
REPORT TO:	FULL COUNCIL	AGENDA ITEM: 8
DATE OF MEETING:	24th FEBRUARY 2021	CATEGORY: DELEGATED
REPORT FROM:	FRANK McARDLE, CHIEF EXECUTIVE	OPEN
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SUBJECT:	EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN 2021-2025	
WARD(S) AFFECTED:	ALL	TERMS OF REFERENCE: FM16

1.0 Recommendations

- 1.1 That the Council approves the Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy and Action Plan for 2021-2025 as detailed in Appendix A.
- 1.2 That the Council endorse Member Champions supporting and monitoring performance against the approved Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Action plan.
- 1.3 That an annual report is presented to Full Council on the progress and outcomes that have been achieved and any changes or developments to the approved action plan.
- 1.4 That the support provided by voluntary, community and faith-based groups, partners who work with the Council in delivering services and individuals whose responses and support during the extensive period of consultation has enabled the completion of the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy and Action Plan for 2021-2025 is acknowledged.

2.0 Purpose of the Report

- 2.1 To seek approval for the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy and Action Plan 2021-25.

3.0 Executive Summary

- 3.1 The Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy and Action Plan 2021-25 sets out the Council's equality commitments for the next four years.
- 3.2 The Equality Act 2010, places a duty on public bodies to consider the needs of all individuals in its day-to-day work when developing policies, delivering services and in relation to its own employees.

3.3 It also places a legal duty on the Council to have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity, eliminate unlawful discrimination and foster good relations between different groups of people. In particular, to work towards making a fairer society for all and remove discrimination of all forms. Under the Act, there are people that receive legal protection, and these are grouped in nine protected characteristics namely;

- age,
- disability,
- gender,
- race,
- religion or belief,
- sexual orientation,
- gender reassignment,
- pregnancy and maternity,
- marriage or civil partnership.

3.4 This Strategy will build on the work that the Council and its partners have undertaken in promoting fair and accessible services to the local community and bring a focus and increased visibility on the actions that are being taken to contribute to a fairer society in South Derbyshire.

3.5 The Council will report annually on its performance and outcomes and communicate this publicly to residents; community, voluntary and faith-based group groups, and partners. This will enable continued engagement with Council plans and provide the continued opportunity for feedback to help shape and influence future.

4.0 Details

4.1 Equality, diversity and inclusion are an integral part of everyday life at South Derbyshire District Council, in the services provided and the communities the Council serves. The Council is committed to putting these issues at the centre of its decision-making processes to ensure the Council can best meet the needs of its residents.

4.2 One of the Council's corporate values is "We have respect for everyone" and through the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy and Action Plan 2021-25, the Council aims to embed this in everything it does.

4.3 In line with the Equality Act 2010, every four years the Council is required to publish an action plan to show how it will meet the duties detailed in the Act.

4.4 The Council is determined to do more than just meet its statutory obligations and will ensure that through its work, either directly or delivered with partners, the Council makes a full and continued contribution to making a fairer society for all.

4.5 A Corporate Equalities and Safeguarding Plan was published in 2016 which set the objectives and actions over four years. A report was submitted annually to show the work completed and progress in meeting the Council's equality objectives over lifecycle of this Plan.

4.6 The proposed Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy and Action plan (in Appendix A) sets out the Council's plans for 2021-2025.

Developing the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy and Action Plan 2021-2025

- 4.7. An internal working group was setup and tasked with taking the appropriate actions to develop a Strategy and Action Plan that was robust, took full account of the Council's statutory duties and reflected the needs and issues that are important to the local community. A detailed action plan was developed that set down the information, consultation and engagement work that was needed to complete this task.
- 4.8 Information was researched and obtained from local, national, and regional bodies relating to the current and projected profile of the District and actions being progressed by different public, voluntary, community and private bodies to advance equality and fairness.
- 4.8 An ambitious and extensive programme of consultation was scheduled and successfully executed. This enabled the gathering of evidence of key concerns and issues that residents and other groups considered were important to them. This has enabled a clear focus on the actions that have been proposed in the action plan.
- 4.9 In total, 19 consultation events with 102 people were completed. This included employees, trade union representatives, elected members, residents, customers, and partners from the community, voluntary, faith-based groups as well as organisations in the private and public sector.
- 4.10 In addition to this, the Council's proposed Strategy and Action Plan was then published on the Council's website for a period of six weeks to enable further comments and information to be obtained from residents or any other interested party. 10 responses were received and responded to during this period.
- 4.11 From all the information received, five key equality objectives have been identified for the next four years. They are to:
- Encourage and enable a skilled and diverse workforce, to build a culture of equality, diversity, and inclusion in everything we do
 - Demonstrate inclusive leadership, partnership, and a clear organisational commitment to being a leader in equality, diversity, and inclusion in the District
 - Involve and enable diverse communities to play an active role in society and put the residents' voice at the heart of decision-making
 - Deliver responsive services and customer care that is accessible and inclusive to individuals' needs and respects cultural differences
 - Understand the District's diverse communities and embed that understanding in how policy and practice are shaped across the Council.
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4.12 The Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy and Action Plan will:

- Work towards eliminating discrimination and promoting good relations between people of different backgrounds, equality groups and the wider community in line with the Council's commitment to effective community engagement and community cohesion
- Seek to achieve a workforce that reflects our diverse population and promotes an inclusive working culture based on respect
- Identify roles and responsibilities on the actions identified in the plan
- Show how the Council will measure its progress.

4.13 The Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Strategy 2021-2025 (Appendix A) provides the blueprint for the actions, commitments, and initiatives that the Council will take in playing a full role in making society fairer for all. This Strategy has its foundations and actions built on robust evidence on what is most important to residents in South Derbyshire.

4.14 It is recognised that the Council cannot complete all this work independently. A lot of the actions, around digital exclusion, will need strong and collaborative working relationships to be established with multi-agency bodies to make real progress. Through the development of this Plan, these relationships have been established and nurtured and will continue to be used to realise mutually beneficial outcomes.

4.15 Most important, are the actions and behaviours taken by our workforce, Elected Members and those working on the Council's behalf when delivering services. The action plan provides for numerous activities to increase awareness, provide training and information to ensure that a shared understanding is established and that all work towards making the Council a role model for advancing equality not only in the community but also regionally and nationally.

5.0 Financial Implications

5.1 There are no direct financial implications associated with this report. Resources will be used from existing service areas to progress actions.

6.0 Corporate Implications

Employment implications

6.1 These have been considered and incorporated into the proposed Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy and Action Plan 2021-25.

Legal Implications

6.2 Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy and Action Plan will ensure that the Council meets its statutory duties under the Equality Act 2010.

Corporate Plan Implications

- 6.3 Equality, Diversity and Inclusion is at the heart of everything the Council has stated it will achieve in its Corporate Plan. This Strategy will support the delivery of all the key themes and actions.

Risk Impact

- 6.4 These have been considered and incorporated into the proposed Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy and Action Plan 2021-25. Aside from legal risks as detailed in the Equality Act 2010, action can also be taken against the Council as an employer or provider of services. The Strategy sets down a clear framework and commitment to advance equality that will minimize the risk of any actions being successful.

7.0 Community Impact

Consultation

- 7.1 Extensive consultation has been completed in the development of the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy and Action Plan 2021-25 as detailed in the report.

Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Impact

- 7.2 The outcomes and impact are detailed in the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy and Action Plan 2021-25. These will be reported on an annual basis to Full Council and made available to the public to ensure transparency and openness with the delivery of the Plan and any further actions that are proposed.

Social Value Impact

- 7.3 The Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy and Action Plan 2021-25 will demonstrate how the Council is advancing equality, meeting its statutory obligations and make society fairer for everyone.

Environmental Sustainability

- 7.4 None directly arising from this report.

8.0 Conclusions

- 8.1 The Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy and Action Plan 2021-25 is ambitious, challenging and built on the needs and issues that are most important to the local community. The Council has clearly stated the role it can play to make a difference to lives of people in the community in the services it can provide directly and indirectly with partners.
- 8.2 Progress on actions will be actively monitored by employees, trade union representatives, elected members, residents, customers, and partners from the community, voluntary, faith-based groups as well as organisations in the private and public sector.

9.0 Background Papers

Appendix A – Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy and Action Plan 2021-2025