

DRAFT

Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Strategy

February 2022

Foreword

The last few years have been incredibly difficult, although I could not be prouder of how our city has responded to the pandemic. Oxford has shown a truly inspirational community spirit with people working together, with equality, equity and kindness becoming central to Oxford's approach.

Commentators and [researchers](#) have drawn attention to how systemic shocks can exacerbate existing inequalities, impacting poor and marginalised individuals and communities disproportionately during, and for years after, the pandemic. Those who belong to the most disadvantaged sections of society have been the same people most likely to be subject to the sharp end when it comes to the [impacts of the pandemic](#).

Michael Marmot's report, "[Build Back Fairer: The COVID-19 Review](#)", shows the scale of the challenge we face. The report says, "*there is an urgent need to do things differently, to build a society based on the principles of social justice; to reduce inequalities of income and wealth; to build a wellbeing economy that puts the achievement of health and wellbeing, rather than narrow economic goals.*"

Perhaps the starkest example is the [social gradient of health](#); Oxford's gap in life expectancy is 15 years between the most and least deprived areas¹. There is every indication that these inequalities are set to worsen. We cannot tackle these deeply engrained inequalities unless we truly understand the issues driving them and take collective, joined-up action working with residents and our partners.

To develop this strategy, we have used the Local Government Association Equalities Framework, which outlines four areas of focus for equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI).

- ❖ [Understanding and Working with our Communities](#)
- ❖ [Leadership and Organisational Commitment](#)
- ❖ [Responsive Services and Customer Care](#)
- ❖ [Diverse and Engaged Workforce](#)

Oxfordshire County Council is also following this approach to develop their county-wide EDI strategy, providing coherence between the local and county level. We already incorporate these cross-cutting themes into our work, and we are committed to further action to put these at the heart of everything we do.

¹ Office for National Statistics (2019)

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion: our commitment

We are committed to building a fairer, greener city in which everyone can thrive. To support flourishing communities, we are focused on ensuring our services, investments, and policy-making are designed to address Oxford's social and financial inequalities. We value diversity and seek to find ways to bring communities together. We want to ensure all Oxford's citizens have fair opportunities and a real share in the city's future.

Equality, diversity and inclusion are together a key focus for all our work. This is a core part of all our policies and partnerships for our residents, staff and elected members. We want Oxford City Council to have a workforce that reflects the community it serves and to be seen as an employer of choice that values diversity and the perspectives it brings. We are committed to building our reputation as an organisation that is inclusive to the core and provides relevant and accessible services that recognise the value of every individual. As part of this we recognise the importance of encouraging a sense of belonging, to a place, organisation, community or project, which can be fostered through informal and formal working practices that promote mutual respect and co-operation.

Our corporate strategy sets the four key priorities for the Council to deliver this vision:

- **Foster an inclusive economy**, in which wealth is distributed across our communities and where all residents can share the benefits of growth
- **Deliver more, affordable housing**, to address Oxford's housing crisis where existing homes are unaffordable for many and demand for good quality homes outstrips what is available
- **Support thriving communities**, to help ensure everyone is able to play a full part in the life of our city
- **Pursue a zero carbon Oxford**, acting on the clear message from Oxford's Citizens' Assembly on Climate Change to continue to take a lead in reducing emissions and increasing biodiversity

As part of delivering these, we will:

- ensure our staff are skilled and confident in delivering services our residents need and the workforce as a whole better reflects Oxford's diverse population
- implement the Oxford City Council Workforce Equalities Action Plan to boost employee diversity through recruitment and apprenticeships and expand the management opportunities for underrepresented groups such as Black, Asian and women
- implement a new, inclusive Economic Strategy to increase the opportunities for disadvantaged groups to have a fair share in the city's economy
- deliver services, grants, community and leisure facilities, parks and cultural events that help to bring communities together, reduce inequality, and improve health and wellbeing
- support and enable local voluntary and community groups to play a greater role in improving the city and the lives of residents
- use our influence to ensure Oxford's diversity is celebrated, and communities are more connected, which will form part of the Thriving Communities Strategy

To deliver high-quality services for the city, we will also:

- work with our subsidiaries Oxford Direct Services (ODS) and Oxford City Housing Ltd (OCHL) to ensure the essential services they provide prioritise a focus on equality, diversity and inclusion
- continue our commitment to the [Oxford Anti-Racism Charter](#) by encouraging communities, businesses and organisations to take ownership of their own contributions to anti-racism in the city

- ensure that staff employed directly, or on behalf of the city council, are paid at least the Oxford Living Wage, and encourage our suppliers to do the same.

Developing this Strategy

This strategy has been developed as a cross-cutting theme that runs through all other policies and strategies. We have consulted widely with partners, staff and stakeholders to understand their experiences and issues. We held a number of workshops through 2020 with groups representing protected characteristics, our staff, elected members, and community partners, ensuring that intersectionality² was also represented and listened to. In addition, we have involved service teams to ensure the strategy reflects their work and the priorities they deliver.

Context and legislation

The [Equality Act 2010](#) is the legal framework to protect individuals’ rights and advance equality of opportunity for all. This Act provides the prime legislative basis under which this strategy operates.

Protected characteristics

The Equality Act 2010 introduced the term “protected characteristics” to refer to groups that are protected under the Act. Protected characteristics are legally defined as:

- Age
- Race
- Sex
- Sexual Orientation
- Marriage/Civil Partnership
- Disability
- Gender Reassignment
- Religion or Belief
- Maternity & Paternity

The Public Sector Equality Duty (created under the Equality Act 2010) came into force on 5 April 2011 and requires public bodies and others carrying out public functions to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, to advance equality of opportunities and foster good relations between different communities. Compliance with the equality duty enables us to provide services to meet the diverse needs of our users, and improve how we carry out our core business.

Gender and ethnicity pay gap

Legislation came into effect in 2017 requiring employers to publish figures on gender pay gap. We use our data on a yearly basis to continually review all areas of the organisation to identify the barriers (and the drivers) for appointing women, particularly at senior levels.

Although not required by law, since 2020, we have included the ethnicity pay gap in our annual reporting and introduced reporting on the disability pay gap in our 2021 publication. We want to go beyond simply our statutory requirements and ensure we truly represent the people we serve.

Modern day slavery act

Legislation requires us to prepare a slavery and human trafficking statement each financial year, publish it on our website, and tackle slavery wherever we find it. We recognise that we have a responsibility to ensure that our services and supply chains understand the issue and can transparently demonstrate how they protect against modern-day slavery. In 2022 we published research into modern-day slavery in Oxford, providing new insight into the local issues.

² [Intersectionality](#): the complex, cumulative way in which the effects of multiple forms of discrimination (such as racism, sexism, and classism) combine, overlap, or [intersect](#) especially in the experiences of marginalized individuals or groups [Merriam-Webster]

Oxford and its citizens: key facts

- Population: 151,584 (ONS 2020 mid-year estimate)
- 33,400 students are enrolled for full-time studies in two universities, the largest proportion of adults in full-time studies of any city in England and Wales
- The third highest ethnic minority population in south-east England
- 26% of residents were born outside of the United Kingdom
- 10 out of 83 neighbourhoods are amongst the 20% most deprived in England
- 22% of adults have no or low educational qualifications
- After housing costs, 1 in 4 children live below the poverty line
- Men in the most deprived areas live 15 years less on average than those who live in the least deprived areas
- Average house prices are 11.4 times the average earnings – the mean house price is £558,216
- An estimated 16% of residences do not have outdoor space, compared to 12% nationally
- Over 4,000 people in Oxford receive Disability Living Allowance or Personal Independence Payments

Our staff: key facts

We collect data on the diversity of our workforce, which is voluntary and anonymous for them to provide (apart from sex). This data indicates the following make-up of our staff:

- 58.2% of our workforce is female, compared to the city population of 47%
- 14.5% identify as Black, Asian or Minority Ethnic³, compared to 18% of the city population
- 10.8% have a disability, compared to 6.7% of the city population
- 3.6% of the workforce identifies as LGBTQ+

These statistics reflect the overall workforce, but do not reflect the continued gaps at senior level for women and those identifying as Black, Asian or other Minority Ethnic heritage.

The Council now reports on its annual gender pay gap, ethnicity pay gap and disability pay gap.

Current challenges and their impact on equality, diversity and inclusion

We face a number of challenges that have influenced our objectives for this strategy. The pandemic has compounded the financial challenges of reduced government funding. We are seeing increasing inflation, rising hardship and financial inequality, a greater focus on racial inequality and its impact on life outcomes and changes in inward and outward migration.

Financial

The financial outlook for all local government is challenging, as the grant we receive from central government funding has significantly reduced over recent years. We now also face the impacts of the pandemic on the local economy and Oxford City Council itself, which continue to be extremely challenging. The Council has seen a sharp increase in expenditure to support those in need, together with a second year of reduced revenues from its core income streams.

³ Black, Asian or other Minority Ethnic is used here as it reflects the data set, we will avoid terms such as minority ethnic that categorise people into large groupings that do not reflect their heritage.

The total financial impact of the COVID-19 on Oxford City Council over the period 2020-2026 is forecast to be £23 million. To date, the Government has provided around £11 million of financial support to the Council in respect of its day to day service delivery. A further £152 million has been provided by Government to support the provision of additional measures to support residents and businesses impacted by the pandemic.

Pandemic

The effects of the pandemic have not been felt equally across all population groups. Research shows that some groups, especially those that already experienced inequality, have suffered the most.

The [latest government reporting](#) shows that those from Black and Asian heritage, and those in higher deprivation, suffered significant health inequalities and higher mortality rates. Research from the [Institute of Fiscal Studies in 2021](#) indicated that the pandemic had also caused more income inequality, more inequalities in education and skills, and more intergenerational inequalities.

How we are responding to these challenges

Workforce

We continue to foster an inclusive and supportive culture, but we have had to adjust rapidly to do things differently in areas such as remote working. We have actively promoted an inclusive and flexible approach through the pandemic, adjusting to individual needs around issues such as health vulnerabilities, mental health, and caring responsibilities. We have embraced the opportunity of technology to deliver for our workforce and our customers in these circumstances, and will continue to invest in these opportunities.

We have launched the Council's new People Strategy, embodying our ambition to put inclusion and respect at the heart of the Council's culture.

Community

At the pandemic's start, we moved quickly to establish Locality Hubs to deliver emergency support and information in the main residential areas. These hubs have built new community partnerships and developed our understanding of community needs in the different localities. These teams have had to adapt on a regular basis and balance their work of emergency support with developing longer-term more sustainable solutions for residents. In practice, this has been working more closely with partners and community groups, listening to residents and an increased focus on addressing the causal issues. A new model of service delivery is now being designed that embeds this learning across council teams.

Black Lives Matter and the Anti-Racism Charter

The Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement in the summer of 2020, and the Rhodes Must Fall campaign in Oxford, highlights the impact of structural racism in our city, society and country. BLM have made it clear it is time to commit to having difficult conversations that enable us to become actively anti-racist and not simply against racism.

To demonstrate leadership for the city, the Council worked with communities to develop and launch the [Oxford Anti-Racism Charter](#), which set out what racism is and made commitments to becoming an anti-racist city. We continue our commitment to the Charter and to becoming an anti-racist city. The Charter demonstrates our intent to tackle institutional racism, and we have committed to taking specific actions to be anti-racist. The Charter also exists for other organisations and individuals to sign.

Deprivation

Oxford is a wealthy city but with stark inequalities. Before the pandemic, [around 12% of the city's neighbourhoods](#) were in the bottom 20% of the whole country. The need for emergency support from the council and community groups has grown over the course of the pandemic, with more people needing emergency help with basics like food, fuel and rent, and more need from schools for youth support services to help children who are struggling in formal education. We continue to fund youth and holiday activities to provide non-formal education, our locality hubs model is evolving to provide longer-lasting support to prevent emergency needs.

Immigration

Oxford is a world-renowned city and attracts people from around the world for work, education and to establish new lives in the UK. We are proud to welcome and support migrants, and have an active third sector supporting refugees and migrants. There are well-established communities with roots in South Asia, the Caribbean, China, the Middle East, Eastern Europe, East Timor and West Papua. Many of these are now second and third generation communities.

More recently, we have seen migration from areas of conflict or with supported migration schemes, including Iraq, Syria, Afghanistan and Hong Kong. Since Brexit and the pandemic, there has been some emigration of EU citizens, so these demographics are constantly changing. What all have in common is a need to access council services equitably, for housing, community spaces, transport and employment opportunities. As migrants, they may need extra support to use our services and understand their rights and responsibilities.

Priority Areas for Action

The Local Government Association has outlined four areas of focus for equality, diversity and inclusion. We already incorporate these cross-cutting themes into our work, and we are committed to further action to put these at the heart of all we do.

This strategy outlines our priorities in delivering each strand of work and the context that each of these operates in. We have outlined actions we are already committed to delivering to demonstrate how we will achieve our priorities. We will produce an Equalities Action Plan for this strategy with measurable targets and commitments which knit together to help create thriving communities.

Understanding and Working with our Communities

Context

Our Thriving Communities Strategy will outline some of the key approaches we will use to improve our understanding and engagement with our communities. The Thriving Communities Strategy has a broad scope and uses the headings of *People*, *Place* and *Pride* to show how we will improve outcomes and make the best possible use of resources. The EDI strategy is integral to delivering the *Pride* part of the Thriving Communities Strategy.

Oxford is one of the most diverse cities in the South East, and that brings additional challenges in community engagement and inclusion. A focus on equality, diversity and inclusion is central to our community relationships. It is vital to understand that protected groups may have differing needs and what we can do to meet those, to prevent unconscious discrimination and unfairness.

We have established a multi-faith forum that meets regularly with senior representatives from the Council and faith groups. This is a forum to discuss opportunities, raise concerns, and work in partnership on these matters. We also work with faith groups at grassroots level on a day-to-day basis through our locality teams to understand and support their needs.

It is also important to understand the intersectionality or interconnected nature of social categorisations such as race, class and gender, regarded as creating overlapping and interdependent systems of discrimination or disadvantage. Intersectionality is the acknowledgement that everyone has their own unique experiences of discrimination and oppression, and we must consider everything and anything that can marginalise people, such as gender, race, class, sexual orientation and physical ability.

We also recognise there is stark inequality in Oxford, and we aim to use our policies and services to rebalance that where possible— from providing social housing to youth work, welfare reform, parks and leisure. Our Housing, Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy is based on research into the community needs for housing, including disability needs, gender, family housing needs and risk of homelessness. We have used this understanding of our communities to ensure our housing strategy meets their needs.

We are also focused on tackling the impacts of child poverty, through our work to support families, our direct work through the Youth Ambition team, through locality hubs and projects like the [Community Impact Zone](#). We recognise that there is an element of child poverty that relates to historic and institutional racial discrimination, and that must be tackled at a political and institutional level to create long-term change.

Priorities

- **Providing inclusive services:** understanding and addressing barriers to accessing our services, community assets and community engagement
- **Promoting partnership working:** use our relationships to work together and connect different communities so that we can jointly address issues and celebrate strengths; this approach is embedded in our new Community Impact Fund
- **Empowerment:** building community capacity to lead and participate in projects that benefit or affect their communities. In practice, this means doing “with” rather than “to” and, where possible, focusing on what is strong in communities rather than what’s wrong- this approach is often termed [asset-based community development](#) (ABCD). ABCD approaches show that connecting people and creating more resident-to-resident relationships builds interdependence and reliance on each other. Connecting people to their shared interests and enabling them to exchange skills and resources helps communities identify and take action on the most important issues to them.

Actions

As part of our work in this area, we will:

- Review how we communicate, consult and engage with communities, looking at how this may need to adapt for different localities, diversities, interests and needs. This will include the need to report back to communities on outcomes as well as listening to needs, vulnerabilities and aspirations.
- Facilitate events that promote understanding and help bring communities together, using our community grant funding, partnerships and our elected members to support and promote these activities.
- Work with stakeholders and partners to support access to core service provision for migrant and refugee communities. This includes promoting and enhancing our online welcome pack for migrant communities and international students.
- Empower communities to help themselves, for example, by working with local organisations to support members of the community to become trustees, or become involved in the governance of community assets.
- Support community groups to access spaces and places where they can come together to enjoy common interests and create new friendships.
- Continue work under our strategic plan to offer development opportunities for disadvantaged children and young people, through the Council’s Youth Ambition programme and our apprenticeship policy.
- Continue to work with partners to tackle racism and hate language, including tackling the root causes, as part of delivering our commitments made in the Oxford Anti-Racism Charter.
- Contribute to wider thriving communities objectives such as addressing youth unemployment through active promotion of apprenticeships, the Rose Hill work hub and Oxford Living Wage.
- Enable people to exhibit and share their stories, cultures and histories in the newly redeveloped Museum of Oxford – the only museum in Oxford dedicated to telling the story of Oxford and its diverse communities.
- Work to find a suitable site for a burial ground so we can meet the future needs of Oxford’s diverse and faith-based communities.

- Through our grants, events surgeries and advice, we will support the LGBTQ+ community to access community facilities and create safe spaces for community activities for new and established groups to meet.

Leadership and Organisational Commitment

Context

The Council has a key role to play in demonstrating leadership in the city on equality, diversity and inclusion. As an organisation, we are responsible for providing investment and services that tackle inequalities; our councillors are elected to represent Oxford's diverse communities and give them a voice in creating a more equal city.

EDI runs through all the Council's strategies and will be a key part of our business and service plans, and every employee's individual performance plan.

The [Council's Strategy for 2020-2024](#) outlines some of the ways we will use our investment and economic influence to create a more inclusive economy, to tackle inequality and increase the opportunities for disadvantaged groups.

As well as working to tackle barriers to equality, we work with Thames Valley Police and other partners from the Oxford Safer Communities Partnership to reduce crime, anti-social behaviour and hate crime and to take legal action against individuals for these offences.

Priorities

- **Challenging discrimination:** using our voice, our services and our economic influence to challenge prejudice and institutional discrimination
- **Improving service design:** building in a strong equality, diversity and inclusion processes at the onset of policy and service design so that we meet the needs of all residents

Actions

We will show leadership in how we listen and communicate about diversity, as well as by the actions we take.

- We will continue to use our financial influence to encourage suppliers to meet demanding standards of equality and inclusion. The Council is one of the major institutions in the city, and we spend significant money in the local economy. We already require our suppliers to show they operate to the highest standards in certain areas, such as tackling modern-day slavery. We will look for further opportunities to embed high standards in our supply chain and actively encourage other Oxford employers to do the same.
- Work is underway to review our Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs), to ensure new policies and services fully consider the impact on protected groups. We aim to have strong EIAs and a clear process, actively supported by senior management, to make sure EDI issues are always considered at the earliest stage when we change or innovate in what we do.
- As well as using EIAs to develop policies and services, we will monitor the equality outcomes of new or updated policies and services. We will use this monitoring to provide feedback on how those services and policies are delivered and learn and improve how our EIAs promote equality.
- We have already embedded equality, diversity and inclusion requirements into our Community Grants criteria, and we will continue to monitor and prioritise equality outcomes as part of our grants process.

- We set up a Residents Panel in 2019 to help us improve our understanding of the views of residents on issues where we are not running a formal consultation. We will review the size and demographics of our Residents Panel and be prepared to increase the size and membership of the panel if needed.
- We are working on tackling harassment and violence against women and girls in the city centre through the Safer Streets initiative with Thames Valley Police and our partners.
- We will continue to act swiftly to tackle anti-social behaviour, for example removing offensive racist, homophobic and transphobic graffiti from Council buildings and public places within one working day.
- Our Anti-Social Behaviour Investigation Team treat all hate crime reports as a priority, working with the police and other partners to support victims and tackle the perpetrators.
- To implement the Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance (DAHA) accreditation which supports our work to be inclusive in meeting the needs of all victims.
- We work with the police to support our communities during and in the aftermath of protests.
- Our Anti-Slavery Coordinator works in partnership across Oxfordshire to combat modern slavery, raise awareness, support victims, and disrupt exploiters.
- Our strategic lead for Domestic Abuse works with partners to support victims of honour-based violence, female genital mutilation and other forms of domestic and sexual abuse.
- We will review how we inform and engage elected councillors on EDI issues, so that they are well informed and can actively engage with residents on these matters. We will support them as leaders in the local community by providing relevant, timely information about actions the Council is taking on EDI matters.
- Engage and empower residents to take action on carbon reduction, support access funding and programmes to cut carbon, and involve them in how we will achieve Zero Carbon Oxford by 2040. We will use our own processes, partnerships, and community relationships to ensure that we cut carbon emissions in Oxford in a way that does not disadvantage low-income households in the city or sacrifice residents' standard of living. We will take opportunities to enhance residents' standard of living, especially those who are most vulnerable and have low-incomes, through our climate action
- Use our programme of capital investment in building and infrastructure to set an example of high standards of inclusive design and planning for public spaces, community buildings and social housing. We will use stakeholder engagement, our Equalities Steering Group, and the public consultation process to listen to concerns around equality, diversity, and inclusion. We will apply and monitor EIAs from the early stages of project development.

Responsive Services and Customer Care

Context

The needs of residents are at the heart of everything the Council does, we have set out an ambition to build a world-class city for everyone. Oxford is a very diverse city and has stark inequalities, and it is vital that our services and our staff are able to respond and adapt to the needs of all residents. We are committed to high levels of customer care, and our People Strategy outlines the standards and values we expect our workforce to uphold for each other and for our customers.

Priorities

- **Ensuring no one is left behind:** focusing extra planning and resources on those most likely to struggle to access our services
- **Focus on crisis prevention:** provide early, joined-up services that support our customers to prevent the worst issues of inequality, including health inequalities, homelessness and debts.
- **Provide modern, accessible services for changing customer needs:** take the opportunities provided by digital technology to support self-service on demand, available at a time and place to suit the customer.

Actions

To deliver these standards in our services and customer care we will:

- Champion digital inclusion and accessibility as we move towards 'digital by default' services, working with partners to ensure there is access to devices, connectivity and skills development. Where appropriate, we will use Council funding and infrastructure, such as free community centre Wi-Fi, to support residents to get online, so that no one is excluded as we move towards fully digital service delivery.
- Work with customers as we go cashless, to ensure the support is there to complete financial transactions with the Council. We recognise that some people may need more support than others, and we aim to provide information, advice and support to ensure they are not disadvantaged as we make the transition.
- Continue to work with County Council and health colleagues, and other key stakeholders, to understand the impact that shielding and social isolation has had on residents, and the additional needs this has created for those affected. As part of this work, we aim to help create routes for people to be referred for appropriate health or social support so that needs are met.
- Review the accessibility and effectiveness of the relocation of the Council's contact centre into the central library.
- Audit green spaces and community facility access to help us develop how we provide these fairly across the city. The pandemic highlighted how essential these spaces are for creating better outcomes for health, skills and positive social connections in areas of high deprivation. This audit will help us devise our approach for future provision of these spaces to support better outcomes and tackle deprivation.
- Ensure that we understand issues that disproportionately affect specific groups and may lead to homelessness. Early homeless prevention is a key part of our Housing, Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy, and we will work with the community and partner organisations tackling homelessness to address these issues and prevent homelessness. Learnings will be incorporated into EIAs for future housing policies, procedures and strategies.
- Review and improve how we engage with our social housing tenants and leaseholders. The Government's Social Housing Whitepaper is expected to soon become legislation. The legislation will, amongst other things, require social housing landlords to provide high-quality engagement with their tenants. We are already reviewing and strengthening our approach to tenant engagement on our housing waiting list and will continue to put inclusion at the heart of this.

- Implement our Service Integration Project involving customer services, Housing, Community Services and Regulatory Services & Community Safety. The focus is on locality working specifically to address customers' needs and provide a preventative approach for vulnerable people to stop them from falling into crisis. We will also provide a reactive response when required, with the aim to create long-term solutions to emergency needs.

Diverse and Engaged Workforce

Context:

We have outlined in our People Strategy how we will ensure that diversity and inclusion are prioritised internally. This includes commitments on recruitment, development and retention to ensure our workforce reflects the make-up of the city, and processes, leadership and governance to embed equality, diversity and inclusion within our policy-making and service delivery.

Priorities:

- **Becoming an inclusive employer:** setting and promoting policies and providing training across the organisation, that foster an inclusive working culture
- **Recruit and retain a diverse workforce:** focus on recruiting, developing and promoting staff from a wider range of backgrounds to truly represent the city, including at senior level
- **Empower staff:** create robust and transparent processes, policies and systems across the Council that improve staff ability to champion diversity and inclusion

Actions

Among the commitments we have made as part of this are:

- Implement and embed the Council's Equality Action Plan to ensure the Council is regarded as an exemplar of good practice, through our staff Equalities Champions and the Equalities Steering Group
- Cultivate leadership at all levels, so that all staff are able to develop and progress throughout their careers. We have made a clear commitment to a more diverse workforce at management level, with a focus on more managers who are female or from a Black, Asian or Minority Ethnic heritage.
- Improving our data collection to help us understand barriers and opportunities to recruiting, retaining and developing talented people from diverse backgrounds.
- Empowering employees to create staff networks that represent the interest and experiences of those with protected characteristics.

Oversight

The four objectives we have outlined follow the Local Government Association's priorities for Equality, Diversity and Inclusion. These are cross-cutting themes that underpin all our work and our service strategies. We need clear oversight and processes to ensure we remain on track to deliver our commitments in this strategy.

The City Council has established an Equalities Steering group, chaired by the Executive Director for Communities and People. This is an advisory group that meets monthly to review progress at service level, reflect staff experience of EDI policy and implementation, and champion EDI within service area.

To strengthen oversight, accountability, and challenge at the senior level, the Equalities Steering group will present quarterly to the Corporate Management Team (CMT) of service directors and the Leaders Group of Cabinet Members. CMT and the Leaders Group will have a challenge and advisory role, rather than acting as decision-makers on EDI delivery. Likewise, the Scrutiny function's purpose is to provide independent and cross-party challenge and advice from non-executive members. Scrutiny also has the capacity to undertake deep-dives into specific topics through Review Groups, and Scrutiny will be offered the opportunity to establish a standing Equalities Review Group as part of its annual work programme.

Our review and development of Equality Impact Assessments and their governance will deliver improvements in how we consider and address equality and inclusion across all our services and policies.

Oversight structure



Our achievements so far

Workforce diversity and inclusion

We are working to build a more inclusive culture, and have implemented a programme of activities, including awareness sessions discussing lived experiences, establishing employee networks for protected groups, and development sessions on equalities for the leadership community.

The Council were awarded Disability Confident Employer status (at Level 2) on 23 March 2021 and this will be in place up to the 19 March 2024

Equality Impact Assessments

We use EIAs to ensure our policies and services do not create unconscious discrimination and to ensure equality principles are designed in from the start.

We are reviewing the process and criteria for these to ensure they are not only adequate for our customers' needs but go beyond that, to deliver on our aspirations of equality for everyone.

Equality Monitoring

We monitor and report on our progress against the gender, ethnicity and disability pay gap, to inform our recruitment, retention and development approaches.

We use our equality monitoring of staff demographics to review our people Strategy and implementations

Locality teams

We have created Locality Hubs, enabling frontline, responsive teams reacting to the needs of the most vulnerable people in our communities and creating trusting relationships with communities and individuals we had failed to reach previously.

Engagement and involvement

We support a range of external partners and activities to promote equality, diversity and inclusion.

We promote awareness of diversity, equality and inclusion to our audiences around key opportunities, including Black History Month, LGBT History Month and South Asian Heritage Month.