



Borough of Telford and Wrekin

Cabinet

14 July 2022

Final Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Strategy

Cabinet Member:	Cllr Kelly Middleton, Cabinet Member for Leisure, Public Health and Well-being, Equalities and Partnerships
Lead Director:	Felicity Mercer, Director: Communities, Customer and Commercial Services
Service Area:	Community Services
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Wards Affected:	All
Key Decision:	Yes
Forward Plan:	9 March 2022
Report considered by:	Senior Management Team on 14 June 2022 Business Briefing on 23 June 2022

1.0 Recommendations for decision/noting:

- 1.1 That Cabinet note the changes to Appendix A - the updated Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Strategy, and approve this as a final version.
- 1.2 That Cabinet note results of the community engagement exercise in Appendix C and approves the publication of this document alongside the Strategy once it has been finalised.
- 1.3 That Cabinet grant delegated authority to the Director: Communities, Customer and Commercial Services in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Leisure, Public Health and Well-Being, Equalities and Partnerships to take the necessary steps to implement the EDI Action Plan moving forward.

2.0 Purpose of Report

- 2.1 To update Cabinet on the outcomes of the community engagement activity used to inform and finalise the draft Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Strategy.

3 Background

- 3.1 In October 2021 we provided a progress update which highlighted positive steps that the Council made in improving access to services, co-ordinating community response to hate crime incidents, celebrating diversity through a range of events and activities, and increasing training and guidance for Council employees.
- 3.2 At the same we made a clear statement that we are fundamentally opposed to and deplore unlawful discrimination of any kind, including Antisemitism and Islamophobia. As such the Council formally adopted the International Holocaust Memorial Alliance (IHMA) working definition of Antisemitism, and the All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on British Muslims definition of Islamophobia.
- 3.3 Following this, in December 2021 we presented a draft Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy which set out the Council's proposed approach through a new 4-year strategy. We took into account our legal duties and responsibilities and also the type of culture we want to promote through our workforce and in the way we treat our customers.
- 3.4 The strategy included a clear commitment, vision and new set of objectives all of which were driven by a supporting action plan that the Council would report against on an annual basis.
- 3.5 The Council wanted to ensure there was an opportunity for local community groups, partners, and employees to get involved and have their say before finalising the Strategy. Cabinet agreed this approach and earlier this year we commissioned DWC Consulting to act as independent facilitators and carry out a series of engagement activities with a range of community and internal stakeholders.

4 Summary of main proposals

Engagement on the Strategy

- 4.1 Engagement with key partners took place in January as part of the budget engagement process. We held two events for members of the voluntary and community sector, Parish & Town Councils and businesses so used this as an opportunity to talk to them about the draft strategy as well.
- 4.2 Engagement with local community groups took place between 14 February 2022 and 3 March 2022 and sessions were held at different locations across the borough.
- 4.3 We contacted a wide range of community organisations based on their ability to provide insights into the lived experience of communities bearing the protected characteristics. We gave them the opportunity to get involved and those that came back to us and participated included:

- Arleston Community centre (Local Geographical Community)
- Autism Hub (Disability)
- Deaf N Able Group (Disability)
- Forum 50 (Age/Elders)
- Holy Trinity Academy School (Race/Age/Young)
- Telford and Wrekin Black History Staff Group (Race)
- One Voice (Race)
- Parents Opening Doors (PODS) (Disability)
- Polski Glos Telford & Wrekin (Race)
- Shropshire & Telford United Women's Association (STUWA) (Race/Women)
- Telford College (Young/Age)
- Telford and Wrekin Interfaith Council (Faith)
- Telford MIND (Disability)
- Telford West Indian Association (Race)
- Telford and Wrekin Employee Panel - Multicultural Development Staff Team (Race)
- Telford and Wrekin LGBTQ Staff Group (Sexual Orientation)
- Telford and Wrekin Neurodiversity Group (Disability)
- Park Lane Centre, Woodside (Local Geographical Community)

4.3 All participants were sent a copy of the draft Strategy in advance. The intention was to give them a starting point from which to begin a discussion and gain valuable feedback to support further development of the Strategy.

4.4 In addition we included two public drop in sessions that were hosted at Park Lane Centre in Woodside (South) and at Telford & Wrekin Interfaith Council in Wellington (North). These were advertised in advance to give the wider community the opportunity to get involved. We also made the Strategy available on our website for anyone who wished to, to access and submit their views in order to make the engagement as accessible as possible for all.

4.5 Mainly the engagement had an external theme, gaining participants views on what is most important to them as customers and importantly what their needs are. It did not go into any detail around managing the Council's workforce or its governance arrangements, though some general comments were noted as part of this.

Responses and recommendations

4.6 Following completion of the engagement exercise DWC Consulting issued the Council with a report outlining the key themes, issues identified, conclusions that emerged and recommendations for the Council to consider.

4.7 We have set out what those recommendations are in **Appendix B** having considered each one carefully beforehand. Recommendations have been followed up and our response to each has been added alongside.

5 Alternative Options

5.1 Consideration has been given to the option of doing nothing. In doing so it would have a detrimental impact on our customers, partners and our workforce. We need to ensure we have adequate and meaningful practices in place to make sure the services we provide are fair and accessible to everyone. It will also ensure that people are treated equitably, get the dignity and respect they deserve and that their differences are celebrated.

5.2 The Council is also required by law to pay due regard to the need to achieve the objectives set out in the Public Sector Equality Duty in the Equality Act 2010. It must strive to eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct prohibited by or under the Act. Therefore the option of doing nothing would conflict with our legal duties.

5.1 Key Risks

The recommendations mitigate against the risks of:

- People not getting the service they need, when they need it
- Complaints/damage to reputation
- Legal challenge – including County Court Judgements and Judicial Review
- Cost (direct costs for damages and/or indirect costs for maintaining a service)

7.0 Council Priorities

- Every child, young person and adult lives well in their community;
- Everyone benefits from a thriving economy;
- All neighbourhoods are a great place to live
- A community-focussed, innovative council providing efficient, effective and quality services.

8.0 Financial Implications

8.1 Costs associated with the actions identified in the Action Plan will be met from within existing budgets and reserves, including a £20K commitment as a contribution from reserves. A small allocation will be made to each of the employee networks to encourage them to engage with community groups to help further raise awareness which may include delivering joint events. As the Action Plan is implemented, costs will be monitored and reported as required through the regular Financial Monitoring process.

9.0 Legal and HR Implications

9.1 The Council is required, when carrying out its duties, to have due regard to the need to achieve the objectives set out in the Public Sector Equality Duty in the Equality Act 2010 ('the Act'.)

It must strive to eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct prohibited by or under the Act. The Council must advance equality of opportunity between those who do and do not share a protected characteristic under the Act. The Council must also foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

The approval and implementation of the finalised EDI Strategy will assist the Council to demonstrate that it is complying with its legal duties and ensure progress is measurable against objectives.

9.2 The proposals contained in Appendix A will be met from within existing HR resources.

10.0 Ward Implications

10.1 This report has a borough wide impact.

11.0 Health, Social and Economic Implications

11.1 The EDI Strategy includes a range of demographic data including health and deprivation, to help us better understand the needs of our borough, Council workforce and any inequalities that exist. This will support us with ensuring fairer practices and true inclusion.

12.0 Equality and Diversity Implications

12.1 The proposals in this report will benefit people with a range of protected characteristics (specific aspects of a person's identify defined by the Equality Act 2010 – see [Protected characteristics | Equality and Human Rights Commission \(equalityhumanrights.com\)](https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/protected-characteristics))

12.2 It also recognises the accessibility issues faced by current Armed Forces personnel, veterans, reservists and their families and makes reference to the Armed Forces Act 2021.

13.0 Climate Change and Environmental Implications

13.1 This report has no direct climate change or environmental impact.

14.0 Background Papers

- 1 Draft Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy report (presented to Cabinet on December 2021)
4.6
- 2 Equality and Diversity Progress Update Report (presented to Cabinet on 7 October 2021).

15.0 Appendices

- A Final Draft EDI Strategy for approval
- B Recommendations and our response
- C Results of the community engagement exercise

16.0 Report Sign Off

Signed off by	Date sent	Date signed off	Initials
Legal	01/06/2022	06/06/2022	RP
Finance	01/06/2022	09/06/2022	PH