

Full Council

7 July 2020



Report of: Tim Borrett, Director: Policy, Strategy and Partnerships

Title: Equality and Inclusion Annual Report 2019-2020

Ward: City Wide

Member Presenting Report: Cllr Asher Craig, Deputy Mayor (Communities, Events and Equalities)

Recommendation

To note the Equality and Inclusion Annual Progress Report 2019-2020

Summary

Our Equality and Inclusion Policy and Strategy 2018–23 sets out our commitment to equality and diversity, and how we will:

- tackle equalities issues
- aim to eliminate discrimination
- create good relationships between communities in Bristol
- ensure those from different backgrounds have similar life opportunities

The 'Equality and Inclusion Annual Progress Report 2019–20' shows what we have done in the period April 2019 to March 2020 to achieve these aims and the progress we have made.



Policy

1. Equality and inclusion is at the heart of the council's overall vision (set out in the Corporate Strategy 2018 – 2023) to 'play a leading role in driving a city of hope and aspiration where everyone can share in its success'.
2. The council's Equality and Inclusion Strategy 2018 - 2023 sets out the opportunities and challenges facing Bristol (both the city and its council) and how it plans to address these. Within this is a commitment to provide an annual report on its progress against the strategy, as noted in the Bristol City Council Business Plan 2019/20.

Context

3. Whilst this report captures an important moment in time – the first full financial year following the adoption of its new Equality and Inclusion Policy and Strategy – the council has a long-standing commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion, and living up to this is a constant journey of learning, engagement and improvement. The council's high aspirations haven't always been adequately reflected in its strategic framework, its practice or its outcomes, and the Annual Progress Report seeks to more openly discuss and draw attention to progress and challenges.
4. The timeframe of the report mostly pre-dates the Covid-19 pandemic's emergence in the UK and completely pre-dates the recent high profile removal of Bristol's statue of Edward Colston, a moment which brought long-standing issues of systemic and structural race inequality even more sharply in to focus for the city. Whilst this Annual Progress Report does not address this more recent context, it is an issue which is very much part of our ongoing improvement journey as an institution and as a city, and we will be engaging further with the city and our staff about its implications.
5. Race equality was already a major internal focus for the council and during 2019/20 much work was undertaken to acknowledge and address institutional racism. This included independent support, facilitation and review which concluded after the end of the time period covered in the Annual Progress Report. The findings from this process have helped inform our ongoing work to improve practice across the council, and a forward-looking report about next steps will be presented to Cabinet on 14 July 2020.
6. In October 2019 the council helped to organise and host 'Race and The City: Tackling Race Equality' Bristol's first Race Equality Conference - alongside Bristol Festival of Ideas, Bristol One City Office and the Cabinet Office's Race Disparity Unit. This conference brought together leaders from across government, public and private sectors to celebrate the progress made in tackling racial inequality and discuss how remaining challenges can be overcome.
7. There was significant progress against our existing plans in 2019/20, though pace and leadership were impacted by a challenging recruitment process to find and appoint a permanent Head of Equality and Inclusion as part of a strengthened central equalities structure established following Full Council's budget approval in February 2019.
8. Despite this, the year saw significant improvements in the delivery of training throughout the Council and encouraging staff survey results (whereby around three-quarters of staff felt treated fairly and able to be themselves at work), albeit this statistic also shows that there is still more room to improve.
9. The year also saw much progress in the necessary but unseen work of building stronger foundations for our corporate equalities practice. This included all council services completing an Equality Action Plan; establishing new governance structures and Equality Champions; reviewing the role of Staff Led Groups; reviewing HR policies for unconscious bias and more.

10. Meanwhile a range of diversity initiatives continued, including the multiple award-winning Stepping UP programme which operates City-wide to promote diversity in city leadership. Towards the end of the year, a new scheme was put in place to help improve corporate practice around implementing reasonable adjustments for disabled employees.
11. Whilst the council has continued to perform better than many comparable organisations in relation to pay gaps facing female, BAME and disabled staff, there are still disparities which are detailed in Appendix D, a pay gap report recently presented to HR Committee on 2 July 2020. There is no requirement upon employers to publish their ethnicity or disability pay gaps, but it is the Council's policy is to publish this information as part of our drive to become an inclusive employer with a workforce that reflects the communities we serve. Work to further close these gaps in pay includes talent mapping, structured development opportunities, senior-level apprenticeships and embedding positive action principles in all recruitment and selection processes.
12. Given the current context of Covid-19 and our desire to become an exemplar employer and city leader in relation to equality, diversity and inclusion, a further review of the Council's Equality and Inclusion Policy and Strategy will be undertaken in coming months. This is one of many strands of strategic work considering the Council's and the City's future as it recovers from the impact of the pandemic and the additional challenges it has brought people who were already deeply affected by systemic and structural inequality.
13. In the meantime the council will continue to take all opportunities to support BAME staff and communities within the city, building upon existing activities. These have included writing to all BAME staff about Covid-19 and its disproportionate impact; conducting Covid-19 risk assessments for BAME staff in work settings; ensuring managers take necessary actions and organising all-staff webinars about race equality.

Consultation

14. Internal

- Staff Led Groups: Black and Minority Ethnic Employee Group; Disabled Employees Group; LGBT+ Group; Young Employee Voice.
- Policy, Strategy and Partnerships Divisional Management Team
- Corporate Leadership Board
- Deputy Mayor (Communities, Events and Equalities)

15. External

We circulated a draft version of the Annual Progress Report to key external stakeholders and their feedback has informed the final report: Bristol Disability Equality Forum, Bristol Hate Crime and Discrimination Services, Bristol Multi Faith Forum, Bristol Muslim Strategic Leadership Group, Bristol Older People's Forum, Bristol Women's Commission, Commission on Race Equality, Off The Record, The Care Forum, Voice and Influence Partnership, VOSCUR, WECIL.

Proposal

16. Full Council is asked to note APPENDIX A Equality and Inclusion Annual Report 2019-2020.

Other Options Considered

Not applicable

Risk Assessment

Not applicable

Public Sector Equality Duties

- 16.a. Before making a decision, section 149 Equality Act 2010 requires that each decision-maker considers the need to promote equality for persons with the following “protected characteristics”: age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation. Each decision-maker must, therefore, have due regard to the need to:
- i) Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct prohibited under the Equality Act 2010.
 - ii) Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not share it. This involves having due regard, in particular, to the need to --
 - remove or minimise disadvantage suffered by persons who share a relevant protected characteristic;
 - take steps to meet the needs of persons who share a relevant protected characteristic that are different from the needs of people who do not share it (in relation to disabled people, this includes, in particular, steps to take account of disabled persons' disabilities);
 - encourage persons who share a protected characteristic to participate in public life or in any other activity in which participation by such persons is disproportionately low.
 - iii) Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not share it. This involves having due regard, in particular, to the need to –
 - tackle prejudice; and
 - promote understanding.
- 16.b. The Equality and Inclusion Annual Progress Report 2019-20 is a review of our progress on the objectives in The Equality and Inclusion Policy and Strategy – which set the standards and mechanism to ensure the council fulfils its obligations under the Public Sector Equality Duty.

An Equalities Relevance Check has been carried out as is available at Appendix D.

Legal and Resource Implications

Legal

Regulation 5 of the Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties and Public Authorities) Regulations 2017 requires some public authorities, including Bristol City Council, to prepare and publish one or more objectives it thinks it should achieve to do any of the things mentioned in paragraphs (a) to (c) of section 149(1) of the Equality Act i.e.

- (a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;
- (b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
- (c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

An objective published by a public authority in compliance with the Regulations must be specific and measurable.

The Equality and Inclusion Annual Progress Report 2019-20 details Bristol City Council's objectives and is prepared and published to comply with the Regulation.

(Legal advice provided by Sarah Sharland - Team Leader Litigation Regulatory and Community Team, 20th May 2020)

Financial (Revenue and Capital)

Noting of Bristol City Council's Equality and Inclusion Annual Progress Report for 2019/20 is requested. The report is a retrospective assessment of progress against the 2018-23 strategy. There are no financial implications arising from this report.

(Financial advice provided by Jemma Prince - Finance Business Partner, 20 May 2020)

Land

Not applicable

Personnel

No direct HR implications as the report is for information.

(Personnel advice provided by James Brereton - People & Culture Manager, 18th May 2020)

Appendices:

APPENDIX A – Equality and Inclusion Annual report 2019-2020

APPENDIX B – Workforce Diversity Statistics Report

APPENDIX C – Workforce Pay Gaps Report

APPENDIX D – Equalities Relevance Check

LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985

Background Papers: None