

Statement: CS18.01

Cabinet – 14th July 2020

Re: Agenda item 18 – Advancing Equality and Inclusion at BCC

Statement submitted by: Bristol Disability Equality Forum

Bristol City Council has a good reputation for promoting equalities and diversity and working with community groups such as Bristol Disability Equality Forum, the LGBTQ forum and Black South West.

We welcome the equalities report to the cabinet and positive recruitment from the BAME community, LGBTQ and disabled staff. Covid- 19 has meant many of these organisations have had to keep going on very limited funding in the community.

Bristol Disability Equality Forum has worked with the City office on the Bristol mayor's Transport board covering the Covid-19 recovery plans and in particular the bus and rail network. We have also worked on wheelchair access social distancing and service planning for bus and rail services with the WECA mayoral Transport authority and North Somerset Council.

We have also been assisting by advising on social services provision, care homes provision, public toilets and disabled access. We have also maintained a helpline for disabled people within the city region.

With regard to the LGBTQ community there has been social isolation and problems with recovery from covid-19. We feel more could be done by the City council to help this community in Bristol. The potential lack of a forum, due to a loss of funding, is of concern to the community as it looks likely that the present forum will not be able to continue into the future.

Bristol is a very diverse city region with a concentration of the LGBTQ community in the area of the city around Old Market and Southville. We need more officers to support the community and enforce better social distancing measures in areas such as West Street, Old Market and Midland Road and especially in public houses and restaurants.

We are asking the mayor to look at investing equalities officer time in LGBTQ forum issues.

We also welcome the work by Asher Craig, Deputy mayor, with the BAME community and especially the Black South West network and the work of the equalities commission. We welcome the slavery museum project at M shed with the statue of Edward Colston. We hope the planned exhibition will give a balanced view of Colston's life including his involvement with the history of the Royal African Company, his substantial philanthropic contributions to the city and the additions he made to the built environment. Hopefully such an exhibition will bring about an informed debate on one part of Bristol's history.

This would also be a good opportunity to see better exhibition opportunities covering disabled history in the Bristol and Bath region and the history of LGBTQ rights in Bristol and the south west.

Bristol is a very diverse city with 1 in 6 citizens being a member of the BAME community and as such we welcome the work by the mayor on equalities.

We would welcome the setting up of an equalities committee by Mayor Bowles as part of WECA mayoral combined authority covering the nine protected characteristics.

We would like to see a more diverse staff balance at WECA and the employment of an equalities officer. We also note and support the leadership of South Gloucestershire Council, Banes and North Somerset council in equalities issues. With North Somerset Council joining WECA combined authority.

We welcome this report but wish to see Bristol and Bath at the heart of diversity in south west England.