

Executive Response to the Report and Recommendations of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Name of Executive Portfolio Holder Councillor as at December 2025: Councillor Chris Brant – Portfolio Holder for Corporate Services	Name of Chief Officers as at December 2025: Claire Cox - Assistant Director of HR Celia Prado-Teeling - Performance and Insight Team Leader Nicola Riley - Assistant Director Wellbeing and Housing; DSL
Name of Executive Portfolio Holder Councillor as at July 2026: Councillor Nicola Borkmann – Portfolio Holder for Customer and Community Services	Name of Chief Officer(s) as at July 2026: Claire Cox - Assistant Director of HR Celia Prado-Teeling - Performance and Insight Team Leader Nicola Riley - Assistant Director Wellbeing and Housing; DSL
Name of External Organisation (if relevant): N/A	Lead Scrutiny Officer contact: Emma Faulkner - Principal Officer - Scrutiny and Democratic Lead Emma.Faulkner@cherwell-dc.gov.uk

Overall response to the Scrutiny Report at December 2025

The Executive thank the EDI working group for their care and attention to this core theme across the whole council and its service delivery. Actions that were recommended through the work of the EDI working group have been progressed by officers. It is acknowledged that this is a developing area of the councils work, and the actions outlined underline the good practice in place and identify how the council could be even better in its performance by reducing barriers to residents needing to use the services we provide.

Executive Decisions (Response to Scrutiny Recommendations).

No.	Recommendation	Agreed? (Yes/ No)	additional information	Update on progress as at July 2026
R1.	That a refreshed Council Equality Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) strategy and framework be developed and agreed by the Executive for ratification by full Council in 2025, with refreshed EDI objectives and Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) to ensure that they link directly and cross reference to the Council's	Yes	This is due for review as it has been in place for over 4 years. We have requested our Inclusion Champions complete an initial review and provide feedback and recommendations for us to consider.	Inclusion Champions provided feedback which now has been incorporated. Currently the final version is being designed to align with Cherwell's Comms look and

	EDI strategy framework, with KPIs clearly referenced against the delivery of each EDI strand.			feel, ready for publication in Q2.
R2.	That the Council's Equality Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) strategy focus and cross reference directly and specifically to the delivery of the key statutory responsibilities from the Public Sector Equality Duty.	Yes		As per the above.
R3.	That Equality Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) audits of public facing services be undertaken to ensure maximum accessibility and inclusion.	Yes	This work will begin after Christmas and will begin in Housing, moving on to Revenues and Benefits, Customer Services, Environmental Services and Regulatory Services and finally Planning and Wellbeing. The audit will approach each service from the perspective of a resident and consider where we create unnecessary barriers for the resident based on protected characteristics. A small project team will carry out the audits and report back rather than ask each service to self-audit to ensure we are holding every service to the same high standard	An EDI self-assessment survey was completed by 21 representatives from public-facing services. The survey identified common barriers relating to digital exclusion, complex forms and evidence requirements, reliance on written English, and physical access to council facilities. Whilst services offer a range of support measures, including telephone assistance, translation services and alternative formats, provision is not always consistent. The results will now be used to inform the resident-focused EDI audit programme, which will systematically review services to identify and remove unnecessary barriers for residents with protected characteristics.

R4.	That the Council review all policies plans and projects to make sure that they have up to date Equality Impact Assessments in place.	Yes	A policy catalogue for the organisation is currently in development. It will include an assessment on EIAs linked to all policies that require one.	This is a work in progress. EIA section has been added to the catalogue and to our service plans.
R5.	That the Council further explore opportunities to achieve further accreditation and better publicise the accreditation that the Council already has.	Yes	We are already Disability Confident Employers. Whilst there are other accreditations available, these are not as widely used or recognised as a scheme such as Disability Confident Employer and come at a cost. There is currently no budget allocated for an accreditation. It is also worth considering, if budget could be sourced, would this, along with officer efforts, be better utilised on key matters in EDI, such as, training colleagues and raising awareness on aspects of inclusion.	No change from previous commentary.
R6.	That the Council's recruitment process be reviewed to make it more inclusive and remove irrelevant barriers to recruitment.	Yes	Work has commenced on this and HR are in the process of running workshops with Inclusion Champions and the wider organisation to gather feedback and ideas.	Workshops have been completed and the outcomes are being reviewed to be worked up into an action plan.
R7.	That the Council should actively facilitate the creation of staff diversity networks and embed this approach.	Yes	We have created the Inclusion Champion Network in the last 12 months and this is going well to date. This group are able to put forward ideas of changes they may like to see, are consulted on EDI-related matters, and have pulled together a calendar of EDI events for the Council to acknowledge and celebrate.	The Inclusion Champion Network is established and is working well. An EDI calendar is in place with events planned accordingly. The network meets regularly and put forward ideas on a regular basis, where possible these have come to fruition. Champions are also consulted on our

				policies as part of our rolling review programme.
R8.	That the Cherwell District Council Consultation and Engagement Strategy 2025 – 2029 include strategies and actions for monitoring response rates among individuals from each of the Protected Characteristics. This should involve incorporating diversity monitoring questions in all consultation and engagement surveys, providing essential evidence for decision-making across all areas of Council policy and service delivery.	Yes	The Strategy is currently in Draft form. It does include a section on Equalities and accessibility.	The draft strategy is being revised as part of the Customer Front Door programme, Equalities and accessibility sections are included.
R9.	That a full Equality Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) audit of the Council website and communications be undertaken to ensure that the Council web communications effectively engage with all sections of the community.	Yes	This will begin once the service audits have been completed, recognising the budget pressure that may arise from the necessary actions.	An accessibility update of the website has been undertaken during Q1, results are currently being analysed.
R10.	That the Council Equality Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) objectives / KPIs reflect meaningful outcomes to be delivered for each key strand, as well as measurable outputs and outcomes (metrics) with milestones and implementation dates.	Yes	Following the approval of the refreshed Council Equality Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) strategy and framework, the Performance & Insight Team will work with EDI Leads to build a set of KPIs to support monitoring of related activities/initiatives.	Work on benchmarking potential KPIs has started during Q1, they will be review in line with the strategy looking into being incorporated into a framework by the end of the financial year.