

15 September 2021**Agenda Item: 5****REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR- CUSTOMERS, GOVERNANCE AND
EMPLOYEES****UPDATE ON NOTTINGHAMSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL'S CORPORATE
EQUALITIES ACTION PLAN****Purpose of the Report**

1. To seek the approval of Personnel Committee to the attached Equalities Action Plan (Appendix 1), to be published on the Council's staff intranet, and agree to progress the actions identified within the plan.

Information

2. The Covid emergency has created many challenges for the Council's workforce and has highlighted some particular issues in the equalities agenda alongside the heightened awareness of issues relating to race equality, both of which have significantly raised the profile of this work over the last 12 months.
3. The increased risk to people with additional vulnerabilities due to ethnicity or long term health conditions has led to closer and more frequent engagement with the relevant self managed groups to discuss and address any issues arising from the ongoing situation.
4. Members will recall approving the Council's Workforce Resilience and Recovery Strategy at Personnel Committee in November 2020. This document sets out how we will ensure we have the right people, with the right skills and values, in place at the right time to enable us to meet our commitments to the people of Nottinghamshire as set out in the Council Plan whilst continuing to respond to the Covid pandemic. An extensive public and partner engagement exercise is currently underway to identify the priorities for local people as we rebuild post Covid and reflect these in a new Council Plan. A new People Strategy will be developed to underpin this and ensure we have the people we need to deliver on this.
5. The current Strategy identifies that successful delivery will rely on a series of underpinning action plans to ensure we seek to attract talent from the widest resource pools, that all employees are motivated and supported to give their best and to remove any barriers to employment and progression by ensuring our employment approaches are inclusive and accessible for all.

6. We also have obligations under the Public Sector Equality Duty which requires public bodies to:
 - Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct prohibited by the Equality Act 2010.
 - Advance equality of opportunity between employees.
 - Foster good relations between employees from different groups.
 - In addition, we are required to review our equality objectives every four years as part of the duty. This work will be undertaken as the new People Strategy is developed and will involve Corporate and departmental Equalities groups, the recognised trades unions and the staff support networks.
7. The protected characteristics are: age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation and marriage and civil partnerships. The Council wants to be seen as an “employer of choice” where the contribution of all is equally recognised and valued and to ensure we attract high calibre candidates to all advertised roles.
8. Members have considered a number of different reports over the last 18 months on a range of activities which fall within the promoting equality agenda including the gender pay gap, Disability Confident, the Race at Work Charter, work experience activity and leadership development. We are continuing to review existing accreditations/memberships and explore other national schemes and awards to further promote and evidence our corporate approach.
9. In addition, each department continues to develop its own departmental equalities action plan which demonstrates the more specific actions which can be taken particularly in relation to services and commissioning. These plans are discussed in leadership teams, the departmental equalities groups, the Corporate Equality Group and with the recognised trade unions on an ongoing basis.
10. Further work will be undertaken to ensure there is improved consistency and quality in the completion of equality impact assessments to demonstrate the Council’s transparency in terms of the decisions it takes and in understanding the varying impacts of these decisions on the different population and workforce groups. The Equality Officer is currently undertaking a review into how these are completed, and involving colleagues from across the Council in a working party, to consider what changes may be required to make the assessments more relevant.

Other Options Considered

11. The development of an equalities action plan is essential to demonstrating our commitment to promoting the Council as an inclusive place to work and where citizens feel they are treated in a fair and consistent way when accessing services. We aim to go beyond the level of statutory compliance and explore all opportunities to further progress our equalities agenda. The option to do nothing would expose the council to legal challenge and reputational risk under the various elements of discrimination legislation. However, it would also ignore the business imperative to maximise our draw to candidates and so attract the best talent to work with the Council.

Reasons for Recommendations

12. In seeking to be a community leader and employer of choice, there needs to be clearly identified actions with deliverable outcomes in order to measure performance and progress in the equalities area.

Statutory and Policy Implications

13. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of crime and disorder, data protection and information governance, finance, human resources, human rights, the NHS Constitution (public health services), the public sector equality duty, safeguarding of children and adults at risk, service users, smarter working, sustainability and the environment and where such implications are material they are described below. Appropriate consultation has been undertaken and advice sought on these issues as required.

Data Protection and Information Governance

14. There are no data protection implications arising from this report as all information is in relation to trends rather than named individuals' data.

Financial Implications

15. There are no direct financial implications arising from the development of an equalities action plan to underpin the objectives set out in the Workforce Resilience and Recovery Strategy and future People Strategy. Clearly the ability to identify future resourcing requirements and effective workforce planning are key components of an organisation which places value for money and efficiency at the heart of all that we do and to aim to be an organisation that is representative of the communities that we serve.

Human Resources Implications

16. The Human Resources implications are implicit in the body of this report. The future success of the Council relies on our ability to plan effectively our future resourcing requirements and to recruit and retain employees with the necessary skills and experience to deliver on the commitments set out in the current and future Council Plans.

Public Sector Equality Duty Implications

17. In seeking to maintain our position as an Employer of Choice, the ability to engage our current and future workforce is essential to our ongoing success. The themes identified in the Workforce Resilience and Recovery Strategy apply to every part of the workforce and therefore there is no group of employees disadvantaged because of this report. Individual equality impact assessments will be prepared for particular activities where required

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that members:

- 1) Approve the attached Equalities Action Plan (Appendix 1).
- 2) Agree to receive an update on progress and to review the status of various actions in March 2022.

Marjorie Toward
Service Director – Customers, Governance and Employees

For any enquiries about this report please contact:

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Constitutional Comments (KK 06/09/21)

18. The proposals in this report are within the remit of the Personnel Committee.

Financial Comments (RWK 06/09/21)

19. There are no specific financial implications arising directly from the report.

HR Comments (BC 06/09/21)

20. The Human Resources implications are contained within the body of the report. The action plan will underpin the objectives set out in the Workforce Resilience and Recovery Strategy and future People Strategy.

Background Papers and Published Documents

Except for previously published documents, which will be available elsewhere, the documents listed here will be available for inspection in accordance with Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972.

- None

Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected

- All