

**Report of Assistant Chief Executive – Citizens and Communities**

**Report to Executive Board**

**Date:** 21 October 2015

**Subject:** Equality Update; Improvement Priorities 2016 – 2020, and the Equality Framework Reaccreditation

Are specific electoral Wards affected? If relevant, name(s) of Ward(s):	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Are there implications for equality and diversity and cohesion and integration?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Is the decision eligible for Call-In?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? If relevant, Access to Information Procedure Rule number: Appendix number:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No

**Summary of main issues**

1. The Equality Improvement Priorities 2011-15 have been reviewed. As a result of this the Equality Improvement Priorities 2016 - 2020 have been produced. These continue to ensure that the council meets its legal duties under the Equality Act 2010.
2. The priorities have been developed to compliment the Best Council Plan priorities and help to underpin our renewed ambition to be a compassionate city with a strong economy, thereby tackling the range of inequalities that still exist.
3. The Equality Improvement Priorities are encompassed in a standalone document, but also form a part of the Equality Action Paper and are linked to and referenced within the Best Council Plan.
4. The council attained Excellence of the Equality Framework for Local Government in 2011. To gain reaccreditation a self-assessment, narrative and supporting evidence have been produced.
5. Assessment of the council against the Equality Framework is via a desk top exercise and peer assessment which will take place in November 2015.

## **Recommendations**

Executive Board is recommended to:

- Note the contents of this report;
- Note the contents of the Equality Framework narrative, and that an update on the outcome and actions arising will be provided in spring 2016, and;
- Endorse the Equality Improvement Priorities 2016-20, and note that annual reports will be provided on progress against these.

## **1 Purpose of this report**

- 1.1 This report sets out the approach taken to develop the Equality Improvement Priorities 2016 - 20 and how these support the ambitions of the city.
- 1.2 It also outlines the plans for reassessment of the council against the Equality Framework for Local Government at excellent level (the highest available).

## **2 Background information**

- 2.1 Compliance with the Equality Act 2010 includes a specific duty to develop equality priorities which are reviewed every 4 years. The specific duty requires local authorities to:
  - publish accessible information outlining the equality analysis which has taken place to inform equality objectives;
  - engage with people who have an interest in furthering the aims of the general equality duty; and
  - demonstrate progress against equality objectives for both employment and service delivery.
- 2.2 To develop the equality improvement priorities consideration has been given to understanding the nature of any disproportional outcome on different groups covered by equality legislation. This information is included in the Equality Action Paper at Appendix 1. Appendix 2 summarises the equality improvement priorities for the council for 2016-20, and Appendix 3 shows which of these have been retained from 2011-15.
- 2.3 Progress has been reported on an annual basis against the 2011-15 priorities, and this year's Annual Update is included in the Equality Action Paper. In addition to progress, it shows the consultation which has taken place in order to inform the current priorities, and the specific equality analysis which underpins why these are areas to focus on.
- 2.4 The information contained within the Annual Update was informed by the evidence which has been collected for the reaccreditation against the Equality Framework. The Equality Framework narrative is at Appendix 4.
- 2.5 The Equality Framework narrative is supported by a self-assessment and the storyboards, some of which are also included in the Annual Update.
- 2.6 Re assessment of the Equality Framework will take place 25 -26 November. The peer assessors will consider the evidence provided and will conduct a series of interviews and focus groups whilst here, as well as attending some or all of the Equality Assembly conference on 26 November.
- 2.7 The outcome of the reaccreditation is expected in January 2016. The Assistant Chief Executive is leading on this work and will provide Executive Board with information about the outcome of the accreditation and an evaluation of further work that the council is taking forward as a result of any feedback. This will be in spring 2016.

### 3 Main issues

3.1 Many of the Equality Improvement Priorities 2011-15 have been retained into 2016 -20; these are showing progress and continue to be areas of focus. Appendix 3 shows these. There are a number of these which are specifically highlighted below to provide additional information in relation to their continuation as priorities:

- **To develop a skilled and diverse workforce – there has been little change in the outcomes for people with protected characteristics.**  
There has been a move to focus on the culture of the organisation so that we are more of an employer of choice when we are recruiting. Work continues to provide direction and to address this area. The commitment and challenge is being strongly led by the Corporate Leadership Team.
- **Domestic Violence** – is a major social issue which is systemically entrenched within generations of family groups and as such there is a need to be constantly re-evaluating our response to the crime type. There is a need to fully understand the changing nature of domestic violence and abuse in Leeds, particularly within the context of constantly changing demographics. Domestic violence has now been identified as a top priority for LCC and as such is one of seven breakthrough projects and significant work is taking place, with partners, to address this at a city wide and council level. Its prioritisation is critical at this time.
- **Hate Crime** – has seen a slight rise in reported incidents over the last year. This is seen as a sign of success in improving confidence in the systems and therefore increased reporting. In addition to increasing reporting the focus is on decreasing repeat incidents. The reports have been predominantly in relation to race, but also include incidents against disabled people, LGB T, people of faith, and transgender people. Race hate crime in Leeds is complex and reflects the changing nature of communities and some of the tensions therein. The current Hate Crime Strategy for Leeds was developed in 2014 and this outlines the approach taken to challenge, report and stop hate crime.
- **Understand the context and impact of migration on Leeds** – Leeds is a diverse and ever changing city. We want to ensure that we take all possible steps to meet the needs of new communities and build sustainable and strong communities. There is an increased focus on this area due to the international position and reduced funding
- **Financial hardship** – the current economic climate has meant that there are more people facing this position and therefore this is a harder area to address. The Supporting Communities and Tackling Poverty narrative outlines all the work which is taking place which should alleviate some of the issues.

3.2 The Equality Improvement Priorities is one of the key council documents supporting the Best Council Plan. The plans cover similar time frames, and this will facilitate joint reviews. The priorities set out here will inform the refresh of the Best Council Plan for 2016/17 which itself will have a clear overarching aim of tackling inequalities.

3.3 The Equality Improvement Priorities and the Equality Framework information were welcomed by the Citizens and Communities Scrutiny Board on 14 September, and the following points made:

- that further work is still needed to create a diverse workforce and particularly in relation to improving opportunities to progress to middle and senior levels in the organisation,
- the drop in the Stonewall Champions Index was noted and the Board were pleased that the council is continuing to engage with this process.

3.4 The Scrutiny Board also considered the learning outcome in relation to those receiving free school meals and reflected the need for this to be broader and take eligibility criteria into account. There was also a request for a specific focus on Children Looked After. Both these areas are fully covered in the Children and Young Peoples Plan 2015-19, and the Equality Improvement Priorities provides a brief and focussed picture of work being undertaken.

3.5 In addition the following suggestions were made and are being considered/taken forward separately:

- consider providing a sign language interpreter at Full Council meetings;
- consider the feasibility of undertaking comparator research involving other large employers within the city in relation to income inequality, and;
- ensure that Parks and Countryside programme of works take account of inclusive design principles.

## **4 Corporate Considerations**

### **4.1 Consultation and Engagement**

4.1.1 Extensive public consultation has taken place on major pieces of work including the Beset City Priorities and budget setting. Both these have been used to inform the priorities as have service specific consultations which continue to take place. All information is recorded in TalkingPoint so that there can be easy and shared learning.

4.1.2 As part of the localisation agenda more conversations are happening locally and these are being used to shape and inform further and future work.

### **4.2 Equality and Diversity / Cohesion and Integration**

4.2.1 The Equality Improvement Priorities are in place to provide focus to address issues of inequality. They are based on evidence of disproportionate outcomes, which we are seeking to challenge and change.

4.2.2 The tools and mechanisms that the council use will continue to play a pivotal role in identifying and addressing inequality and these priorities form one part of this

approach. Equality Impact Assessments continue to take place and will inform further developments in each of these priorities.

### **4.3 Council policies and the Best Council Plan**

4.3.1 The Equality Improvement Priorities sit with the council priorities and are an integral part of the renewed ambition to be a compassionate city and to tackle inequalities in the city

### **4.4 Resources and value for money**

4.4.1 There are no additional resource implications arising from this report.

### **4.5 Legal Implications, Access to Information and Call In**

4.5.1 Developing and publishing our 4 year Equality Improvement Priorities is in compliance with the Equality Act 2010

4.5.2 This report does not contain any confidential or exempted information and is subject to call in.

### **4.6 Risk Management**

4.6.1 Any risks associated with specific priorities are addressed as part of service delivery.

4.6.2 The risk to the council in not developing 4 yearly equality priorities and/or not publishing these is that we will be in breach of the Equality Act 2010

## **5 Conclusions**

5.1 The Equality Improvement Priorities have been developed following a robust process and will help the council to focus on areas of disproportionality and tackle inequalities

## **6 Recommendations**

6.1 Executive Board is recommended to:

- Note the contents of this report;
- Note the contents of the Equality Framework narrative, and that an update on the outcome and actions arising will be provided in spring 2016, and;
- Endorse the Equality Improvement Priorities 2016-20, and note that annual reports will be provided on progress against these.

## **7 Background documents<sup>1</sup>**

7.1 Self assessment for Equality Framework for Local Government

7.2 Supporting storyboards for Equality Framework for Local Government

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<sup>1</sup> The background documents listed in this section are available to download from the Council's website, unless they contain confidential or exempt information. The list of background documents does not include published works.