

# STROUD DISTRICT COUNCIL

## COUNCIL

THURSDAY, 28 APRIL 2022

<b>Report Title</b>	<b>ANNUAL REPORT ON THE OUTCOME OF 2021/22 EQUALITY, DIVERSITY &amp; INCLUSION ACTION PLAN AND PROPOSED 2022/23 ACTION PLAN</b>			
<b>Purpose of Report</b>	To set out the progress that has been made in meeting the Council's Equality Objectives during 2021/22 and the proposed action that will be taken during 2022/23.			
<b>Decision(s)</b>	<b>The Council RESOLVES to:</b>  <b>a) Note the progress made on the EDI Action Plan 2021/22; and</b> <b>b) Approve the EDI Action Plan 2022/23</b>			
<b>Consultation and Feedback</b>	Both EDI Action Plans have been developed in consultation with the Equality Working Group and Group Leaders have also been consulted.  An 8-week public consultation was undertaken on the Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Policy and Equality Objectives.			
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<b>Options</b>	Members may suggest changes to the Action Plan			
<b>Background Papers</b>	None			
<b>Appendices</b>	Appendix A – EDI Action Plan 2021/22 Appendix B – EDI Action Plan 2022/23			
<b>Implications (further details at the end of the report)</b>	Financial	Legal	Equality	Environmental
	No	No	Yes	No

## 1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 Council approved the draft Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Policy and Equality Objectives 2021-25 in March 2021. Following an 8-week public consultation, these were formally adopted by Council in October 2021.
- 1.2 The EDI Policy sets out the Council's commitment to achieving the aims of the Equality Act 2010 and to demonstrate how the Council, when carrying out its functions, will have due regard to the public sector equality duty and the need to:
- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited under the equalities legislation;
  - Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not share it; and
  - Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not share it.

- 1.3 A protected characteristic under the Act refers to: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.
- 1.4 The EDI Policy commits the Equality Working Group, comprising Members and officers, to report annually to Council on progress in meeting our Equality Objectives, which are:
- **Community:** Listen and learn from our communities and use this to deliver services that work well for everyone.
    - Improve data collection, publish it often, and use it to make decisions that focus on the needs of all our communities
    - Ensure people are engaged, involved and consulted.
    - Ensure our services are designed in an accessible and inclusive way
  - **Leadership & Organisational Commitment:** Actively champion our commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion and tackle inequality together.
    - Embed equality into our services and procurement in a meaningful way that uses feedback to improve
    - Quality check decisions that impact disadvantaged groups and compare them so we can make improvements
  - **Workforce:** Build a diverse and engaged workforce, where everyone is respected.
    - Equip our workforce, including our leadership to meet the needs of the community we serve.
    - Take actions agreed in our Organisational Development Plan and resulting from equality workforce monitoring.
    - Ensure that our employees feel equal and included and are not subject to any unfair disadvantage regardless of their background and/or characteristics.

To this end, the Equality Working Group produced an Action Plan which set out the priority areas of focus for the year 2021-22.

## **2. ACTION PLAN 2021/21**

- 2.1 The EDI Action Plan 2021/22 (Appendix A) details the progress we have made towards our Equality Objectives. Implementing this plan has ensured that ED&I is firmly back on the agenda and embedded as a clear priority for the organisation.
- 2.2 This is evident in the [Council Plan](#), where ED&I and community engagement are strategic objectives, underpinned by measures to strengthen community cohesion and provide support to those who experience most disadvantage.

### **2.3 Summary of Achievements 2021/22**

- 2.3.1 In association with the Employers Network for Equality & Inclusion (ENEI) a mandatory ED&I training programme was rolled out to all Councillors and staff. This focussed on creating an inclusive culture and raising awareness of unconscious bias. All managers undertook an additional 'Inclusive Culture & Leadership' module and officers who volunteered to be Equality Champions received specific training for this new role.
- 2.3.2 We have published an Easy Read version of our revised ED&I Policy so that it is accessible to more people in the community. We have also improved the visibility of

equality and demographic data for the district by publishing infographics relating to the protected characteristics for each of our 27 wards.

- 2.3.3 In response to concerns raised during the 2020 Black Lives Matter protests, a review was held into street or building names and monuments in the district to ensure names, statues and commemorations represent local people's values and a modern, inclusive Council. This included gathering views on the Blackboy Clock in Stroud. 1,600 responses were received to the public consultation, and a review panel considered the responses and will publish its recommendations to Council. The review panel is drawn from community representatives, councillors and historians.
- 2.3.4 The Council is an active member of the South West Equalities Network (SWEN) and the Chief Executive is the sponsor of SWEN at the SW Chief Executives Group. We are also part of a working group (set up by the Equality and Human Rights Commission), of organisations who have pledged to promote the socio-economic duty of the Equality Act. The Council is keen to learn from and share best practice in the region and nationally.
- 2.3.5 To embed equality across the Council and to improve performance as an employer and in the service delivered to customers, we have a network of Equality Champions from services across the Council. Their responsibilities include promoting and raising awareness of ED&I issues, ensuring ED&I is an integral element of our strategies and policies, and facilitating organisational change in response to ED&I issues.
- 2.3.6 We have a small Black, Asian and Minority Ethnicity staff group who meet quarterly as a support network and work together to promote notable calendar days for celebrating ED&I throughout the year. This includes working with partners across Gloucestershire in support of Black History Month and Race Equality Week. Our partners include Prospects, Gloucester City Council, Gloucestershire Constabulary, Gloucestershire Health and Care NHS Foundation Trust and Gloucester Hospitals NHS Trust.
- 2.3.7 We also have a staff Pride Network, STRIDE, who share the common goal of providing support and sharing experiences with Council staff from the LGBTQIA+ community.
- 2.3.8 The apprenticeship programme has been expanded to give young people the opportunity to work across different service areas to gain a broader range of experience. We have also successfully used the Levy fund to offer management training to six female staff.

### **3. ACTION PLAN 2022/23**

- 3.1 Many of the initiatives started in 2021/22 will remain a priority over the coming year and will help us to further embed equality into our day-to-day practices and procedures. Our Action Plan 2022/23 (Appendix B) will focus on achieving the specific aims we set under our three Equality Objectives.
- 3.2 More work is needed to embed a consistent approach to conducting Equality Impact Assessments across the organisation. This will be aided by using more recent demographic data, as the results of the National Census will be available later this year.

- 3.3 The development of the website and customer portal delivered by the Council's Fit for the Future (FFF) programme will, once embedded, provide the organisation with real time data and customer profiles to help to focus our services on the needs of our communities and those most in need.
- 3.4 Three other key workstreams under the FFF programme have the advancement of equality at the heart of delivering their projects:
- *Community Connected workstream* is establishing a baseline of current consultation with the aim to develop a Community Engagement and Consultation Strategy by 2023.
  - *Service Delivery workstream* will promote new Customer Care Standards and producing more of our documents in accessible formats.
  - *Organisational development workstream* will promote values and behaviours which are inclusive and respect the diversity of our workforce.
- 3.5 We plan to work more with Gloucestershire Sight Loss Council on a number of actions to raise awareness of visual impairment and to further ensure our services are designed in an accessible, inclusive way.
- 3.6 A Social Value Portal was introduced as part of our procurement process in 2021. Over the coming year this will enable us to measure the additional community benefits, such as the number of apprenticeships and training opportunities our contractors can offer to those from disadvantaged communities and backgrounds.
- 3.7 We know that addressing long standing inequalities is best tackled in partnership with other public sector, voluntary, community and private organisations. This has been recognised in the recently published reports from the [Director of Public Health](#) and the [Gloucester Race Equality Commission](#). We will work collaboratively with partners across Gloucestershire to raise awareness and find solutions to health inequalities and racial discrimination.
- 3.8 We are looking to introduce a Member Development Programme 2022/23 which will include more work with our Councillors so they can effectively champion equality in their wards and the wider community. The LGA has produced an excellent updated Councillor Equality Workbook which members will be encouraged to complete to gain a better understanding of the diverse communities they represent.
- 3.9 The staff equality networks that have been established will continue to promote the equality agenda and work with our services to progress the organisation from equality to full inclusion. The Organisational Development work will further promote shared values and behaviours.
- 3.10 The key pieces of work for the HR team over the coming year will be reviewing the recruitment process, expanding opportunities for under-represented groups at all levels of the organisation and implementing systems to allow better monitoring and analysis of workforce equality data.

#### 4. Performance Monitoring

We will report quarterly to the Strategy & Resources Committee on progress of the ED&I Action Plan, in line with the monitoring arrangements for the overarching Council Plan. Specific actions that relate directly to the Council Plan will also be reported to the relevant committees.

- 4.1 We will continue to ask equality related questions in our annual residents' survey: When asked to what extent residents agree or disagree that their **local area is a place where people from different ethnic backgrounds get on well together**, 62% agreed (14% *definitely agree* and 48% *tend to agree*). In 2020 this was 70%. However, just under 1 in 5 (19%) disagreed (9% in 2020).
- 4.2 Stroud District Council is part of the Gloucestershire Hate Crime and Incident Strategic Group which meets quarterly and monitors the incidents of hate crime across the County. The number of recorded incidents for the Stroud district has increased over the last 3 years, as they have for all the districts.

	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Cheltenham	80	172	135	227	218	250
Cotswold	16	28	35	70	69	91
Forest	15	47	36	67	74	87
Gloucester	118	232	222	330	317	417
Stroud	34	73	50	106	96	130
Tewkesbury	32	49	44	80	49	94
<b>*Total</b>	296	606	531	904	855	1224

\* Total may add to more than the total of the six districts - this is due to not recording the location

Although it is troubling to see this increase, in some cases this can be seen as positive, as it means that more people are recognising and reporting hate crime. Anecdotal data suggests that some of the district's community hubs may have helped influence this increase, as these are safe places where residents have built trusted relationships with hub managers, police and neighbourhood wardens. The Equality Working Group aims to establish closer links with the Strategic partnership to gain a better understanding of the data and measures being taken to combat hate crime.

#### 4.3 Workforce equality monitoring data:

PI Ref No.	PI Description	17/18	18/19	19/20	20/21
BV11a	Percentage of top-paid 5% of staff who are women	35.48	34.43	45.81	40
BV11b	The percentage of the top 5% of earners from BME communities (BV11b) expressed as a ratio of the percentage of working age population from BME communities (17b).	10.75	10.93	8.34	6.67
BV11c	Percentage of the top paid 5% of staff who have a disability.	0	0	0	3.33
BV16a	The percentage of local authority employees with a disability	2.34	2.3	3.26	3.75
BV17a	The percentage of local authority employees from ethnic minority communities.	3.64	4.02	4.08	4.02

## 5. CONCLUSION

Although we have made good progress with our ED&I agenda, this is an area of work that will require ongoing input and diligence from every Councillor and member of staff to truly effect change. The action we have taken over the past year has laid a solid foundation on which to further build during 2022/23.

The Equality Working Group, Leaders and representative staff networks will continue to champion the ED&I agenda in the workplace and work with partner organisations and individuals to celebrate our diversity, improve relations in the community and reduce the effects of overt and unconscious discrimination. Collecting and analysing available data will help us to measure the impact of our actions.

## 6. IMPLICATIONS

### 6.1 Financial Implications

There are no specific financial implications arising from this report.

Actions within the Action Plan can mostly be met from existing resources. Where additional resources are required these will be the subject of a specific committee decision.

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### 6.2 Legal Implications

There are no significant implications within this category.

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### 6.3 Equality Implications

The Council has statutory duties under the Equality Act 2010 to promote equality. The Council also has a specific duty to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between different people. This report and the proposed EDI Action Plan set out how the Council is meeting its Equality Objectives, as required under the public sector equality duty.

An Equality Impact Assessment has been undertaken on the Council EDI Policy and Equality Objectives which were adopted by Council in October 2021.

### 6.4 Environmental Implications

There are no significant implications within this category.