



CABINET
Tuesday, 05 December 2023

Subject	Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan
Cabinet Member	Councillor Sarah Whitelock Cabinet Member with responsibility for Communities, Leisure and Tourism
Report Author(s) / Head of Service	Nicole Rickard Head of Communities Nicole.rickard@eastsuffolk.gov.uk 07766 998074
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Is the report Open or Exempt?	OPEN
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Category of Exempt Information and reason why it is NOT in the public interest to disclose the exempt information.	Not applicable.
Wards Affected:	All Wards

Purpose and high-level overview

Purpose of Report:

To seek Cabinet approval of the new East Suffolk Council Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan. The new Action Plan was developed following two workshops earlier this year focussing on the role of East Suffolk Council as both an employer and a service provider and sets out our ambitious approach to embedding Equality, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion.

Options:

To approve the Action Plan / not to approve the Action Plan

Recommendation/s:

It is recommended that Cabinet approve the new East Suffolk Council Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan and that all Councillors and officers of the Council play an active role in embedding Equality, Diversity and Inclusion in all that we do as a Council.

Corporate Impact Assessment

Governance:

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion is considered at monthly Corporate Leadership Team Governance meetings and overseen by the Council's Services for All Group, which includes representatives from all services (this group also oversees the Council's work around safeguarding).

ESC policies and strategies that directly apply to the proposal:

The Action Plan will help the Council to deliver its ambitions around tackling inequalities set out in the 'Tackling Inequalities' theme of the new East Suffolk Council 'Our Direction 2028' document approved by Cabinet and due to be adopted by Full Council in November 2023.

Environmental:

No specific implications

Equalities and Diversity:

This Action Plan represents the Council's ambitions around Equality and Diversity and has been co-designed through two workshops that included input from staff, Councillors and partners (including Unison).

Financial:

There are minimal financial implications associated with this report, although some of the activities proposed in the Action Plan may have resource implications in the form of staff input.

Human Resources:

A number of the actions in the Action Plan will be delivered by the HR Team and the key principles of the Plan have fed into the development of the Council's new People Strategy

ICT:

Specific actions are identified within the plan about how we provide information to engage and communicate with the spectrum of protected characteristic groups in East Suffolk.

Legal:

There are no specific legal implications associated with the Action Plan, indeed the intention of the Plan is to ensure that we get it right first time in terms of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion – for example a renewed focus on Equality Impact Assessments should reduce the likelihood of legal challenge on the grounds of inequalities.

Risk:

This Action Plan should reduce risk to the Council because it sets out our ambition to embed Equality, Diversity and Inclusion in all that we do, including using tools such as Equality Impact Assessments to assess the potential impact of policy and service changes on all ten East Suffolk protected characteristic groups before they are implemented and to mitigate wherever possible when negative impacts are identified.

External Consultees:

Information and expertise from partners with/representing lived experience of the ten protected characteristic groups have informed the development of this Plan, including young people and people with disabilities. Staff voices formed part of the two workshops held to develop the Plan.

Strategic Plan Priorities

Select the priorities of the Strategic Plan which are supported by this proposal: <i>(Select only one primary and as many secondary as appropriate)</i>		Primary priority	Secondary priorities
T01	Growing our Economy		
P01	Build the right environment for East Suffolk	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
P02	Attract and stimulate inward investment	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
P03	Maximise and grow the unique selling points of East Suffolk	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
P04	Business partnerships	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
P05	Support and deliver infrastructure	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
T02	Enabling our Communities		
P06	Community Partnerships	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
P07	Taking positive action on what matters most	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
P08	Maximising health, well-being and safety in our District	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
P09	Community Pride	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
T03	Maintaining Financial Sustainability		
P10	Organisational design and streamlining services	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
P11	Making best use of and investing in our assets	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
P12	Being commercially astute	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
P13	Optimising our financial investments and grant opportunities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
P14	Review service delivery with partners	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
T04	Delivering Digital Transformation		
P15	Digital by default	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
P16	Lean and efficient streamlined services	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
P17	Effective use of data	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
P18	Skills and training	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
P19	District-wide digital infrastructure	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
T05	Caring for our Environment		
P20	Lead by example	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
P21	Minimise waste, reuse materials, increase recycling	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
P22	Renewable energy	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
P23	Protection, education and influence	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
XXX	Governance		
XXX	How ESC governs itself as an authority	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
How does this proposal support the priorities selected?			
<p>This action plan should underpin all of our work as a Council – as an employer, a service provider and a community champion/leader. There is a real emphasis on understanding the needs of all the protected characteristic groups in East Suffolk and taking positive action to address these needs. A lot of what we do around Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion – and our ambition to achieve Equity – is delivered in partnership with other organisations.</p> <p>The Action Plan aligns well to both the Strategic Plan priorities and the new Our Direction 2028 document with its focus on Tackling Inequalities. It also aligns well to the Community</p>			

Partnership Board priority around Tackling Inequalities with its focus on five of the 22 identified areas of inequality in East Suffolk – Mental Health and Wellbeing, Absolute Poverty, Children and Young People’s Health and Wellbeing, Access to Services and Disabilities and Long Term Health Conditions with also feed into and draws from relevant priorities for our eight Community Partnerships.

Background and Justification for Recommendation

1 Background facts	
1.1	In 2022 we became one of the first Councils in the East of England to sign up to the Unison Anti-Racism Charter and were asked to speak at a regional event earlier this year about how we were implementing the Charter in East Suffolk.
1.2	The Council revised its Equality and Diversity Policy in 2021 (post-pandemic) following a self-assessment against the national Equality Framework for Local Government (EFLG) conducted in order to better understand our strengths and weaknesses in relation to Equality and Diversity East Suffolk Council Equality Framework for Local Government self-assessment
1.2	<p>The Policy sets out how councillors and staff work together to actively promote equality and diversity of access to services for all East Suffolk residents and for council staff. We are working to meet our obligations under the Equality Act 2010 through the three specific public sector duties:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act. • Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it. • Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it. <p>New and updated policies and key decisions about services should take into consideration the specific needs of the nine protected characteristic groups, identified within the Equality Act, plus socio-economic disadvantage which has been identified as the tenth priority in East Suffolk:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Age • Being or becoming a transsexual person • Being married or in a civil partnership • Being pregnant or on maternity leave • Disability • Race including colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin • Religion, belief or lack of religion/belief • Sex • Sexual Orientation • Socio-economic disadvantages <p>The East Suffolk Equality and Diversity Policy focusses on a range of things we do to try to ensure that we promote equality including:</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accessible buildings from which services are delivered. • Charges for services that take into account income deprivation where possible. • Engaging with individuals and communities when developing new services. • Providing information about our services in a range of formats. • Interacting with the public in appropriate ways. • Striving to meet people’s individual needs when delivering services wherever possible. • Monitoring take up of our services to ensure equity. • Being transparent about the basis upon which we make decisions. • Training frontline staff to understand and meet the specific needs of customers.
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2 Current position

2.1	<p>The increasing amount of data available about our communities, combined with evidence from the Covid pandemic, has shone a spotlight on the inequalities that exist both within and between our communities. Earlier this year it was agreed that the Council should develop an Action Plan that includes the areas for development identified through the EFLG self-assessment, our commitments in the Anti-Racism Charter and which overall provides a more ambitious framework for our work to promote equity and reduce inequality in the district.</p>
2.2	<p>We already use various tools to meet the Equality Duty and promote equality of access to services for all of our communities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Services for All Group - an equality and diversity group, including representatives from different service areas, to drive equality improvements through a progressive action plan and the planning of training and development. • Human Resources - our Human Resources (HR) team drives the transformation and organisational development of the council, while at the same time ensuring that we are meeting our ethical and legal responsibilities in respect of all employment and workforce matters, including the equality duty. • People Strategy – the HR team ensures that we have the right number of people, with the right skills, in the right place at the right time to deliver our vision and objectives. This ensures that we have a productive and skilled workforce and effective policies in place which support diversity and good people management. • Training and development provision - regular training workshops are provided to councillors and officers including equality and diversity duties and responsibilities, equality impact analysis, safeguarding children, young people and adults at risk and community mapping. A session on equalities forms part of our induction programme for all new recruits to the council. • We work closely with minority groups, voluntary sector and community organisations, including through the two Disability Forums, the Youth Council, Youth Voice and local faith groups.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We commission our Citizens Advice, Disability Advice Service (south) and Disability Advice North East Suffolk to support specific protected characteristic groups.
2.3	In order to develop the Action Plan, two workshops were held (in April and August 2023) with staff at all levels from all services, including representatives of the Corporate Leadership Team. Workshop 1 was opened by the Leader of the Council and Workshop 2 by the then Cabinet Member for Communities (now the Deputy Cabinet Member).
2.4	Workshop 1 provided an introduction to why Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Matters, an overview of local data about the ten protected characteristic groups, input from Unison and examples of projects like Youth Voice, work to become an Age Friendly Community and how we work with our two Disability Forums. This was followed by focussed work in groups to identify priorities. Workshop 2 included a presentation on disabilities and dedicated the majority of the time on refining the content of the Plan, including adding timescales and agreeing priorities for action.
2.5	Both workshops included an opportunity for staff to share their stories – their lived experience – of living as part of one or more protected characteristic groups – we heard stories focussed on race, neurodiversity, age, gender, disability and gender reassignment. The focus across both sessions was firmly on what else we should do as a Council to maximise the voice, inclusion and access to services of all the ten East Suffolk protected characteristic groups both in our role as a service provider and as an employer.

3 How to address current situation

3.1	The new Action Plan includes a vision, principles and definitions of Equality, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion, as well as a reminder of the ten protected characteristic groups.
3.2	Our vision is that ‘Equality, Diversity and Inclusion is at the heart of all we do – ensuring equal access to opportunity and striving for equal outcomes for all’. Our principles focus on our behaviours – as Councillors, staff and contractors – our ambitions to co-produce our services, our focus on tackling inequalities and commitment to standing up to discrimination.
3.3	<p>The Action Plan is structured around three key themes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> East Suffolk Council as an inclusive employer of choice East Suffolk Council as a community leader East Suffolk Council – thinking equalities in all we do <p>Each of the three sections of the plan includes a set of priority projects/activities and other activities (many of which are medium to long term ambitions). Against each theme is a set of proposed projects with a lead officer or group and an indicative timescale.</p>

4 Reason/s for recommendation

4.1	The new Action Plan sets out our ambitions as an employer and community leader and our desire to embed Equality, Diversity and Inclusion at the heart of all that we do. The Plan is wide ranging and ambitious and will be further refined through our work with those directly impacted by the inequalities that exist in our
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	communities, through co-producing projects with those they are intended to benefit. We want both our communities and staff to understand that we are listening and will do what we can to ensure that we meet their needs.
4.2	Equality, Diversity and Inclusion lies at the heart of the Councils ambitions for East Suffolk, as highlighted in 'Our Direction 2028'.

Appendices

Appendices:

Appendix A	Draft Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan
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Background reference papers:

None.
