

Equality Improvement Priorities Progress Report 2021 – 2022

Date: 21 September 2022

Report of: Director of Communities, Housing and Environment

Report to: Executive Board

Will the decision be open for call in? Yes No

Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? Yes No

Brief summary

- Executive Board agreed on 18th November 2020 that a new strategic approach to the council's Equality Improvement Priorities is developed for 2021 – 2025. These would be closer aligned to the then eight Best City Priorities. With the introduction of the Best City Ambition, moving forward the improvement priorities for the remainder of their 21-25 time period will be realigned to this ambition and this will be reflected in our annual reporting for 2022/23 onwards.
- The council is currently consulting on a draft vision statement for equality, diversity and inclusion. This will be brought to Executive Board in due course and will align with and support our equality and diversity policy, Equality Impact Assessment process, improvement priorities and annual reporting.
- The Equality Improvement Priorities 2021 - 2025 were approved by Executive Board in July 2021. Executive Board also requested that they receive annual reports on progress.
- During 2021 the City has continued to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic and resultant impact on communities. 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 which are inextricably linked..
- The council's Equality Improvement Priorities 2021 - 2025 were produced to ensure that the council meets its legal duties under the Equality Act 2010. These continue to recognise poverty as a barrier that limits what people can do and can be.
- They also take into account 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 for the City.
- The Children and Families Services in Leeds are committed to support learning settings in the city to develop a culture of anti-racism and have proposed a refreshed equality improvement priority for 2022 - 2025. This can be found at appendix 2.

Recommendations

The Executive Board recommendations are to:

- a) Approve the Equality Improvement Priorities Annual Report 2021 – 2022 (appendix 1);
- b) Agree the Children and Families directorate's request to shift the focus of the Educational Attainment priority onto racial equality, as outlined in appendix 2; and
- c) Note that the Director of Communities, Housing and Environment is responsible for the implementation of decisions made by Executive Board in respect of this report.

What is this report about?

- 1 The production of the Equality Improvement Priorities Annual Report ensures compliance with the Equality Act 2010.
- 2 The council's Equality Improvement Priorities have considered the protected characteristics as required by equality legislation. They also recognise poverty as a barrier that limits what people can do and can be. As a result priorities have been included that address poverty as the council recognises that a number of the protected characteristics are disproportionately represented in those living in poverty.
- 3 The Equality Improvement Priorities 2021 – 2025 recognise the disproportionate and differential impact of COVID-19 on inequality and were aligned to the eight Best City Priorities for this reporting cycle and progress is reported against these. For future years reporting will align with the Best City Ambition and proposed vision on equality.
- 4 Appendix 1 shows progress against each priority over the previous 12 months. It also outlines work that is currently planned to be undertaken over the remaining 3 years of the cycle of the priorities.
- 5 The Children and Families directorate are keen to shift the focus of the Educational Attainment priority onto racial equality and the directorate's accountability for raising awareness. Further details have been provided within appendix 2 but progress against the existing priority has been included within the annual performance report 2021-2022.

What impact will this proposal have?

- 6 Tackling poverty and reducing inequalities is fundamental to the Best City Ambition and work was already in progress by the council and its partners to address it prior to the COVID-19 pandemic emergency.
- 7 Work that has been taking place during 2021 demonstrates that there is a disproportionate or differential impact on inequality due to the COVID-19 pandemic on the City's Communities of Interest/Equality Communities. This work highlights that action needs to be taken to address these social, structural and economic inequalities to ensure that they do not worsen.
- 8 The Strategic Equality Improvement Priorities 2021 – 2025 ensure the council continues to meet its legal duties but more importantly improves equality outcomes and tackles the barriers to poverty and disadvantage for the citizens of Leeds.

How does this proposal impact the three pillars of the Best City Ambition?

Health and Wellbeing

Inclusive Growth

Zero Carbon

- 9 The Equality Improvement Priorities are an integral part of the Best City Ambition 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.

What consultation and engagement has taken place?

Wards affected:

Have ward members been consulted? Yes No

- 10 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 Strategic Equality Improvement Priorities. Service specific consultations have taken place to inform the new priorities.

What are the resource implications?

- 11 There are no additional resource implications arising from this report.

What are the key risks and how are they being managed?

- 12 Any risks associated with specific priorities would be addressed as part of service delivery. The risk to the council in not developing 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 impact and possible financial implications.

What are the legal implications?

- 13 The production of the Equality Improvement Priorities Annual Report and production of equality objectives at least every four years ensures the council meets its legal duties under the Equality Act 2010.

Options, timescales and measuring success

What other options were considered?

- 14 No other options were considered.

How will success be measured?

- 15 Each of the Strategic Equality Improvement Priorities have their own indicators and measures. These are reported annually to Executive Board.

What is the timetable and who will be responsible for implementation?

- 16 Work to deliver the Strategic Equality Improvement Priorities takes place throughout the year and an update on these can be found at appendix 1. Responsibility for the delivery of the priorities sits with the Director for Communities, Housing and Environment.

Appendices

- Appendix 1 - Equality Improvement Priorities Annual Report 2021– 2022.
- Appendix 2 - Strategic Approach to Racial Inequalities in Learning Settings 2022 – 2025.

Background papers

- None.