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Title of meeting:	Employment Committee
Subject:	Equality, Diversity and Inclusion
Date of meeting:	23 November 2021
Report by:	Director of Corporate Services
Wards affected:	All

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report is to update members on progress against the actions set out in the Equality and Diversity Strategy 2019 - 2022 and provide an update on the council's actions in regard to Equality Diversity and Inclusion throughout the Covid 19 response (March 2019 to date). The report also outlines a forward plan of action to further enhance and embed the council's commitment to equalities, evidence compliance with the Public Sector Equality Duty and set out the actions to be taken that will underpin the Council Corporate Plan for Recovery and Renewal.

2. Recommendations

Members are asked to note the contents of this report and endorse the planned activity to enhance and embed the council's commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion.

3. Background

The current PCC Equality and Diversity Strategy 2019 - 2022 was published in 2019 and had strong member support from the Cabinet Member. Not long after publication the council underwent a restructure and as a result it was not clear where in the officer structure strategic responsibility for Equalities then rested, compounded with no dedicated corporate Equalities resources as this team had been disbanded several years previously. Furthermore, as a result of the change in structure a number of actions had been assigned to specific roles within the council that no longer existed. The consequence of these changes was a hiatus in progressing a number of actions for a period of some months leading up to the start of the pandemic response in March 2020. During the same period a new role was created in the senior leadership team and was appointed to in September 2019 (Director of Corporate Services).

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Both prior to, and during the pandemic response there has been recognition and commitment by the council of the importance of equalities and diversity in ensuring delivery of high quality services for all residents; and that our employment policies and practices ensure we attract and retain a diverse workforce, enable all staff to reach their potential, and deliver services that are fair and accessible for all residents.

During March 2020 the council entered into an emergency response phase in order to manage the response to the Covid 19 pandemic. As the pandemic progressed more and more evidence emerged of the disproportionate impact of the pandemic on our communities and in particular:

- Black and Asian communities
- Those with underlying health conditions and disabilities (clinically extremely vulnerable, clinically vulnerable)
- Those living in poverty or experiencing deprivation
- The homeless
- Those aged 60 and over

In addition, during the summer of 2020 the killing of George Floyd raised awareness of race inequality on a global scale.

The combination of factors outlined above shone a light on the structural inequalities that exist within the UK, and within the city.

As a result of the above the council publicly declared its commitment to equality, and race equality in particular, at its meeting in July 2020.

At the same time the Director of Corporate Services assumed strategic responsibility for Equality, Diversity and Inclusion and more recently a corporate Equalities Officer role has been created and recruitment completed. The new Equalities Officer starts in role on 15 December 2021.

4. Progress Against Equality and Diversity Strategy Action Plan

The Equality and Diversity Strategy 2019 - 2022 sets out 32 actions/objectives under 5 themes.

Objective Theme	No of Actions
Promote fairness and equality by tackling inequalities, disadvantage and discrimination	8
Leadership and partnerships	4
Employment and training	9
Service delivery and access	8

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Promoting community and the voluntary sector	3
Total	32

Progress in delivering a number of the actions has been superseded by the Covid response, for example around Homelessness, and in some cases actions have not been progressed due to capacity in the organisation where Covid response has been prioritised. However, several actions are now in progress and a small number have been completed as set out below:

The chart 1 below sets out progress against all actions:

Chart 1 Equality and Diversity All Actions Progress (November 2021)

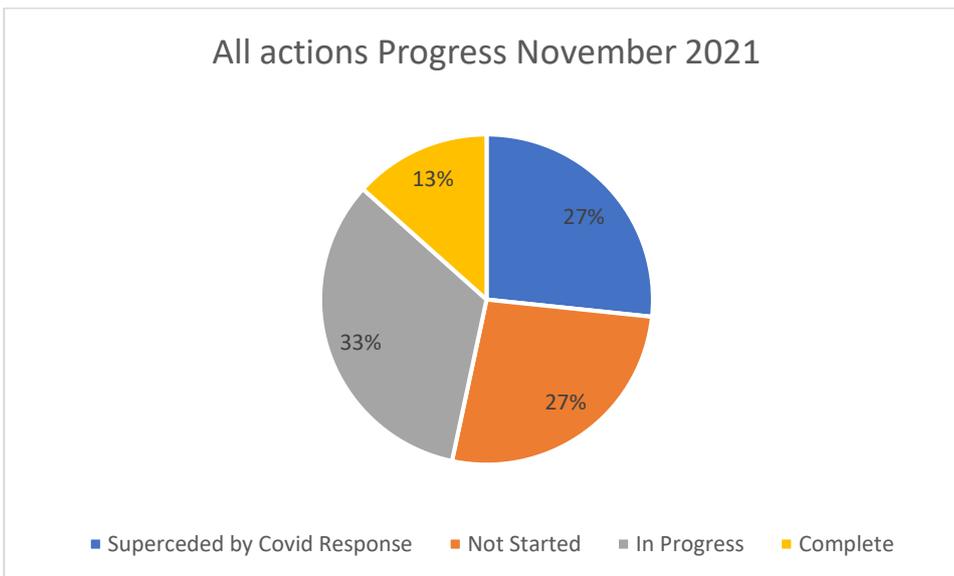
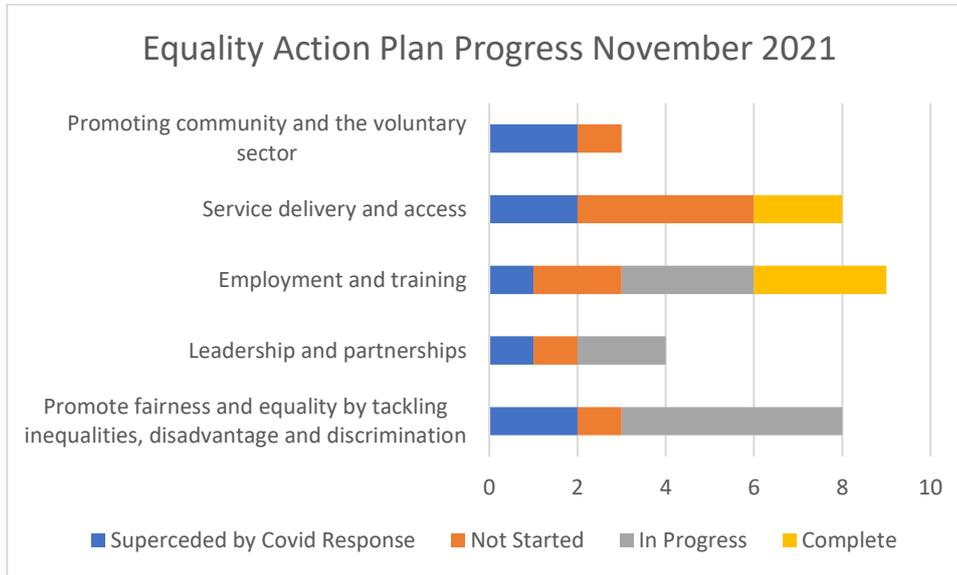


Chart 2 below sets out progress against actions under each objective theme:

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Chart 2 Equality and Diversity Progress by Theme



The details of actions and their status can be seen in Appendix 1.

Although action against 27% of the objectives has not been started to date, it should be noted that despite the challenges presented by a global pandemic 46% of objectives are either in progress or complete.

The Equality and Diversity Strategy states that an annual report will be produced to show progress on achieving the equality objectives and will report to the Governance, Audit and Standards Committee. For all the reasons outlined above an annual report was not produced during 2020, however the above charts show progress against achieving the objectives and further information setting out additional actions undertaken is set out below.

5. Actions Undertaken March 2020 to Date

As outlined above the requirement of the council to move into a pandemic response mode in March 2020 meant the organisation focused on business continuity to ensure critical services remained in place to support our residents and communities. Over the last 18 months of the pandemic services have resumed although methods of delivery have had to be altered to ensure covid safety for both residents and staff. In working through these changes equality, diversity and inclusion considerations have been at the forefront, and additional activity has also been undertaken to support those most vulnerable. Actions taken during the period are outlined below, some of which are actions arising from the Equality and Diversity Strategy and some are in addition. The activities outlined below are

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those with a specific reference to Equality and Diversity and do not represent all of the work undertaken by the council and partners, in responding to the pandemic.

At its October 2020 meeting the Council further declared its commitment to inclusion by committing to becoming a Sunflower Friendly Council and signed up to the Hidden Disabilities Sunflower Scheme. As a result all customer facing staff were given training in recognising hidden disabilities and how to support customers; non-customer facing staff were also given training in the scheme as part of an awareness raising campaign and so staff can support each other. Residents and staff can access Hidden Disabilities Sunflower Lanyards and our staff wellbeing resources have incorporated the hidden disabilities tools. Councillors were also trained in the scheme and a good uptake of the training by members was seen.

In July 2020 a Staff Race Equality Network was established. The group is open to all staff within PCC, the CCG and staff from other partner organisations who don't have a similar network. The focus of the group is on inclusion, providing a forum for mutual support, sharing of experience, consultation about new policies and strategies and support to the wider equalities agenda. It also includes race equality allies from across the organisation and links in to the equalities network established among our schools and education colleagues. The group has an established terms of reference and a number of sub groups on specific areas such as events and support. The Group is chaired at Director level and the Cabinet member is also a member of the group as a race equality ally thereby ensuring senior level champions and the ability for the group to have a voice at strategic level in the organisation. The group have also recently developed a Race Equality Action Plan which is now being populated with action owners and measures to track delivery and impact; the action plan will eventually come under the umbrella of the EDI strategy as one of a number of action plans that will deliver the outcomes in the overarching strategy when it is refreshed in 2022. The group have also been assigned a small budget to progress their work.

One of the achievements of the staff Race Equality Network is the council joining the Safe Space initiative. The initiative creates a Safe Space for individuals who might need support on a night out and is now located in the reception of Civic Offices in Guildhall Square. This has moved from Guildhall Walk Practice, where it has been located over the summer. The Safe Space will be open every Friday and Saturday from 10pm to 3am to offer confidential and non-judgemental advice, immediate medical care, and help for minor injuries from trained professionals to anyone who needs it. Members of the network reached out to the organisers of the initiative and were able to work with services to enable the council offices to participate. The initiative is run in partnership with health and with support from Hampshire Constabulary and the Street Pastors network.

A further area highlighted by the pandemic is the role of unpaid carers in society. As a result of Covid there has been an increase in people who are caring for someone, with 8 out of 10 carers being of working age (i.e. between 16 and 65) according to research carried out Carers UK. Working in partnership with the Adult Social Care Carers Service

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work is currently underway to develop our approach as an employer to supporting staff with caring responsibilities. The council have taken out membership of Employers for Carers which gives us access to a range of resources including guidance documents, employer toolkits, sharing of best practice, digital resources and networking events. Two workshops have been completed, one for working carers and one for managers to start a conversation and understand current experience in the council and to inform how we develop policies and initiatives to support working carers. A lunch and learn session was hosted to promote the membership resources available to staff who are carers and more recently a Staff Carers Network has been established, along similar lines to the Staff Race Equality Network.

Immediately prior to the pandemic work was started to develop insight about the workforce profile so we can better understand the range of protected characteristics among the workforce and begin to understand the barriers and enablers to inclusion. The council has also implemented a new system for all its workforce information during 2021 and has used the opportunity to encourage staff to update their personal information so that we have a better quality of workforce data from which to draw insight. The categories against which data is collected also now includes all protected characteristics, including some that were not captured under the previous system such as gender identity and sexual orientation. Future years workforce profiles will therefore include these additional categories to further improve our understanding of our workforce.

One of the benefits of annual workforce profile analysis is the ability to track trends and evidence changes arising from actions set out in the Equality and Diversity Strategy in relation to having a diverse workforce and one that is representative of our local community. In order to aid comparison the categories for reporting purposes have been aligned to those of the Office for National Statistics so that like for like comparisons can be made with our population data.

An issue identified as a gap in our workforce data, is an inability to capture data of job applicants. During 2022 a new recruitment system will be implemented that will give greater insight on the protected characteristics of applicants and this will help us to understand who is applying for jobs at the council, how we can improve our reach into our communities and promote careers in local government amongst the widest and most diverse audience as possible. Insight on applicants also helps to identify any potential issues in the recruitment process that may present a barrier.

It is also a requirement of the Public Sector Equality Duty to publish workforce information on an annual basis and therefore the Workforce Profile will be refreshed and published annually and reported to the Employment Committee, with the current workforce profiles for 2019 and 2020 being reported to Employment Committee on 23 November 2021.

Over the last 18 months there has been close working with the Directorate of Children, Families and Education in ensuring that EDI runs through the recently launched Children's

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Trust Plan and a particular commitment to tackling race equality in education. The plan is currently being consulted with stakeholders.

The directorate are working in close partnership with the University and through the Portsmouth Education Partnership. The two areas of focus currently are on tackling racism and supporting transgender young people.

In amongst the above work we have also been taking a targeted approach to encouraging vaccine uptake within the city with an equalities focus. This work is data driven enabling us to target specific sections of our community where the data shows the greatest need. The work to date has focused on our Black and Minority Ethnic communities, younger people aged 16+, those living in more deprived parts of the city (including the homeless) and our Eastern European communities. It has included webinars for the Black community, pop up vaccination clinics e.g. at the Jami Mosque and Friendship House, Instagram stories and Tick Tok features as well as direct outreach work among the Buy Black network of retailers in the city. The working group also has a local resident as a core member, who is a community leader for race equality; this involvement of a resident has been invaluable to our approach to targeting vaccine uptake among our younger age groups and among our ethnic minority communities and enabled the voice of our communities to directly inform the approaches we have taken. The new community champions programme is now becoming established and we are looking to recruit community champions from younger age groups to help encourage vaccine uptake among young people. The work on increasing vaccine uptake has been and continues to be well supported by partners, in particular the Hive, with joint working on webinars, access to community groups and volunteers.

The council has also started working with other large institutions in the city, namely the Naval Base, Portsmouth University, Portsmouth Hospitals University NHS Trust, and Hampshire Constabulary to develop a city wide approach to inclusion and equalities among these partners, starting with some shared activities as part of national inclusion week at the end of September, Black History Month throughout October and, national hate crime awareness week.

6. The Future and Next Steps

Going forward pandemic response work will continue on encouraging vaccine uptake using a data driven approach to target the areas of greatest need. The two established staff networks will also continue to be supported and engaged in supporting the wider equality, diversity and inclusion agenda for the council and the city.

An Equalities Steering group will be established with representation from across all council service areas and partners where appropriate. An initial task for this group will be to undertake an equality, diversity and inclusion self-assessment using the Local Government Association equalities framework. The group will also review progress against the current strategy and identify the underpinning activities needed to support and

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enable delivery of the council plan for recovery and renewal. The two activities will be used to inform the Equality and Diversity Strategy 2022 - 2025.

A number of gaps have already been identified that need addressing including:

- Greater focus on LGBTQ+ communities and staff
- Greater focus on disabled communities and staff
- Expand the city-wide strategic approach to include more partners, in particular in the voluntary and community sector
- Further develop the council's approach to measuring achievement of objectives, for example tracking changes in the workforce profile
- Equalities data gathering from recruitment activity
- Further develop the data sets used to inform, measure and provide an evidence base for equality and diversity initiatives
- Incorporate regular reporting of equalities achievements/data in corporate performance reporting to Governance, Audit and Standards Committee
- Develop mechanisms to ensure community engagement by services and partners enables the community voice to be heard in setting equality and diversity priorities

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Signed by (Director)

Appendices:

Background list of documents: Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972

The following documents disclose facts or matters, which have been relied upon to a material extent by the author in preparing this report:

Title of document	Location