

Full Council

6th July 2021



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

Title: Equality and Inclusion Annual Report 2020/21

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 2020-2021
- to note the Local Government Association Equality Framework For Local Government Report and response
- to note the Advancing Equality and Inclusion at BCC – New Actions for 2020-21 closure report

Summary

Our Equality and Inclusion Policy and Strategy 2018-23 sets out our commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion, 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

In recent years the Council has been on a substantial journey of improvement around equality and inclusion practice, investing time, money and effort to better live up to our high aspirations for inclusivity in our workplaces and our City. The 'Equality and Inclusion Annual Progress Report 2020-21' shows what we have done in the period April 2020 to March 2021 to achieve these aims and the progress we have made. It is presented alongside related updates on progress, including the findings of an independent LGA peer review and the results of the 2020/21 Advancing Equality and Inclusion Action Plan.



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.

Context

3. Bristol City Council's overall vision, set out in its Corporate Strategy, is to play a leading role in driving a city of hope and aspiration in which everyone can share in its success. Central to this is to make meaningful equality and inclusion a central part of the Council's policy, strategy and practice.
4. In recent years the Council has been on a significant improvement journey from a low baseline towards ambitious aims to be a model employer and service provider, and among national leaders in the field of equality, diversity and inclusion. This is described in the Council's Equality and Inclusion Policy and Strategy 2018 – 2023, which was approved by Full Council with unanimous cross-party support. Its objectives are:
 - a. Our handling of equality and inclusion will reach the high standards we expect of ourselves and others will look to us as a source of good practice.
 - b. Building an inclusive organisation where the workforce reflects the city we serve and the needs of all citizens, and where colleagues feel confident about being themselves at work.
 - c. Providing inclusive services which actively address inequality and exclusion and enable all of Bristol's citizens to realise their potential and live safely.
 - d. Achieving a measurable increase in the extent to which communities facing inequality can share in and contribute to the city's success.
 - e. Progressive building of good relationships between different communities in Bristol so everyone is able to participate and contribute.
5. In recent years the Council has been on a substantial journey of improvement around equality and inclusion practice, investing time, money and effort to better live up to our high aspirations for inclusivity in our workplaces and our City. This annual report details our progress against these objectives during 2020/21, a year in which the stark inequalities that Bristol is tackling were brought in to even sharper focus; both through the disproportionate impacts of the coronavirus pandemic on various equality groups and also the global profile attached to the toppling of the Colston statue.
6. Against this backdrop and the Council's ongoing journey of improvement, including the high-profile issue of institutional racism, significant investment and progress have been made. We ask Full Council to note the delivery of the Equality and Inclusion Action Plan approved by Cabinet in June 2020, progress against which is also reported within this update. Of 68 discrete

actions based around the themes of ‘strategy changes’, ‘recruitment’, ‘leadership’, and ‘other activities’, 45 are evidenced as complete and the remainder are in-flight and will be continued through the normal business of the Council departments which are responsible (a summary of progress against the actions is in Appendix H). As recommended by our recent LGA peer review (see below) we will use a coordinated approach to ensure our various strands of equality and inclusion work are managed as a coherent programme. Among the improvements made this year are a refreshed Equality and Inclusion Policy and Strategy, a new corporate equality governance structure, the relaunch of our internal staff-led groups, an updated equality impact assessment process, improved diversity monitoring and reporting, an updated Workforce Strategy, and several new Positive Action initiatives.

7. During the year assurance was sought on progress through both an internal audit of the Action Plan (which provided Reasonable assurance and Substantial assurance on progress tracking) and an external peer review as part of the Local Government Association’s Equality Framework for Local Government. We ask Full Council to note the full report of the LGA, which was recently received by Officers and found much positive practice but a need to make this more systematic and consistent across the Council’s business. It made six specific recommendations. The report is appended at Appendix B and a table of its recommendations and a management response is shown at Appendix C.
8. COVID-19 has had an impact on performance during 2020/21, and the Annual Report contains performance metrics for the overall Equality and Inclusion Policy and Strategy, along with narrative updates and case studies about key activities. In particular COVID-19 has impacted upon the range and quality of face-to-face services, and community-based activities for those who need them most, and the Council’s response and recovery strategy seeks to mitigate and address these impacts. During the year the Council has played a major leadership role in embedding equality and inclusion in its COVID-19 response, including co-commissioning the Black South West Network report ‘Designing a New Social Reality’ on the future of the Bristol VCSE and social enterprise sector beyond COVID-19, and leading on development of a region-wide Equality Impact Assessment for the Avon and Somerset Local Resilience Forum’s Strategic Recovery Group.
9. Taken as a whole, the Annual Report, LGA Report and Advancing Equality and Inclusion Action Plan Closure Report provide a robust overview of activity and progress against the Council’s equality objectives. Looking ahead, there is no room for complacency and work will continue at pace to embed good or excellent practice as standard, and to place a stronger focus on equality and inclusion through the process of revising the Council’s Corporate Strategy, its overall strategic plan for the next five years. Leadership commitment, strengthened governance, improved organisational knowledge and well-developed plans now need to translate into consistently strong practice and proven outcomes, particularly for known issues such as improving services for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities, and reducing the gender, race, disability and LGBT+ pay gaps.
10. We acknowledge that with a wide range of initiatives, interventions and actions across the Council and City, there is a need to organise and manage this as a single programme of activity linked to our overall Equality and Inclusion Strategy. Work to develop this single-view programme is underway, led by the Equality and Inclusion Team within the Council’s Policy, Strategy and Partnerships division. Progress has already been made in many areas subsequent to the period covered within this Annual Report.

Consultation

11. Internal

- Staff Led Groups: embRACE Staff Network; Disabled Colleagues Network; LGBT+ Employees Group; Young Professionals Network
- Policy, Strategy and Partnerships Divisional Management Team
- Corporate Leadership Board
- Deputy Mayor (Communities, Events and Equalities)

12. External

Commission on Race Equality; Bristol Women's Commission

Proposal

Full Council is asked to note the Equality and Inclusion Annual Progress Report 2020-2021; to note the LGA Equality Framework for Local Government Report 2021 recommendations and response; and note the Advancing Equality and Inclusion at BCC – New Actions for 2020-21 closure report.

Other Options Considered – not applicable

Risk Assessment – not applicable

Public Sector Equality Duties

- 18.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.

18.b. The Equality and Inclusion Annual Progress Report 2020-21 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 Equality Impact Assessment has been carried out as is available at Appendix E.

Legal and Resource Implications

Legal

Regulation 5 of the Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties and Public Authorities) Regulations 2017 requires Bristol City Council to prepare and publish specific and measurable objectives in order to:

- a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by the Equality 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.

The Equality and Inclusion Annual Report 2020-21 details Bristol City Council's objectives and is prepared and published to comply with the Regulations.

(Legal advice provided by Sarah Sharland, Team leader - Litigation Regulatory and Community Team)

Financial

Approval of Bristol City Council's Equality and Inclusion Annual Progress Report for 2020/21 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)

Land

Not applicable

Personnel

No direct HR implications as the report is for information.

(Personnel advice provided by James Brereton, People & Culture Manager)

Appendices:

APPENDIX A – Equality and Inclusion Annual Progress Report 2020-21

APPENDIX B – LGA Equality Framework for Local Government Report (EFLG) 2021

APPENDIX C – LGA EFLG Recommendations Table

APPENDIX D – New EqIA Template

APPENDIX E – Advancing Equality and Inclusion Action Plan Closure Report

APPENDIX F – Equalities Impact Assessment

APPENDIX G – Eco Impact Assessment

LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985

Background Papers: None