policy, HR and communications colleagues.

## 2.11 Communities

**This objective actively encourages all service areas to better understand our communities. The council will actively engage with our communities to help people participate in decision-making processes, to improve the services we provide, and to enable more people to take part in the life in the District.**

The Black Lives Matter movement prompted a local, independently led review of statues and monuments to be undertaken. This has been carried out and the outcomes and recommendations have been reported to the Council's Executive. Executive have required officers to ensure that policies for new monuments, commemoration and honouring individuals and groups are diverse and inclusive and agreed that a second phase of work should focus on telling the untold stories of the District's diverse communities. This work is on-going.

To better understand working with diverse groups and sharing of the experiences of staff, service users and projects, the council will be profiling this in Inclusion week- this week long of activities provides many learning opportunities for staff on the different ways in which 'Inclusive working' is addressing inequalities. This programme includes many events from both our internal teams and external partners.

The Council is committed to reduce the level of hate crime experienced by diverse communities. A new Hate Crime Strategy has been drafted, and is to be launched in October 2021. It is supported by University of Bradford research on Hate Crime reporting; which is commissioned by the Stronger Communities Bradford for Everyone programme. The research is currently on-going.

Strengthening our relationships with our VCS partners which include REN, Equality First, Community Action Bradford and District and faith partners has ensured proactive and equitable rollout and messaging of vaccines and countering of hesitancy. There has been good joint working with communities around Ramadan / Eid arrangements and shared messaging in both 2020 and 2021.

Public Health have commissioned research on appropriate messaging on vaccine take up for young people of Pakistani' background in Bradford. This has been used to develop the engagement strategy for the Vaccine Plan. PH also developed the Vaccine Uptake Equalities Plan which was shared and developed further with health partners across the district ensuring a shared vision of rollout.

The Council have published an **economic recovery plan** prioritising those most affected by the pandemic. There is significant evidence that the COVID pandemic has had a greater economic impact on those with protected characteristics, who are more likely to work in the sectors most affected. This includes BAME communities, women, younger adults and people on low incomes in more insecure work. In line with the District Economic Strategy, the recovery plan aims to drive actions that specifically target under-represented groups and specific areas of deprivation. It will also address underlying historical labour market disparities and improve workforce diversity ensuring greater economic participation and opportunity.

The Council has approved £50K budget investment to support Financial Inclusion, and an additional £600K investment for Ward Officer recruitment to support and engage with communities across the District.

Covid Champions project. Bradford Council's Stronger Communities team worked with partners Equality Together, REN, CABAD and Race Equality Network to provide messaging, challenge stereotypes and provide accurate information on test and trace, infection control and the vaccine programme. This programme trained 220 champions from diverse backgrounds and have engaged over 5,500 residents. 135 champions are female and 45 have registered disabilities. They represent 29 different ethnic groups, 7 religions and currently live in 33 wards across Bradford and Keighley. 49 grass root organisations have been funded to provide soft intelligence and contribute to the co-production and co-design group to create accessible communications under the following themes of Fertility, Accessibility and Trust. Material can be found on the Community Engage website. The Covid Helpline, which ended in July 2021, provided Covid-19 support and advice in 13 languages. Over the period of February – July 2021, the helpline received over 1,341 calls which ranged from vaccination concerns to Covid restrictions.

## **2.12 Service Delivery**

**To design, commission and deliver services that are accessible, inclusive and responsive to the needs of people and communities. To provide information about services in a range of accessible formats so that people know what services are available to support them and how to access them.**

**To aim to contract and commission locally wherever possible so that we can support our local economy. This will help to build a local supply chain connected to its wider social responsibilities and offering high-quality employment and training opportunities to local people, while delivering equitable services that are value for money.**

In order to collect data that will enable the measuring and effective evidence building, a task and finish group has been created to develop a 'minimum data set requirement for services in order to better understand their user profile and any gaps. This set is yet to be finalised however its roll out will ensure that consistent data is being collected across the Council and among commissioned services. We

have made extensive use of Public Health (PH) data collections for areas to build a framework for delivering vaccines to all, identifying the poorest wards/ high density households/ areas of high Covid rates and using this intelligence to design input and testing/ vaccine offers.

The Council is committed to improving the way it works to serve the communities of Bradford District with its partners in the VCS. New co-production standards and governance will be in place by Q3 of 2021/22 in partnership with the voluntary sector to hear and act upon the voices of service users and carers including those from diverse backgrounds, older people, carers and disabled people.

A co-produced piece of work in Adult Services, working with disabled people and their advocates, is being piloted. Learnings from the work is due to be profiled in Inclusion Week.

Public Health also commissioned REN to support Black and Asian Minority Ethnic (BAME) groups through the pandemic with advice, guidance and messaging in appropriate languages. Public Health commissioned services to support vulnerable groups with complex needs to access health care, testing and vaccines. Public Health co-designed its Vaccine Delivery Plan with key partners such as REN, faith groups and health partners.

Work is due to begin with the procurement team on embedding equality principles in the commissioning process and ensuring our suppliers hold the same equality values which the Council holds.

The work being done by HAF Holiday Activity and Food programme has been supporting the most disadvantaged communities across the Bradford district in terms of low incomes. Working with 106 providers, 14,000 children attended the holiday clubs in parks across the district for 42 days over the summer period. There are plans to continue this work over the coming Christmas period.

There is recognition throughout the organisation that the data collected needs to be more effective in providing an evidence base of the experiences of service users. This is something the Equalities Lead will be addressing over the next 12 months.

### **3 Next steps:**

Priorities for the next year include:

**Delivery:** to develop the delivery plan that sets out how the actions to each objective will be delivered over the next 3 years in relation to timescales and lead responsibility.

**Consultation:** To develop an easy-to-use corporate toolkit to help to ensure all services and consultations with the public have equality and fairness as a fundamental principle

**Pay gap data:** To produce ethnicity Pay Gap Reporting alongside the existing mandatory requirement for employers with 250 or more employees to publish their gender pay gap.

Developing an inclusive service and policy design guide: This will provide service managers with a suite of tools to ensure: appropriate engagement and involvement with all stakeholders, use of existing information, data, and other criteria to be considered such as 'Child Friendly' criteria, when designing, contracting or commissioning, services or policies, and to be aware of and to address barriers to access for low income individuals and families and those who share other protected characteristics. On occasion, some services may be 'exclusive' to ensure that all communities have fair access to the services they need.

Data: Focus on the development and approval of a more streamlined data set on services provided. For the data to demonstrate positive year on year change.

Procurement: to embed equality principles within the procurement process and be able to influence the ability to recruit from the local district, and where possible encourage the use of local suppliers.

Staff development: Develop and rollout staff development programmes targeted at specific protected characteristics to enable our staffing at all levels to reflect the local demographics

Building sustainable relationships: To build on our partnership working with our internal and external stakeholders and partners to move forward on challenging inequalities addressing them with co-produced solutions.

Information: Adopting the Accessible Information Standard across the whole of the Council

Website: Ensuring our Website is accessible so that people can access the information they need via this route

Service user experience: Improving our understanding of all our service users and their needs regardless of their protected characteristic or income.

#### **4. FINANCIAL & RESOURCE APPRAISAL**

➤ There are no specific finance or resource implications

#### **5. RISK MANAGEMENT AND GOVERNANCE ISSUES**

There are no identified risk and governance issues

#### **6. LEGAL APPRAISAL**

Pending

#### **7. OTHER IMPLICATIONS**

None

**7.1 SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS**

None identified.

**7.3 GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS IMPACTS**

None identified.

**7.3 COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS**

None identified.

**7.4 HUMAN RIGHTS ACT**

**7.5 TRADE UNION**

None identified.

**7.6.1 WARD IMPLICATIONS**

None identified.

**7.8 IMPLICATIONS FOR CORPORATE PARENTING**

None identified.

**8. NOT FOR PUBLICATION DOCUMENTS**

None

**9. RECOMMENDATIONS**

**9.1** That Members consider the progress made and the next steps set out in the plan

**11. APPENDICES**

Appendix 1 – Equalities Action Plan.

Appendix 2 – Equalities Dashboard.

## **12. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS**

None.