

Report for:
ACTION/INFORMATION* (delete as appropriate)

Item Number:

Contains Confidential or Exempt Information	NO
Title	Update on Equality Diversity & Inclusion Workforce Action Plan
Responsible Officer(s)	Sue Evans Interim HR Director Amanda Askham – Strategic Director – Strategy & Change
Author(s)	Samantha Whittick – Assistant Director – Equality Diversity & Inclusion (EDI) and Organisational Development
Portfolio(s)	Cllr Steve Donnelly
For Consideration By	Cabinet
Date to be Considered	29 th March 2023
Implementation Date if Not Called In	10 th April
Affected Wards	None
Keywords/Index	Workforce, Equality Diversity, Inclusion, Tackling Inequality

Purpose of Report:

This report updates progress on EDI activities, specifically in relation to the workforce. The council has supported several development interventions which were designed to help embed EDI into the fabric of the organisation, co-ordinate and progress the mainstreaming of EDI.

It also sets out a two year (EDI) Action Plan which describes the work to be undertaken with managers and staff required to demonstrate the council’s commitment to the EDI agenda.

1. Recommendations for Decision

1.1 To note and agree the implementation of the 2-year corporate EDI Action Plan 2023- 25 (Appendix 1).

2. Recommendation for NOTING

2.1 To note the following key corporate EDI actions and activities delivered to date, outlined in paragraphs 3.7- 3.9.

3. Reason for Decision and Options Considered

- 3.1 Tackling inequality is one the council's three strategy priorities. The Council Plan 2022-26 sets out commitments to address inequality and in particular racial inequalities. Ensuring we have a diverse workforce that reflects the diversity of the community we serve, where we can attract and maximise the talents of a diverse range of staff contributing to the council's success. In 2020, the council held 'A Big conversation' with staff to understand their views on equality and followed up by implementing several actions in response including the development of the Corporate Action Plan (Appendix 1).
- 3.2 The Corporate EDI Strategy reinforces the commitment of the organisation to pace, leadership and accountability on this agenda. The attached corporate action plan represents a whole organisation approach to address these concerns, at the same time as recognising that each directorate must bear responsibility for addressing the specific issues relevant to their immediate workforce, at pace.
- 3.3 The council has therefore committed to placing a 'high priority and high ambition' on its priority of tackling race inequality and ensuring race equality is central to all we do internally with our workforce and externally in communities in delivering our responsibilities as a local authority. Inaction would not add sufficient value to the council's business objective nor meet the principles established by the public sector equality duty. The alternative option considered was not to develop an action plan which was discounted in view of the level of importance attached to this agenda.
- 3.4 Our increased focus on EDI coincided with the events following the death of George Floyd, including the world-wide and national Black Lives Matter protests. Another crucial factor was the disproportionate impacts that covid-19 has on different minority ethnic communities. Recognising the sensitivities associated with the EDI agenda, we sought external support and advice to progress our actions and the strategic leadership team committed to identifying resources and holding all stakeholders to account.
- 3.5 The staff engagement approach included Trade Union representatives to gain rich information about employees' lived experiences in Ealing Council. Over two hundred staff took part, and some sessions were specific to the Equality Act 2010 protected characteristics. The outcome of this exercise has been considered by the strategic leadership team and consolidated into the corporate action plan (Appendix 1). In addition, elected members across the political divide attended a session as part of a separate commissioning arrangement.
- 3.6 There was also a significant engagement with senior managers across all directorates, HR and L&D, trade union representatives and the various 'equality groupings' across the council.

Progress

- 3.7 The council formally established dedicated senior Equality Lead positions, the Assistant Director for EDI & organisational development role and the Assistant Director Equality and Engagement roles were created in Spring 2022. An EDI Administration role was created summer 2021.
- 3.8 We formalised an EDI Governance Framework and Terms of Reference. The resulting Corporate Equality Board - held its first meeting in February 2022, chaired by then interim CEO and subsequent meetings followed in June 2022, October 2022, and January 2023 chaired by the current Chief Executive.
- 3.9 The organisation has supported the formation of Staff Equality Groups (SEG) to encourage communication and involve staff in co-producing the EDI strategy. The SEGs include Women's, LGBTQ, Disability Health, and Wellbeing, BAME, All Faiths, and an Adults and a Children's directorate staff groups. The SEGs are established and hold regular meetings, senior managers are invited to speak, details of how to contact the group are available on the council OneSpace intranet. The council has given a commitment to staff for Protected Time to attend SEG meetings (1.5hrs for member and 2.5hrs for chairs – monthly). SEG Chairs were recruited or nominated themselves (there was no formal election process), this is being addressed and plans have been laid for democratic elections later in the year.
- 3.10 SEGs have been supported by the corporate EDI Lead to facilitate events and identify keynote speakers for key awareness events (Lord Simon Woolley, Patrick Vernon, Meera Spillett, Mohamed Ilyas). We have also facilitated the identification of cultural celebration dates which have been incorporated into the corporate awareness calendar and raised awareness on the use of pronouns via guidance to staff following dialogue with the LGBTQ+ group and CEB.
- 3.11 The council has supported talent identification and development and launched the Positive Action Leadership Programme Level 5 (Institute of Leadership and Management) in 2021 for BAME staff. Twenty-three staff applied and were accepted for the programme, the target date for completion of their qualification is summer 2023. The programme is funded using the apprenticeship levy. Evaluation, ROI (return on investment), and participant career progression will be reviewed and reported.
- 3.12 To further support talent development, the HR and OD department launched an Inclusive Mentoring Scheme last year (2022) in support of the council's Equality Diversity and Inclusion commitment. There are twenty-seven mentoring partnerships now. Our vision is to support the creation of mentoring partnerships, bringing together staff and managers from across the council to enable them to develop a mentoring relationship underpinned with sharing knowledge, skills and experience and exploring ways to resolve work related challenges and achieve ambitions.
- 3.13 Our presence on the London Councils regional circuit has proved essential to keeping abreast of what is happening elsewhere, learning from others and benchmarking

against good practice. Our creative use of the apprenticeship levy to support our positive action programme has created significant interest from other councils. Ealing is also taking part in the London Council's pilot of a new EDI standard; our involvement will enable us to benchmark our approach and progress against other councils.

3.14 The council has reflected the importance of tackling inequalities in the indicators reported to Cabinet as part of the corporate performance indicator suite. For 2022/23 the following indicators are included:

- Percentage of the top paid 5% of local authority staff who are from an ethnic minority (excluding those in maintained schools)
- Percentage of the top paid 5% of local authority staff who have a disability (excluding those in maintained schools)
- Percentage of the top paid 5% of local authority staff who are female (excluding those in maintained schools)
- Mean disability pay gap within the Council
- Mean ethnicity pay gap within the Council
- Mean gender pay gap within the Council
- % of ethnic minority residents among those supported into employment through Council schemes (NB not all will move into employment with the council)

3.15 Directors have been supported to engage staff and enable them to identify priority areas for action and bring forward Directorate action plans.

EDI Action Plan

3.16 Notwithstanding the significant activity outlined above there is a need to continue to drive forward action to ensure the council provides an inclusive place to work and makes sure all staff understand the level of EDI ambition we have. The Corporate EDI Action Plan is a 2 year plan, covering the period 1st April 2023- 31st March 2025. The plan sets out the actions, success measures and designated responsible officers. The Action Plan will be reviewed and monitored at Corporate Equality Board (CEB) on a quarterly basis (See Appendix 1). The strategic leadership team will receive Corporate EDI reports in advance of them being presented to CEB. Directors and their senior management teams will hold responsibility for monitoring progress on Departmental Action plans and reporting progress to the CEB.

3.17 The corporate AD EDI lead will continue to work with the leaders from each directorate to ensure their action plans accurately reflect the issues and concerns identified at both corporate and directorate level. Progress and accountability will continue to be reported and monitored by the CEB as part of the governance arrangements on a quarterly basis.

3.18 Cabinet has endorsed an additional investment via the budget process for 2023/24 to ensure that there is sufficient resources to drive forward the interventions that will be required to deliver the strategy. Key areas include development support for senior

leaders, mandatory EDI training for managers, EDI awareness sessions for staff and support for the staff equality groups.

Data Dashboards and EDI Requirements

3.19 Equality and diversity data collection and monitoring is a necessity for assessing the impact our policies and practices have on different people, including levels of satisfaction and other outcomes. Work has been done to establish a summary of data requirements (See Appendix 2). Power BI has enabled us to begin the process of creating a data dashboard of EDI metrics. The first iteration of the dashboard is now complete and will be reviewed quarterly at CEB.

4. Financial

4.1 As part of the 2022/23 budget process, £0.585m of growth was approved to create capacity to deliver the equalities priorities. A further net £0.104m was approved as part of the 2023/24 budget process with £0.150m to create additional capacity and drive forward progress for the activities set out in this report. Effective delivery will mean that workforce budgets across the council have increased focus on EDI considerations via recruitment, development, and other management decisions.

The table below sets out the approved budget over the current Medium Term Financial Strategy period.

Programme Budget - Cumulative	2022/23 (£M)	2023/24 (£M)	2024/25 (£M)	2025/26 (£M)	2026/27 (£M)
New Equality & Engagement Function	0.335	0.289	0.289	0.289	0.289
Learning & Development Programme	0.050	0.050	0.050	0.050	0.050
Deliver on our commitment to tackle race inequality - Schools	0.150	0.150	0.150	0.150	0.000
Civil Leadership Programme	0.050	0.050	0.050	0.050	0.050
Equalities Workforce Programme	0.000	0.150	0.000	0.000	0.000
Gross Budget	0.585	0.689	0.539	0.539	0.389
Contribution from HRA	0.000	(0.057)	(0.057)	(0.057)	(0.057)
Contribution from Public Health Grant	0.000	(0.030)	(0.030)	(0.030)	(0.030)
Net Budget funded from General Fund	0.585	0.602	0.452	0.452	0.302

5. Legal

5.1 The activities proposed in this action plan comply with the requirement of the Equality Act 2010 and the provisions of the Equality Duty place upon public authorities. The broad purpose of the equality duty is to integrate consideration of equality and good relations into the day-to-day business of public authorities. If there is no consideration of how a function can affect diverse groups in different ways, this can contribute to greater inequality and poor outcomes. The general equality duty therefore requires organisations to consider how they could positively contribute to the advancement of

equality and good relations. It requires equality considerations to be reflected into the design of policies and the delivery of services, including internal policies, and for these issues to be kept under review.

5.2 The equality duty was developed to harmonise the equality duties and to extend it across the protected characteristics. It consists of a general equality duty, supported by specific duties which are imposed by secondary legislation. In summary, those subject to the equality duty must, in the exercise of their functions, have due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and 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 relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

5.3 A robust EDI policy helps the council to meet its legal obligations and avoid discrimination claims, which can be costly and damaging to its reputation. Compliance with the general equality duty is a legal obligation and makes good business sense.

6. Value for Money

6.1 Value for money will be achieved through efficiencies in the way we work – the plan includes a combination of quick, medium, and long-term wins. Awareness of the inequality gaps that exist and having an action plan to address them will promote an awareness of the multiple forms of inequality/intersectionality and enables us to nurture an inclusive workforce helping to build a culture of trust and accountability.

6.2 The activities and action set out in this report contributes to mitigating the direct and indirect costs of discrimination. An organisation that can provide services to meet the diverse needs of its users should find that it conducts its core business more efficiently. A workforce that has a supportive working environment tends to be more productive. It should also result in better informed decision-making and policy development. Overall, it can lead to services that are more appropriate to the user – more effective and cost-effective. This can lead to increased satisfaction with the public services the council provides.

6.3 Budget and cost management disciplines will be maintained via:

- Monitoring and reviewing costs will include scrutiny by the Corporate Equality Board
- EDI/HR&OD Departmental management team will undertake internal reviews
- Care will be taken to estimate cost of each proposed action and cost indicators and drivers / quality of services subject to scrutiny by SEGs and council's internal financial controls

- All activities are subject to cost-benefit evaluations and comply with risk management guidance

7. Sustainability Impact Appraisal

7.1 A sustainability impact appraisal is not required for this report.

8. Risk Management

8.1 It is essential that public sector organisations take the time to assess the potential risks and benefits of implementing an EDI policy and take steps to ensure that their activities are comprehensive, well-implemented, and effectively monitored. Every effort will be made to mitigate all potential risks associated with this report. The responsibility for each activity in the action plan has been designated to the appropriate accountable individual/department. Leaders are required to be accountable where actions are not achieved.

8.2 The priority areas for mitigating risk are as follows, and if not completed will have an impact on our success:

- Senior leadership representation at Corporate Equality Board – needs to be maintained for risk of drift to be avoided
- Beyond 2025 needs early consideration of resources and early commitment to funding to meet the increased workload generated by raised expectations in the current period
- Directorate action required to finalise departmental action plans – inaction concerns mitigated by support from corporate EDI team
- SEGs – Election of group Chairs in Spring/Summer 2023, identify contingency plan in the event of no nominations
- Training and development – review systems to ensure non-attendance to mandatory training is visible and managed
- Data collection – Campaign to encourage staff to provide personal data and understand the benefits – currently 15% of staff do not provide this information
- Work with the Communications Team to achieve success through messaging
- Work closely with the directorates to identify the actions/projects that directly overlap

9. Community Safety

9.1 Implementation of the action plan has an indirect impact on community safety. Raising workforce awareness will have a positive impact on relations with customers and communities served by the council. Frontline staff will also be better supported to serve our residents.

10. Links to the 3 Key Priorities for the Borough

10.1 **Fighting inequality:** delivery of the actions outlined in Appendix 1 of this report will have a direct impact of fighting inequality and closing the race and inequality gap. The activities listed will make a significant contribution to:

- **Improving Employee Morale:** when employees feel valued and respected, they are more likely to be engaged, productive and motivated in their work. This can lead to improved morale and a positive work environment, reducing staff turnover and absenteeism.
- **Increased Innovation and Creativity:** a diverse workplace brings together a range of perspectives, experiences, and skill sets, leading to increased creativity and innovation. This can help the organisation stay ahead of competitors and improve overall performance.
- **Positive action:** training and development of Black & Minority Ethnic staff helps to overcome artificial barriers to their advancement.
- **Better Reputation:** the activities here present the council more favourably to diverse employees, customers, and other stakeholders, which can lead to increased reputation and customer confidence.

10.2 Tackling **the climate crisis:** in 2023-25 consideration will be given to making and strengthening the linkages between EDI activities and climate change. This will emerge as a clear thematic consideration in 2026 onward.

10.3 Creating **good jobs:** fair recruitment increases access to good jobs for under-represented communities. Without an EDI policy, organisations may struggle to attract and retain a diverse workforce, reducing the benefits of diversity and potentially limiting the organisation's ability to innovate and succeed.

11. Equalities, Human Rights and Community Cohesion

11.1 A robust EDI policy provides the foundation for a workplace culture that values and respects all employees, their human rights, and cultures. The activities set out in this report are designed to create a supportive and inclusive environment where everyone feels valued and engaged. It is anticipated that the actions within will have a direct positive impact on the council's equalities intention especially those from a Black, Asian, Minority and Ethnic communities.

11.2 Consideration has also been given to the human right and community cohesion implications of the activities presented in this report. There is a clear correlation between diverse and inclusive workplaces and a council's ability to better understand and meet the needs of the communities they serve. The activities set out here are designed to equip the organisation with the lived experience to that better meet the needs of its diverse communities.

11.3 Equality Assessment consideration will be given to the proposal and recommendations and reviewed by stakeholders as they are rolled out.

12. Staffing/Workforce and Accommodation implications:

12.1 There are no foreseeable accommodation implications. This will be kept under review as the workforce equality action plan is rolled out. Currently there is adequate desk space to accommodate the EDI/OD team.

13. Property and Assets

13.1 None

14. Any other implications:

14.1 The EDI work being undertaken internally has links and implication for the work being undertaken by colleagues advancing the findings of Ealing's Race Equality Commissions (EREC) whose report was published in January 2022 and accepted by the Council in February 2022. The action plan was agreed by Cabinet in November 2022 and has achieved a key objective to recruit and appointment ten independent tribunal members who will hold the council and partners to account.

14.2 The Race Equality Commission concluded that race inequality is in crisis requiring an urgent response and called upon Ealing Council, public institutions, and the borough's employers to be bold and make a clear commitment in response to the report findings. This ambition mirrors the work that is being done internally with the workforce set out in this EDI Action Plan. There are several EREC priorities which have made specific demands with regards to workforce representation, career development and progression. It should also be noted that many council staff live in the borough and are therefore direct beneficiaries of the work being done to advance race equality externally.

14.3 Regular strategy meetings are scheduled between the Assistant Director - Equality Diversity & Inclusion and Organisational Development and the Assistant Director Equalities and Engagement to ensure that the most is made to synergise and bolster race equality work being conducted within the council and outside in the community.

15. Consultation

15.1 The action plan has been socialised with the staff equality groups and trade union representatives. The overwhelming response is support for equalities being a whole organisational responsibility.

15.2 Questions/concerns raised by Overview and Scrutiny Committee 08/04/2021, with regards, disabled representation, diverse representation at senior level, disciplinary data, recruitment outcomes and representation of diverse staff of contractors, concerns have been addressed in the corporate action plan. Minutes can be accessed

[Agenda Document Pack - Overview and Scrutiny Committee - 08-04-2021.pdf \(moderngov.co.uk\)](#)

16. Timetable for Implementation

16.1 The action plan covers a two-year period 2023-25. Priority and quick win actions have been identified for year one. Quarterly progress updates will be provided to the CEB.

16.2 The corporate EDI project lead will agree directorate plans/priorities which will be reviewed at CEB.

17. Appendices

Appendix 1 – Corporate Action Plan

Appendix 2 – Summary of Data Requirements

18. Background Information

Appendix 3 – [Agenda Document Pack - Overview and Scrutiny Committee - 08-04-2021.pdf \(moderngov.co.uk\)](#)

Consultation

Name of consultee	Post held	Date sent to consultee	Date response received	Comments appear in paragraph:
Internal				
Amanda Askham	Strategic Director Strategy and Change	23/2/2023	6/3/2023	
Helen Harris	Director, Legal and Democratic Services	23/2/2023	7/3/2023	5. Legal
Emily Hill	Interim Strategic Director, Corporate Resources	23/2/2023	9/3/2023	4. Financial
Cllr Steve Donnelly	Cabinet Member for Inclusive Economy	23/2/2023	9/3/2023	
Sue Evans	HR Director	23/2/2023	6/3/2023	
External				

Report History

Decision type:	Urgency item?
EITHER: Key decision OR Non-key decision OR For information (Delete as applicable)	For Information
Report no.:	Report author and contact for queries:
	Samantha Whittick, Assistant Director EDI and Organisational Development