

Cherwell District Council

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

29 November 2022

Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Action Plan

Report of Assistant Director - Customer Focus

This report is public

Purpose of report

To seek the Committee's views on the approach officers are proposing for the council's EDI action plan and a councillor EDI working group.

1.0 Recommendations

The meeting is recommended:

- 1.1 To considers the approach being proposed for the council's Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) action plan and councillor working group and provides comments on both.
- 1.2 To review the draft action plans for Inclusive Communities and Inclusive Services and provides comments for the Executive Committee to consider at its February meeting.

2. 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:
 - 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 Earlier this year, the council agreed an equalities framework, 'Including Everyone' to capture these statutory obligations but also its commitments to going beyond what the law expects, to deliver inclusive communities, services and an inclusive workforce.

2.4 The action plan for delivering this framework was co-produced with Oxfordshire County Council during our partnership arrangement.

2.5 Following the decoupling officers have taken a fresh look at the action plan from a Cherwell only perspective and what that has highlighted is that many of the actions assume we have the data and infrastructure needed to deliver them.

2.6 Officers therefore recommend reshaping the action plan so it continues to capture the spirit and intentions of the original one but with a focus on ensuring we have the necessary foundations in place to deliver our EDI commitments. The updated version will then provide the platform from which we can develop annual action plans, which are focussed on delivering improvements.

2.7 The intention is to produce action plans to underpin the three themes in our equalities framework:

Inclusive Communities
Inclusive Services
Inclusive Workforce.

2.8 Given the clear interdependencies between these themes officers have suggested establishing a councillor working group that is made up of representatives from both Overview and Scrutiny and Personnel Committees.

2.9 The group's first task will be to review the action plans before they are considered by the relevant committee. The group will then oversee the implementation of these plans and help shape the annual improvement plans.

2.10 Officers have prepared draft action plans for Inclusive Communities and Inclusive Services (Appendix 2) for the Executive to consider at their February meeting.

2.11 The Inclusive Workforce action plan is currently being drafted and will be shared with the EDI working group when its ready for feeding in any comments before the Personnel Committee considers it in the spring.

3. Conclusion

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 approach officers are recommending for the EDI action would ensure we are delivering all of the above, however we are keen to hear the committee's thoughts on this and the draft action plans for Inclusive Communities and Inclusive Services.

4.0 Consultation

N/A

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 There are no financial implications arising from this report. Any budget that is needed to deliver any of the action plans will be considered and identified during the approval process for them.

Comments checked by:

Joanne Kaye, Strategic Finance Business Partner/Deputy S.151 Officer. Tel: 01295 221545, email 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.

6.3 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.

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

Comments checked by:

Shiraz Sheikh, Monitoring Officer and Assistant Director for Law and Governance, Tel: 01295 221651, shiraz.sheikh@cherwell-dc.gov.uk

Risk Implications

- 6.5 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

Equalities and Inclusion Implications

- 6.6 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

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 1 – Including Everyone framework
- Appendix 2 – Draft Inclusive Communities and Inclusive Services Action Plans

Background papers

None

Report Author and contact details

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