

This report is public	
Equalities, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) Action Plans – Inclusive Communities, Services and Workplaces	
Committee	Executive
Date of Committee	8 April 2024
Lead Councillor / Portfolio Holder presenting the report	Councillor Gemma Coton, EDI working group Chair / Councillor Sandy Dallimore, Portfolio Holder for Corporate Services
Date Portfolio Holder agreed report	13 February 2024
Report of	Assistant Director – Customer Focus, Shona Ware

Purpose of report

To seek approval of the action plans for delivering the council’s equality, diversity, and inclusion commitments for creating inclusive communities, services, and workplaces, which are set out in its Equalities Framework, Including Everyone.

1. Recommendations

The Executive resolves:

- 1.1 To approve the proposed Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) action plans for Inclusive Communities, Services and Workplaces.
- 1.2 To delegate authority to the Assistant Director for Customer Focus, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Corporate Services and the Chair of the EDI working group. to make minor amendments to the agreed Inclusive Communities and Services Action Plans

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1 The Council needs clear action plans for the next financial year to underpin the delivery of the EDI commitments set out in its equalities framework ‘Including Everyone’.
- 2.2 A councillor working group consisting of members from the Overview & Scrutiny and Personnel Committees was established to review progress against its existing action plans and to develop new plans for 2024/25.
- 2.3 The working group was satisfied with the delivery of the current EDI action plans citing several examples of excellence, and used these as the foundations for the new plans. The Overview & Scrutiny Committee considered the working group’s proposed action plans for Inclusive Communities and Services at their meeting on 12 March 2024 and the Personnel Committee the action plan for Inclusive Workplaces at their meeting on 7 February 2024.

Cherwell District Council

2.4 The Overview & Scrutiny Committee recommended strengthening the narrative for two objectives:

EDI1.03 “Work directly with communities to identify inequality and tackle disadvantage”

EDI1.04 “Promote equality, diversity and inclusion through our supply chain and strategic partnerships”

The narrative has since been updated to reflect the work planned and ongoing towards meeting these objectives.

2.5 Both Committees resolved to recommend the proposed action plans to Executive for approval.

Implications & Impact Assessments

Implications	Commentary			
Finance	The action plans can be delivered from within existing budgets and staffing resources. If their implementation give rise to proposals that would require additional resources, then these would be authorised separately. Kelly Wheeler, Finance Business Partner			
Legal	The Council has a statutory duty under the Equality Act 2010 and the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) as outlined in this report. This report allows the Council to meet these obligations and duties. Risks associated with the delivery of the action plan should be monitored and managed through both the Executive and the Overview and Scrutiny committee governance arrangements. Shahin Ishmail, Interim Head of Legal Services			
Risk Management	Through the approval, and subsequent delivery, of the proposed EDI action plans we aim to be on the right path to deliver against our EDI commitments, mitigating any risks that could arise due to inaction. Any risks associated to the delivery of all action plans will be managed through the correspondent service operational risk and escalated to the Leadership Risk Register as and when deemed necessary. Celia Prado-Teeling, Performance Team Leader			
Impact Assessments	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Commentary
Equality Impact	X			The council is already meeting its statutory responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010. These actions plans aim to enable us to go above and beyond these obligations and strengthen our capacity to promote equality across protected characteristics. Celia Prado-Teeling, Performance Team Leader

A Are there any aspects of the proposed decision, including how it is delivered or accessed, that could impact on inequality?	X			
B Will the proposed decision have an impact upon the lives of people with protected characteristics, including employees and service users?	X			
Climate & Environmental Impact		X		There is no climate nor environmental arising impact directly from this report Jo Miskin, Climate Action Manager
ICT & Digital Impact		X		N/A
Data Impact		X		The implementation of these plans rests on using publicly available data (in particular from the 2021 Census) and the results of the regular Pulse Surveys of the council's workforce. Participation in the Pulse Surveys is optional, results are anonymised and held securely.
Procurement & subsidy		X		N/A
Council Priorities	Healthy, resilient, and engaged communities			
Human Resources	The action plans can be delivered from within staffing resources. If their implementation gives rise to proposals that would require additional resources, then these would be authorised separately.			
Property	None at this stage. If adjustments are recommended as a result of the proposed accessibility audits, these would be considered separately, and a fresh decision would be required.			
Consultation & Engagement	Overview and Scrutiny Committee discussed the Inclusive Communities and Services Action Plans at their meeting on 12 March 2024. The Inclusive Workplace action plan was consulted with the Personnel Committee on 7 February 2024.			

Supporting Information

3. Background

- 3.1 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.
- 3.2 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.
- 3.3 In 2020, the council agreed an equalities framework, 'Including Everyone', which it co-produced with Oxfordshire County Council. This framework was to capture our statutory obligations but also our commitments to going beyond what the law expects, to deliver inclusive communities, services, and an inclusive workforce.
- 3.4 The framework commits the council to considering the impact of its decisions on those living in social deprivation, rural communities, leaving care, carers, and those in our armed forces community, in addition to the statutory protected characteristics.
- 3.5 In early 2023, an EDI Working Group was formed to refresh the action plans that had been created to underpin the framework so that it reflected Cherwell as a single council and the significant progress that had been made since it was developed. The Working Group consisted of members from both the Overview and Scrutiny and Personnel Committees.
- 3.6 Three actions plans were developed for the 2023/2024 financial year: Inclusive Communities, Inclusive Services, and Inclusive Workplace.
- 3.7 In June 2023, the Overview & Scrutiny and Personnel Committees agreed that the EDI Working Group should continue to meet in the new financial year, when it will oversee the implementation of these plans and help shape the annual improvement plans.
- 3.8 Over the course of nine meetings, the group reviewed the background, issues, and delivery of the existing plans; during Q3 2023-24 the group reviewed the progress of all plans and proposed new actions for 2024-25. Annexes 1 - 3 reflects that work.

3.9 The Overview & Scrutiny and Personnel Committees resolved to recommend the proposed action plans for approval at their meetings on 12 March and 7 February 2024, respectively.

4. Details

4.1 The EDI Working Group has met regularly throughout the year to review progress towards the current EDI action plans, meeting with officers across the council to gather further information about delivery against these actions, and about the work being carried out to support our most vulnerable residents.

4.2 The working group cited some excellent examples of delivery against our commitments to support Equality Diversity and Inclusion across the district, such as:

- Cherwell's wellbeing strategy, 'Everybody's Wellbeing,' offering a range of ways to build stronger and more resilient communities.
- The establishment of the Resettlement Team to support refugees, asylum seekers and other vulnerable migrants
- Delivery of a new Procurement Strategy, developed in line with our EDI principles.
- Refreshed HR policies to reflect EDI principles
- Activities to promote, educate and support our staff, such as 16 Days of Activism to end gender-based abuse and violence, World menopause day forum, and the launch our Neurodiversity network.

4.3 Building on the positive action taken to date towards our EDI commitments the working group have proposed the following for the next financial year 2024/25:

- 11 actions to deliver our Inclusive Communities Action plan, with a clear focus on collaboration not just with partnership organisations but also across services, working together to extend our outreach within underrepresented communities and vulnerable residents. Continuing to work on better understanding of any barriers and how to solve them.
- 8 actions to deliver our Inclusive Services Action Plan. Focussing on accessibility, making sure our services are accessible to all, and that any potential equalities' impact, identified as a consequence of any of our policies, strategies and/or services, is mitigated as much as possible.
- 7 actions to deliver our Inclusive Workplaces Action Plan. Making sure our internal policies are up to date, all our staff feel respected, and heard, and that training is provided around skills to support employees with different needs and to plan inclusive services.

5. Alternative Options and Reasons for Rejection

5.1 The following alternative options have been identified and rejected for the reasons as set out below.

Option 1: Not to agree the action plans

This will not ensure the council delivers on its EDI commitments.

6. Conclusion and Reasons for Recommendations

6.1 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

6.2 The Inclusive Communities, Inclusive Services, and Inclusive Workplaces Action Plans provide a structure in which this can be delivered and a basis on which work to deliver these commitments can be undertaken.

Decision Information

Key Decision	No
Subject to Call in	Yes
If not, why not subject to call in	N/A
Ward(s) Affected	All

Document Information

Appendices	
Appendix 1	Inclusive Communities Action Plan 2024/25
Appendix 2	Inclusive Services Action Plan 2024/25
Appendix 3	Inclusive Workplace Action Plan 2024/25
Appendix 4	Including Everyone Framework
Background Papers	None
Reference Papers	None
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