

**Report of the Deputy Chief Executive Officer and the Director of City Development**

**Report to Executive Board**

**Date: 21 September 2016**

**Subject: Integrating Diversity and Inclusion into the Built Environment.**

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. This report sets out a new Leeds City Council framework to support its aim and aspirations of being a *modern, forward thinking, inclusive Council*. The framework covers access, inclusion and inclusive design for all LCC building stock.
2. The framework recognises the importance of creating a high quality inclusive and accessible environment, eliminating barriers for both LCC employees and service users
3. Adopting the framework will formalise our current practice and builds on our efforts and achievements to become a Compassionate City. It supports our work around Child and Dementia Friendly and Great City to Grow Old. It will drive further change so that all LCC buildings and environments:
  - a) Can be used safely, easily and with dignity by all
  - b) Are convenient and welcoming with no disabling barriers, so everyone can use them independently without undue effort, separation or 'special treatment'
  - c) Are flexible and responsive taking account of the varying needs of people
  - d) Respond to the changing demographics and expectations in the city

## **Recommendations**

4. This report recommends that the Executive Board adopt the framework 'Integrating Diversity and Inclusion into the Built Environment' for Leeds City Council.
5. The Executive Board note that in applying the framework, Leeds City Council will seek to strike the right balance between aspiration, practicality and cost. The overall responsibility for the framework implementation sits with the Director of City Development

## **Purpose of this report**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek approval from the Executive Board to adopt a Council wide framework (attached in Appendix1) which will help us to achieve its' ambition to become the best City in the UK- fair, open and welcoming by creating high quality inclusive and accessible environments which eliminate barriers for both LCC employees and citizens who live in our communities, creating buildings/environments which are fit for purpose and are modern, accessible and inclusive spaces.
- 1.2 It sets the standard and aspiration that:
- Reinforces our commitment to be a compassionate city, where equality is a reality for all citizens in Leeds
  - Supports our ambitions in the areas of Child Friendly and Dementia Friendly Leeds, and Great City to Grow Old
  - Recognises the changing demographics and expectations we face
  - Makes a further long term commitment to staff and our communities
  - Assists us to check how inclusive is our current building stock and assess the current suitability and future viability of our buildings, which will in turn link to the Council's asset strategy
  - Applies to all buildings that we own, lease, or commission through
  - Strikes a balance between aspiration, practicality and cost, informing all our major development work as part of our CTWP modernisation programme

## **2 Background information**

- 2.1 Inclusion and Diversity is one of the Council's priorities. We recognise that as a compassionate city the environment from which we engage with our communities and deliver services needs to be accessible on a number of levels taking into account physical, sensory and cultural access requirements. This is reflected in our Equality Priorities 2016-20.
- 2.2 Inclusivity and equality in terms of access for disabled people is crucial to Leeds City Council (LCC) achieving its Best Council Plan objectives.
- 2.3 Shaping the built environment is a key part of this, integrating the needs of our diverse population (including, however not limited to access for disabled people). The Annual Report 2015 from the Director of Public Health described how the built environment and good urban design can contribute to better health outcomes, and respond to changing population characteristics and aspirations.
- 2.4 The framework has been developed as part of our Merrion rebuild project, so it has a current, practical relevance.

### **3 Corporate considerations**

3.5 There is broad agreement that the Council needs a joined up approach to implement this inclusive design framework which will require:

- setting up a joint team to conduct future 'inclusion in the built environment work' to include, incorporating the following services Facilities Management, Fire Safety, HR, Building Control, Access Officer, CTWP project team
- Making stronger links to the asset strategy
- Agreeing practical case by case reviews for each council building to offer pragmatic approaches to cost-benefit decisions

3.6 This framework has already proved beneficial in the review of Merrion House and is already being applied to the plans for the other major city centre buildings.

3.7 The overall responsibility for the framework implementation sits with the Director of City Development

### **4 Consultation and engagement**

4.1 The experience and expertise from within our own workforce and across our staff networks and from the wider community has shaped and influenced the design of the framework. The Equality team and the Disabled, BME and LGBT\* staff networks have all played strong roles.

4.2 Leeds City Council visited external sites and organisations in the public, private and third sector to inform the development of the framework. As a result the overwhelming evidence showed that our plans are in line with current inclusive design principles for both office spaces and public spaces in the city.

### **5 Equality and diversity / cohesion and integration**

5.1 Applying inclusion and diversity principles to our design and planning framework for all Leeds City Council Buildings will remove barriers that exist for some groups and communities. This in turn will help improve better quality services and create greater trust with our communities.

### **6 Council policies and best council plan**

6.1 Inclusion and diversity needs to be at the heart of the Council's design framework in order to create an environment which is welcoming to all Leeds citizens.

6.2 Inclusion and Diversity sits at the heart of the Best Council Plan and Values, and is one of the council's Calls to Action.

### **7 Resources and value for money**

- 7.1 A level of investment will be needed, balancing the Council's aspiration to build a Council wide standard for inclusive design in the City with its practical application and cost.
- 7.2 Our asset strategy will guide and inform our investment decisions.
- 7.3 This is a long term project to create equality of access for both our workforce and our citizens. However, there are some short term wins which can be implemented quickly at marginal cost, such as addressing the issue of accessible toilet facilities in buildings.

## **8 Legal Implications, access to information and call In**

- 8.1 Legal implications linked to our public sector duty under the Equality Act are referenced in the report
- 8.2 The report is subject to call in, and does not contain any exempt or confidential information.

## **9 Risk management**

- 9.1 The proposed framework underpins our public sector duty under the Equality Act to need to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations
- 9.2 If we do not create more inclusive workspaces and public buildings we leave ourselves open to the accusation of not being an inclusive and representative employer and may lose the trust of those in our communities who feel excluded.
- 9.3 It is crucial that we provide an inclusive environment for our customers, where they feel safe and treated fairly. If we are to address poverty, health inequality and create a fairer society, we need services which are inclusive and culturally accessible. By not providing an inclusive environment for our customers we may exclude those most in need.
- 9.4 It is important that our workforce feels valued and engaged. Inclusive work places and environments are a key part of this.

## **10 Conclusions**

- 10.1 Our aim to be a modern, forward thinking and inclusive Council is crucially dependent on having inclusive buildings, work spaces and environments for our staff and customers. The proposed framework helps us to deliver this.

## **11 Recommendations**

- 11.1 This report recommends that the Executive Board adopt the framework 'Integrating Diversity and Inclusion into the Built Environment' for Leeds City Council.
- 11.2 The Executive Board note that in applying the framework, Leeds City Council will seek to strike the right balance between aspiration, practicality and cost. The

overall responsibility for the framework implementation sits with the Director of City Development

**12 Background documents<sup>1</sup>**

None

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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.