

# **Cherwell District Council**

## **Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

**14 March 2023**

## **Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Action Plans**

### **Report of Assistant Director – Customer Focus**

This report is public

#### **Purpose of report**

To seek the committee's views on the draft action plans for delivering the council's equality, diversity and inclusion commitments for creating inclusive communities and inclusive services, which are set out in its Equalities Framework, Including Everyone.

#### **1.0 Recommendations**

The meeting is recommended:

- 1.1 To review the draft action plans for Inclusive Communities and Inclusive Services and provide comments for the Executive Committee to consider at its April meeting.
- 1.2 To recommend to the Executive Committee that there is a delegation of authority to the Assistant Director for Customer Focus to make minor amendments to the agreed Inclusive Communities and Services Action Plans in consultation with the portfolio holder and Chair of the EDI working group.

#### **2.0 Background and Report Details**

- 2.1 The Equality Act 2010 requires all public bodies including councils to take extra steps to stop discrimination. This is known as the Public Sector Equality Duty.
- 2.2 The duty means having to consider equality as part of our daily business and sets out specific requirements for achieving this, which are to:
  - Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act,
  - Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not,

- Foster good relationships between people who share protected characteristics and those who do not,
- Set and publish equality objectives at least every four years and,
- Publish information at least annually, to show how we comply with the Equality Duty including information about employees and to people who are affected by our policies and procedures.

- 2.3 In 2020, the council agreed an equalities framework, 'Including Everyone', which it co-produced with Oxfordshire County Council. This framework was to capture the councils' statutory obligations but also their commitments to going beyond what the law expects, to deliver inclusive communities, services and an inclusive workforce.
- 2.4 Earlier this year, the Executive Committee agreed to refresh the action plan that underpinned the framework to reflect Cherwell as a standalone council and also the significant progress that has been made since it was developed.
- 2.6 The approach agreed by both the Executive and O&S committee was to have develop an action plan for each commitment with a focus on ensuring the necessary foundations are in place to deliver them. The action plans would then provide the platform from which we future plans could be developed, which focussed on delivering improvements.
- 2.8 The approach also included setting up a joint councillor working group consisting of members from both the Overview and Scrutiny and Personnel committees. This was to reflect the interdependencies between the commitments and in the spirit of being inclusive. The role of the group was to develop draft action plans for each commitment for consideration by the relevant committee. The intention was also that the group continues to meet in the new municipal year, when it will oversee the implementation of these plans and help shape future improvement plans.
- 2.9 The members of the Group were Cllrs Rebecca Biegel, Gemma Coton, Sandy Dallimore, David Hingley, Chukwudi Okeke, Jason Slaymaker, and Amanda Watkins. At the first meeting, Cllr Hingley was elected as the Group's chair.
- 2.10 Over the course of four meetings, the Group reviewed and refined drafts of the three action plans. Annexes 2 and 3 reflect that work.
- 2.11 Personnel Committee will discuss the Inclusive Workplaces Action Plan on 15 March.
- 2.12 The Inclusive Communities, Services and Workplace Action Plans are due to be considered by the Executive on 3 April.

### **3.0 Conclusion and Reasons for Recommendations**

3.1 The council is committed to going above and beyond our statutory responsibilities in creating inclusive communities and services and an inclusive workforce. To do this effectively we need to have the right resources and infrastructure in place to:

- capture the latest EDI data and trends
- use the data available to identify and address any barriers
- ensure EDI implications are identified and considered at the earliest opportunities through our service planning and decision making processes

3.2 The Inclusive Communities, Inclusive Services, and Inclusive Workplaces Action Plans provides a structure in which this can be delivered and a basis on which further more specific, substantive work on this topic can be delivered.

### **4.0 Consultation**

None

### **5.0 Alternative Options and Reasons for Rejection**

5.1 The alternative would be to continue to deliver the original action plan. This option has been rejected as its prudent to ensure we have the right infrastructure in place to deliver the desired outcomes for our communities, services and workforce, following the end of our partnership with Oxfordshire County Council.

### **6.0 Implications**

#### **Financial and Resource Implications**

6.1 The action plans can be delivered from within existing budgets and staffing resources. If their implementation gives rise to proposals that would require additional resources then these would be authorised separately.

Comments checked by:

Joanne Kaye, Strategic Finance Business Partner/Deputy S.151 Officer. Tel: 01295 221545, email [joanne.kaye@cherwell-dc.gov.uk](mailto:joanne.kaye@cherwell-dc.gov.uk)

#### **Legal Implications**

6.2 The Council has a statutory duty under the Equality Act 2010 and the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) as outlined in the report.

Specific duties for the Council also include the requirement to develop and publish equality objectives and to annually publish actions under way or planned to meet the requirements of the PSED.

Risks associated with the delivery of the action plan should be monitored and managed through the governance arrangements.

Comments checked by:

Shahin Ismail, Interim Head of Legal Services, [shahin.ismail@cherwell-dc.gov.uk](mailto:shahin.ismail@cherwell-dc.gov.uk)

### **Risk Implications**

- 6.3 There is a reputational risk that the council could be perceived as having abandoned work on its EDI action plan during decoupling. However, there is a lot of excellent work happening across the council already to demonstrate we are going above and beyond our statutory responsibilities to create inclusive communities and services and an inclusive workforce. This and any other arising risks will be managed through the relevant service risk register and escalated to the leadership register as and when necessary.

Comments checked by:

Celia Prado-Teeling, Performance Team Leader, Tel: 01295 221556. Email: [Celia.Prado-Teeling@Cherwell-dc.gov.uk](mailto:Celia.Prado-Teeling@Cherwell-dc.gov.uk)

### **Equalities and Inclusion Implications**

- 6.4 The council is already meeting its statutory responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010, so these actions plans will demonstrate how we plan to deliver our commitment to go above and beyond our legal obligations.

Comments checked by:

Celia Prado-Teeling, Performance Team Leader Tel: 01295 221556. Email: [Celia.Prado-Teeling@Cherwell-dc.gov.uk](mailto:Celia.Prado-Teeling@Cherwell-dc.gov.uk)

### **Sustainability Implications**

- 6.5 None

Comments checked by:

Jo Miskin, Climate Change Manager, [jo.miskin@cherwell-dc.gov.uk](mailto:jo.miskin@cherwell-dc.gov.uk)

## **7.0 Decision Information**

**Key Decision** N/A

**Financial Threshold Met:** N/A

**Community Impact Threshold Met:** N/A

### **Wards Affected**

All

### **Links to Corporate Plan and Policy Framework**

Including Everyone Framework

**Lead Councillor**

Councillor Richard Mould, Portfolio Holder for Corporate Services

**Document Information****Appendix number and title**

Appendix 1 – Including Everyone framework

Appendix 2 – Draft Inclusive Communities Services Action Plan

Appendix 3 - Draft Inclusive Services Action Plan

**Background papers**

None

**Report Author and contact details**

Mark Mills, Policy Development Officer, [mark.mills@cherwell-dc.gov.uk](mailto:mark.mills@cherwell-dc.gov.uk)