

STROUD DISTRICT COUNCIL

COUNCIL

THURSDAY, 20 JULY 2023

Report Title	Annual report on the Outcome of 2022/23 Equality, Diversity, Inclusion & Equity Action Plan and proposed 2023/24 Action Plan			
Purpose of Report	To provide Council with an update on the Council's progress on its equality objectives for the period 2022-23 and approve the proposed 2023/24 Action Plan			
Decision(s)	The Council RESOLVES to: a) Note the progress that has been made over the past year towards the Council's equality objectives; and b) Approve the refreshed Equality, Diversity, Inclusion & Equity Action Plan 2023/24.			
Consultation and Feedback	The Action Plan has been developed and reviewed by the Council's Equality, Diversity, Inclusion and Equity Working Group, which is comprised of the five Member Equality Champions, members of the Strategic Leadership Team, Leadership and Management Team and representatives of our staff network groups including STRIDE and RISE. Consultation has also been held with Stroud District Youth Council.			
Report Author	Hannah Emery, Corporate Policy and Governance Manager Email: Hannah.emery@stroud.gov.uk			
Options	Members may suggest changes to the Action Plan 2023/24			
Background Papers	None			
Appendices	Appendix A – EDI Action Plan Progress 2022/23 Appendix B – EDI Action Plan 2023/24			
Implications (further details at end of the report)	Financial	Legal	Equality	Environmental
	No	No	Yes	No

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 Council approved the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Policy and Equality Objectives 2021-25 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 In addition to this commitment, Council also agreed the EDI action plan focussed on three themes:
- 1.3.1 **Communities:** Listen and learn from our communities and use this to deliver services that work well for everyone.
 - 1.3.2 **Leadership and organisational commitment:** Actively champion our commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion and tackle inequality together.
 - 1.3.3 **Workforce:** Build a diverse and engaged workforce, where everyone is respected.
- 1.4 The policy and action plan were designed to embed EDI into everything we do at the council and in our commitment to continuous improvement, progress against the action plan and identified new actions for the coming year are reported to Council annually. This report, therefore, sets out progress made over the past year and how we will continue to build on these foundations to make identified improvements in some key areas over the next year in the refreshed Action Plan 2023/24.

2. 2022/23 Action Plan

- 2.1 The Action Plan is key to delivering the equality objectives and progress in delivering the actions during 2022/23 relating to the three themes is set out in Appendix A with a summary provided below:

Status	
Complete	12
Ongoing development (completed but in need of further action)	7
In progress	6
Delayed or further action needed	8
	33

- 2.2 We have made some significant progress since the original action plan was agreed in 2021 and refreshed in 2022. Some notable achievements for 2022/23 include:

- 2.2.1 **Workforce:** The recently established Equality Champions, STRIDE (LGBTQ+ staff group), RISE (Black, Asian and Minority staff group) and Parent Group networks are active networks led by their members. The networks provide a safe and confidential environment for staff to meet with others, and an opportunity to discuss issues that they may be facing, develop solutions and recommend actions. Importantly, they also work to promote a better understanding of equality issues throughout the organisation.

Two members of our RISE staff group have been successful in obtaining a placement on SOLACE's AMPlify Programme which supports the development of diverse talent within local government leadership. The programme provides development opportunities for groups of staff who are currently under-represented within senior leadership levels and is designed for staff from ethnically diverse backgrounds who have the ambition and potential to become future leaders within local government.

- 2.2.2 **Notable dates calendar of events:** This has been developed to plan communications around key inclusion and awareness days across the organisation. For example, the council marked the UN International Day to Combat Islamophobia with the screening of "Unreflected Reflections: A short documentary on the Muslim community of Gloucester", a film produced by Ismail Kholwadia. This presentation prompted discussion of how the council can do more to promote awareness and recognition of the communities that play an important role in our district and across the country.

2.2.3 **Collaborations with partners:** We have developed a close working relationship with Gloucestershire Sight Loss Council and completed simul spec walks in Berkeley and Wotton-under-Edge. Simul spec walks give a brief experience of the challenges faced by blind and partially sighted people navigating the high street. The walks are led by blind and partially sighted people living in Gloucestershire and raise awareness of the changes that could be made to high streets to make them more accessible.

2.2.4 **Community Taskforce:** The Community Taskforce was established as an outcome of the recommendations made by the Review Panel approved by Council in April 2022. The Taskforce has been working to install an Information Plaque near Blackboy House and complete a community project to promote diversity and inclusion within the Stroud District. The Taskforce has been meeting monthly to develop the project which aims to be completed by the end of this year.

2.2.5 **Equity:** The Working Group and Action plan have been updated to reflect the need to foster equality in addition to equality, diversity and inclusion. Equity relates to the need to create equal outcomes for communities, whereas equality means having equal status, rights and giving individuals or groups the same resources or opportunities. The name of the Working Group now includes Equity in the title and is referred to as the Equality, Diversity, Inclusion and Equity (EDIE) Working Group.

2.3 In recognition of the work that has been undertaken, the council has recently entered the Local Government Chronicle Workforce awards for the category 'Best equality, diversity and inclusion employer' and will find out later in the year if our entry has been shortlisted.

3. 2023/2024 Action Plan

3.1 Our membership with enei (Employers network for equality and inclusion) provides us with an opportunity to complete a Talent Inclusion and Diversity Evaluation (TIDE). This is a self-assessment evaluation and benchmarking tool which allows us to validate our progress and enables our commitment to continuous improvement. We completed the TIDE assessment annually and use the results to inform actions for the coming year.

3.2 The tables below show progress made since we first undertook the assessment in 2020:



- 3.3 We have used the results from this year's assessment to heavily inform priority actions for next year as outlined below. Additionally, key learning from the 2022-23 Action Plan was the need to ensure the actions are more specific and measurable and this has been reflected in the commitments for this year's plan.
- 3.4 New actions for this year include:
- 3.4.1 **Procurement and Contract Management:** Using our position as a major purchaser of goods and services to ensure social value is measured to support our EDIE goals and review our contract management processes to ensure it takes into account our EDIE policy and objectives and promotes equalities in the procurement process.
 - 3.4.2 **Training and development:** Hold a minimum of four events for officers and members which promote or raise awareness of EDIE issues with a focus on telling first person stories to highlight lived experience.
 - 3.4.3 **Equality Impact Assessments (EQIAs):** EQIAs are designed to provide an effective way to ensure the Council can evidence its compliance in respect of its legal duty to have due regard to equalities in decision making. EQIAs are already embedded in the Council's decision-making process although there is potential to improve their implementation and quality. Further improvement is required in the quality and diligence with which managers complete their assessments. The EDIE Working Group have expressed their commitment to establishing a mechanism which enables them to monitor and review the quality of EQIAs.
 - 3.4.4 **Workforce:** Using the improved methods of collecting and analysing employee data as part of the new HR system, iTrent, we will enhance the quality of our employee data to gain a full demographic profile. We also aim to improve our understanding and reporting of inequalities faced by our workforce by better analysis and reporting of leaver's exit questionnaires and a review of unacceptable behaviour policies and reporting of incidences.
- 3.5 It is important to note that the Action Plan is not exhaustive and does not include all of the work that takes place across the council and the district. It is important that we continue to improve our usual day to day activities, as well as making progress against actions identified positive equalities outcomes.

4. CONCLUSION AND NEXT STEPS

- 4.1 Progress against the EDIE Action plan are tangible examples of the council's commitment to EDIE. The continuous improvement aspect of the Action Plan allows us to build on progress to maintain, and increase momentum on our EDIE journey.
- 4.2 Upon approval of the Action Plan, implementation will start immediately and all of the actions for 2023/24 will be added to an EDIE portal on Pentana to allow for regular performance monitoring by the EDIE Working Group and will be accessible for all councillors to review.
- 4.3 A refreshed plan and progress report will be presented to Council to consider next year.

5. IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Financial Implications

There are no specific financial implications arising from this report.

Actions within the Action Plan can be met from existing resources. From 2023/24 onwards Council agreed an annual budget of £20k for work related to Equalities and wellbeing projects. Where additional resources may be required, they will be the subject of a specific committee decision.

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5.2 Legal Implications

The Council is required to meet its duties under the Equalities Act 2000. This includes the Public Sector Equalities Duty under section 149.

This means that public bodies have to consider all individuals when carrying out their day-to-day work in shaping policy, in delivering services and in relation to their own employees. The Action Plan sets out how the Council will meet its duties.

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5.3 Equality Implications

The Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy 2021-2025 sets out the council's approach to equalities issues across all protected groups. 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 EDIE Action Plan set out how the Council is meeting its Equality Objectives, as required under the public sector equality duty.

The EDIE Action Plan will have specific benefits to staff and residents, particularly those with protected characteristics. An Equality Impact Assessment has been undertaken on the council's Policy and Equality Objectives which were adopted by Council in October 2021 and can be found on the dedicated [Equality page](#) on the council's website.

5.4 Environmental Implications

There are no significant implications within this category.