

Report of Director of Communities and Environment

Report to Executive Board

Date: 18 November 2020

Subject: Equality Improvement Priorities Progress Report 2019 – 2020

Are specific electoral wards affected? If yes, name(s) of ward(s):	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Has consultation been carried out?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Are there implications for equality and diversity and cohesion and integration?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Will the decision be open 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

1. Main issues

- The Equality Improvement Priorities 2018 - 2022 were approved by Executive Board in July 2018. Executive Board also requested that they receive annual reports on progress. The Equality Improvement priorities were produced to ensure that the council meets its legal duties under the Equality Act 2010.
- The priorities were developed to complement the Best Council Plan priorities and help to underpin the ambition for Leeds to be the best city in the UK: compassionate and caring with a strong economy, which tackles poverty and reduces inequalities.
- During the year, work has continued to review/amend or complete the Equality Improvement Priorities. Of the 32 equality improvement priorities published and approved in 2019, 27 priorities and their performance indicators/measures will remain the same. The rest are either: completed; subsumed within mainstream work or have been amended and an additional priority with performance indicators/measures have been developed.
- In 2020, the city has had to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic. Recent work in Leeds has focused on understanding the disproportionate or differential impact on inequality of the COVID-19 pandemic on the city’s Communities of Interest and the protected characteristics covered by the Equality Act 2010. Communities of Interest have been identified as groups of people who share an identity, for example, people

with a learning disability, or those who share an experience, for example, the homeless community.

- The council has a legal duty to publish information to show their compliance with the Equality Act duty.

2. Best Council Plan Implications (click [here](#) for the latest version of the Best Council Plan)

- Equality Improvement Priorities have been designed to complement the best council plan priorities and the plans ambition to be a compassionate city with a strong economy.

3. Resource Implications

- All resources deployed for the work articulated in this report are within budget and part of the Councils mainstream service delivery.

Recommendations

The Executive Board recommendations are to:

- a) Approve the Equality Improvement Priorities Annual Report 2019 – 2020;
- b) Agree to sign off the completed priorities for 2019 – 2020;
- c) Approve the new and amended priorities for 2020 – 2021;
- d) Approve the proposed approach for the development of new Strategic Equality Improvement Priorities for 2021 – 2025;
- e) Invite a further report in July 2021; and
- f) Note that the Director of Communities and Environment is responsible for the implementation of decisions made by Executive Board in respect of this report.

1. Purpose of this report

- 1.1 This report sets out the annual progress against the council's Equality Improvement Priorities for 2018 – 2022. It also outlines the reviewed, amended and completed priorities.

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: and
- publish information to show their compliance with the Equality Duty, at least annually

2.2 The council's Equality Improvement Priorities have taken into account the protected characteristics as required under the Equality Act 2010. They also recognise poverty as a barrier that limits what people can do and can be. As a result priorities were included that address poverty as the council recognises that a number of the protected characteristics are disproportionately represented in those living in poverty.

3. Main Issues

3.1 Progress against each of the council's equality improvement priorities during 2019 – 2020 is attached in Appendix 1. This update is not intended to give a comprehensive view of all the work that has been undertaken but provides an overview and examples from across all directorates.

3.2 The Equality Improvement Priorities recognise that there are currently different outcomes and experiences for different groups and communities and were developed to support the Best Council ambitions of Compassionate City and a Strong Economy and progress is reported against these.

3.3 The Equality Improvement Priorities Annual Report now includes progress on the delivery of the workforce Inclusion and Diversity work, which was approved by Executive Board in July 2017.

3.4 In addition to the current Equality Improvement Priorities, some work has taken place on refreshing and amending the existing priorities and developing new ones. Equality Improvement Priorities can be revised or new ones developed at any point during the year.

3.5 The work on the refresh and development of new Equality Improvement Priorities has been led and developed by Directorates and/ or Services to reflect their equality improvement work.

3.6 All of the refreshed and new strategic equality improvement priorities have been: informed by qualitative and/or quantitative intelligence and various consultation and engagement activities.

3.7 Communities and Environment have amended measures for the following four priorities:-

- Improve the approach to migration in Leeds
- Improve equality outcomes across the six priority neighbourhoods with a focus on addressing inequality and poverty
- Taxi and Private Hire Licensing to work with key partners in Leeds and to make sure hate crime incidents are reported, action taken, and information fed back
- To focus on changing how the Environmental Action Service is seen by communities both in terms of being a service provider and potential employer

Communities and Environment have also completed the work on their priority to 'Improve the Customer Experience for Deaf People' as this is now subsumed into mainstream work.

3.8 City Development have amended measures for the following priority:-

- Improve access to Leeds city centre pavements by making Leeds City Centre more user friendly and accessible by all communities

City Development have also completed the work on the priority to 'Improve Inclusion and Diversity across the Built Environment - Make our Operational Estate as Inclusive and Accessible as possible to our Diverse Range of Customers, Staff and Visitors, within limitations of individual buildings (e.g. those listed) and available resources' as this is now subsumed into mainstream work.

- 3.9 A new priority has been developed by Communities and Environment and an update is included in the 2019 – 2020 annual progress report. This is:-
- To make the council website (and all associated websites) accessible for all our users
- 3.10 The annual reporting, refresh and development of new equality improvement priorities is tied in to the business planning cycle for the council. This enables data analysis and consultation and engagement activities used for developing the annual budget proposals and Best Council Plan to also inform the equality improvement priorities.

Next Steps

- 3.11 In 2020, the city has had to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic. Recent work in Leeds has focused on understanding the disproportionate or differential impact on inequality of the COVID-19 pandemic on the city's Communities of Interest and the protected characteristics covered by the Equality Act 2010. Communities of Interest have been identified as groups of people who share an identity, for example, people with a learning disability, or those who share an experience, for example, the homeless community.
- 3.12 Work has started in the City to tackle and take forward the issues of COVID-19 inequality and some key pieces of work are outlined below.
- 3.13 The Leeds Health and Wellbeing Strategy has had its ambition for 'Leeds will be the best city for health and well-being, where people who are poorest improve their health the fastest' since 2016. They have recognised that health inequalities have been increasing over recent years. COVID-19 has shone a light on this in Leeds as much as in other areas, giving us a context of renewed focus and momentum for change. To consider the depth and breadth of the impact of COVID-19 on health inequalities in Leeds the framework of the four waves of the pandemic has been used.
- 3.14 The fourth wave of the pandemic recognises that wider issues have a significant impact on people's health and wellbeing. The economy is now on the downturn with people losing jobs. The Centre for Economic Policy Research that estimates that a 1% fall in employment could lead to around a 2% increase in the prevalence of chronic illness. There is also the issue that people who have had COVID-19 are now experiencing long-term symptoms and will not be able to return to work for some time. The Centre for Ageing Better's findings highlight that older and younger workers are more likely to be made redundant or furloughed. For older people this will mean entering retirement without enough money to support themselves in retirement.
- 3.15 The Health and Wellbeing Board have asked that the city's health and care system re-energise its efforts on working together, and with communities and people, to collectively reduce health inequalities. This requires the agreement that tackling health inequalities is a strategic priority for all partners and that they will consider it

in every decision and action they take. The principles of starting with people, working as team Leeds and ensuring delivery is central to this work.

- 3.16 The Tackling Inequalities Group representing organisations across all system partners has been set up to develop a framework for the city with a set of standards and tools. The Health Inequalities work outlined above which is being undertaken through the Health and Well Being Board has a primary focus on the inequalities work that is being undertaken by the health and social care sector.
- 3.17 Work continues to understand the differential and disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on inequality. The Communities of Interest work continues to provide a continuous 'snapshot' of how inequalities are amplified in a time of crisis and is a resource that can be used to support change within the city around inequalities.
- 3.18 The council's Equality Improvement Priorities 2018 - 2022 were produced to ensure that the council meets its legal duties under the Equality Act 2010. We continue to recognise poverty as a barrier that limits what people can do and can be. We have, therefore, included priorities that address poverty as we recognise that a number of the protected characteristics are disproportionately represented in those living in poverty.
- 3.19 Improving equality outcomes and tackling inequality are inextricably linked and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has brought this to the fore.
- 3.20 It is proposed that a new approach to the council's Equality Improvement Priorities is developed for 2022 – 2025. These will take into account the disproportionate and differential impact of COVID-19 on inequality and will be closer aligned to the eight Best City Priorities. This is likely that the current number of priorities will reduce from the current figure of 32 and will be more cross cutting and strategic and less service focused.
- 3.21 They will also take into tackling poverty and reducing inequalities with the city's Inclusive Growth Strategy, Health & Wellbeing Strategy and Climate Emergency declaration as key drivers and locality working as a core principle and will help to hard wire the council's approach to improving equality and tackling inequality into the strategic framework for the Best Council Plan and for the city.

4. Corporate considerations

4.1 Consultation and engagement

- 4.1.1 This report provides a progress update on the Equality Improvement Priorities. Extensive public consultation on the Best City Priorities and budget setting has been used to inform the priorities. Service specific consultations have taken place to inform the revised/new priorities.

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 are an integral part of the Best Council Plan priorities and help to underpin the ambition for Leeds to be the best city in the UK: one that is compassionate with a strong economy which tackles poverty and reduces the inequalities that still exist

Climate Emergency

4.3.2 There is no direct impact on the Climate Emergency arising from this update report. This report outlines progress against the council's the Equality Improvement Priorities 2018 – 2022. Any direct impact on the Climate Emergency will be addressed by Directorates as part of their equality improvement work which is outlined in the update report.

4.4 Resources, procurement 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 The production of an annual progress report on the Equality Improvement Priorities is a legal requirement to ensure 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 would be 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 an annual progress report is that we will be in breach of the Equality Act 2010 which could result in reputational and possible financial implications for the council.

5. Conclusions

5.1 The Equality Improvement Priorities Annual Update Report demonstrates progress against the Equality Improvement Priorities 2018 – 2022 and help the council to focus on areas of disproportionality and tackle inequalities.

5.2 However, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has raised issues of tackling inequality that need to be addressed and the development of new Equality Improvement Priorities for 2021 -2025 will ensure a joined up approach with equality improvement work.

6. Recommendations

6.1 The Executive Board recommendations are to:

- a) Approve the Equality Improvement Priorities Annual Report 2019 – 2020;
- b) Agree to sign off the completed priorities for 2019 – 2020;
- c) Approve the new and amended priorities for 2020 – 2021;

- d) Approve the proposed approach for the development of new Strategic Equality Improvement Priorities for 2021 – 2025;
- e) Invite a further report in July 2021; and
- f) Note that the Director of Communities and Environment is responsible for the implementation of decisions made by Executive Board in respect of this report

7. Background documents¹

7.1 None

¹ 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.