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Title of meeting:	Cabinet
Subject:	Tuesday 21 March 2023
Date of meeting:	Development of equalities and diversity strategy
Report by:	Head of marketing, communications and engagement
Wards affected:	All

1. **Requested by** Cabinet Member for Communities and Central Services

2. Purpose

To update Cabinet on work undertaken to support the development of a new equalities and diversity strategy for the council.

3. Information Requested

- 3.1 Work is underway to create the next iteration of the council's equalities and diversity strategy which will cover the period 2023-26.
- 3.2 While the council's aim is ultimately to achieve the highest possible standards relating to equality and diversity, we need to consider our current position and the resources available to deliver improvements and to set realistic and achievable targets to work towards.
- 3.3 The Local Government Association has created an [Equality Framework for Local Government](#) which councils can use to undertake a self-assessment. The Framework has three levels: developing, achieving and excellent.
- 3.4 A self-assessment exercise was carried out which gathered information and views from a range of staff in roles relevant to the extensive criteria on the framework. It found the council to be at the developing level across the four modules of the framework. A summary of the self-assessment can be seen in appendix 1.
- 3.5 While the overall level for each module was developing, there were a significant number of areas ranked as achieving and pockets of excellence throughout the organisation but often no consistent approach throughout the council.

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- 3.6 As well as assessing our current position, the self-assessment exercise asked for a view on what it would take to improve in the various criteria and this has given an indication of the resource it might take for the council to achieve a better rating in the future.
- 3.7 In many areas plans are already in development to improve equalities outcomes and would be expected to lead to improved scoring on the Equality Framework for Local Government. This includes staff training and workforce strategy implementation in HR and the review of Integrated Impact Assessments. It is also worth noting the implementation of an equalities strategy for the organisation, giving a clear direction of travel for departments to work to, will assist with this progress.
- 3.8 The main areas the council needs to progress which will not be addressed by existing work or by straightforward changes within the organisation, relates to collection and sharing of data across the organisation. This includes sharing of data relating to local need and those accessing services as well as information on key contacts to engage with for specific communities.
- 3.9 The pockets of excellence found within specific departments and projects suggest within the council there is knowledge of the key contacts who can facilitate engagement with different communities but it is siloed and not widely available across the organisation.
- 3.10 Feedback from across the organisation indicates there is a desire to make improvements relating to these areas but additional support or resource is needed.
- 3.11 Alongside the internal self-assessment exercise research was carried out with residents representing communities with protected characteristics to ensure we align our strategy with their priorities.
- 3.12 By reaching out through voluntary and community sector organisations we recruited to two workshops attended by 28 people and carried out an online survey completed by 263 respondents. An informal workshop was also conducted with 10 members of the Youth Cabinet. Full results can be seen on the Your City Your Say section of the council website under [Equality, Diversity and Inclusion \(EDI\) Draft Strategy Research](#)
- 3.13 Participants generally agreed with the approach and priorities set out.
- 3.14 Around 20% of respondents (online survey) feel they have experienced discrimination and micro-aggressions based on protected characteristics. The self-assessment identified plans are already in place to assess and deliver

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equality-related training required within the organisation which should help improve this.

- 3.15 The most common reason for difficulty accessing services was not knowing what is available. Additional comments given suggest respondents have difficulty negotiating PCC departments or processes. This could be mitigated by extending the council's training on the Making Every Contact Count approach which would increase the number of frontline workers skilled in referring residents to a range of support. The suggestion people with protected characteristics may need more support in accessing services means this could be included in the review of equality-related training requirements.
- 3.16 There was a theme throughout the findings that the council does not engage well with communities; this seemed to centre around information being shared with them and possibly links with the self-assessment identifying a need for better access across the organisation to contacts who can facilitate engagement with specific groups (3.8 above).
- 3.17 A draft strategy will be brought to Cabinet in the new municipal year, setting out aims and priorities along with proposals for public consultation ahead of the final strategy document being adopted.
- 3.18 The draft strategy will detail plans to improve in line with the modules in the Equality Framework for Local Government and the findings of the public research.
- 3.19 Based on all of the above, steps can be taken to develop the organisation relating to both the public's priorities and the Equality Framework for Local Government without specific additional resources. However, the one area it appears it may be more challenging to do this is in module 1 of the framework.
- 3.20 While improvements will be made in the period covered by the strategy, if the council wants to continue beyond that to work towards the highest levels of attainment it is likely to require additional dedicated resource.

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Signed by (Director)

Appendices:

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

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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
Equality Framework for Local Government	https://www.local.gov.uk/publications/equality-framework-local-government-eflg-2021
Portsmouth City Council equalities self-assessment	Appendix 1 (below)
Equality, Diversity & Inclusion draft strategy research	Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Draft Strategy Research

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Appendix 1

Portsmouth City Council equalities self-assessment

Ahead of work on Portsmouth City Council's new equalities and diversity strategy, a self-assessment exercise has been carried out for the organisation using the Local Government Association's [Equality Framework for Local Government](#).

The overall result is Developing. Details for each of the four modules are below.

Module 1: Understanding and working with your communities

Level: Developing

1. Collecting and sharing information

Level - **Developing**

Many specific areas use both national and local data well but outside of the department dealing with a topic there is limited understanding of what data might be available.

Data is gathered and published as part of various projects, such as the cost-of-living dashboard, lessons learnt from this best practice can be shared across the organisation. Some good examples of directorates such as Public Health and Children, Families and Education working closely with their partners and sharing information.

Specific areas scored some of the Achieving criteria, such as employing best practice by using qualitative and quantitative methods to gather data and information, and disaggregating it using the same or similar categories, but this is not done consistently.

Market Research advise on best approach to consultation when contacted but across the organisation may be inconsistencies in diversity monitoring. It is worth noting that directorates are keen on making sure consultation is proportionate and best suited and decide on framework on case-by-case basis.

Across the organisation there are pockets of Excellent, such as Culture, Leisure and Regulatory Services regularly updating data and using it to set priorities across the directorate and services to support specific needs of geographical areas or residents with specific needs and characteristics. They achieve this through quarterly KPI data collection and reporting, which can be used by services to update and inform operational plans. However, this is not done consistently across the whole of the organisation. Feedback identified additional central resource would

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be helpful to improve data collection, sharing and analysis so that it can be used to set priorities.

2. Analysing and using data and information

Level - Developing

Good work is happening within many distinct areas but there is there is no clear consistency across the organisation. A process for effective knowledge sharing within the council would be a very helpful first step to find out what information we have and how compatible the data sets might be. Difficulties include different data sets not being compatible with one-another, sensitive/ confidential data and being able to marry up different sets of data.

Gaps were identified around using data effectively as part of integrated impact assessment (IIA) and risk assessment processes, as often limited data is available. Across the organisation, systems are being developed to analyse soft and hard data/intelligence about communities, their needs, and aspirations.

Children Families and Education directorate and the Strategic Intelligence and Research team within Public Health are performing well in this area, meeting some of the Achieving and a few of the Excellent criteria but this is not done consistently across the organisation.

3. Effective community engagement

Level - Achieving

Responses notably differ between departments. In the majority of areas integrated engagement mechanisms and structures are in place to involve stakeholders in scrutinising service delivery, decision-making and progress. Many specific areas engage with all communities when making decisions, including those from under-represented groups, a good example of this is the co-production process Adult Social Care used when creating the Autism Support Hub and looking at the needs of neurodiverse community in the city. Children, Families and Education also scored highly on these criteria but advised that additional resource would allow them to increase the involvement of all under-represented groups in all consultations.

While the majority of areas are performing to a good standard, there are some gaps such as consistent approach to engagement and evidencing engagement with under-represented groups - it is not clear if this is because of a lack of routine diversity monitoring or other issues such as a need for better relationships between communities and the council.

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Culture, Leisure and Regulatory Services and Children, Families and Education show examples of excellent practices, meeting some of the Excellent criteria, such as working with their partners to improve performance on good relations in the community and where resources permit cater for difference, even where there is very limited or no actual representation within a local demographic. Challenges noted include a need for more resource to reach out to under-represented communities outside of the usual channels used to promote engagement activities and knowledge sharing across the organisation about who key contacts are.

4. Fostering good community relations

Level - **Developing**.

Structures are in place within the organisation and across partnerships to understand community relationships and map community tensions, these include a bi-weekly community tension monitoring meeting chaired by Hampshire Police, although this may benefit from wider participation. The quarterly Prevent board discusses community tensions and has access to the LGA Special Interest Group on Counter Extremism, this provides opportunities for roundtable discussions and communication briefings. The newly re-established community tasking and coordinating group monitors tensions to some extent.

In terms of harassment and hate crimes being monitored and analysed regularly, the Community Safety Partnership strategic assessment analyses hate crimes, and the police provide an update to the Prevent board on hate crime specifically. Specific support for council housing tenants is available through a hate crime officer in Housing. The Home Office has suggested developing a disruption policy for use in managing a serious incident of hate crime or related protest/demonstration, this may be more practical as part of a wider piece of work, if pursued it would help progress towards Achieving level.

5. Participation in public life

Level - **Developing**

The organisation has some understanding of the level of participation in public life by different communities/protected characteristics. This can include involvement in local democracy and representation e.g. school governors, councillors, board members of voluntary/statutory sector organisations.

The consensus is that additional resource would assist in more targeted outreach work and public campaigns to reach under-represented communities and enhance

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participation in public life. Some directorates advised that all section of the community are involved in public life, however diversity monitoring data is not routinely collected, therefore this could be anecdotal.

Module 2: Leadership, partnership, and organisational commitment Level - Developing

1. Political and officer leadership

Level - Developing

The political and executive leadership have publicly committed to reducing inequality, fostering good community relations, and challenging discrimination. Many specific areas feel their leadership champions the equalities, diversity and inclusion (EDI) agenda, but there are some gaps in business as usual embedding of EDI practices across the organisation. The idea of regular training and awareness to ensure that leaders are up to date with EDI related matters was raised.

Some areas scored Achieving and Excellent criteria, such as acting as ambassadors and managing conflicting needs and community tensions, but this was not consistently across the whole organisation and in places there were slight gaps in the Developing criteria.

2. Priorities and working in partnership

Level - Achieving

There is a coherent, shared vision of equality for the local area, with clear priorities which have been agreed and understood by all key stakeholders, including the voluntary and community sector. This can be evidence with the City Vision work, where consultation was broad and robust to ensure marginalised groups took part. One of the most important values identified as part of the City Vision is equality. There is evidence of looking beyond traditional partners to include the voices of smaller influencing organisations. Frameworks such as Social Value can be flexed to support particular groups or particular outcomes. There are high level statements within the corporate and partnership documents relating to equalities, however these could be more explicit in places or detail that specific issues will be defined in underlying documents.

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3. Using equality impact assessment

Level - Developing

This is a very strong Developing and close to Achieving in areas. Many specific directorates have embedded the IIA process, but a further benefit might be ensuring IIAs are completed at the outset of projects. Further training could assist with this to compliment an updated IIA form which will be rolled-out to the organisation this year. Drop-in training sessions will take place and the Equality and Diversity Officer is available for consultation on Equality Impact Assessment (EIA). This should allow for the EIA to be robust and meaningful.

There are pockets of Excellent, such as willingness to take measured risk to progress the EDI agenda in specific areas, but other areas do not perform as well. Overall, due regard is taken to the aims of the general equality duty when conducting business as usual, making decisions and when setting policies. The next step of ensuring that equality analysis/impact assessments are integrated systematically into planning, decision making and performance reviews across the organisation and based on this assessment this should be easily achievable by introduction of the new form, training and raising awareness.

4. Performance monitoring and scrutiny

Level - Developing/Achieving

Appropriate structures are in place to ensure delivery and review of equality objectives in the form of the EDI Steering Group, but how information cascades from there to specific service areas is inconsistent. There are pockets of Excellent, relating to Scrutiny Panels and specific areas assessing their performance and outcomes against comparable organisations. With the introduction of the EDI strategy and toolkit the organisation should move to Achieving level by meeting criteria around setting and monitoring of equality objectives which are subject to challenge and linking to the political overview and scrutiny process.

Module 3: Responsive services and customer care

Level: Developing

1. Commissioning and procuring services

Level - Developing/Achieving

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The organisation is working to ensure that procurement and commissioning processes and practices take account of the diverse needs of clients, and that providers understand the requirements of the public sector equality duty. The organisation has an established Social Value Framework, where the social value of contracts is measured, but there is no specific focus on equalities, it is just one of a number of areas suppliers can deliver social value. There may be potential to enhance the focus on equalities within which could meet Excellent criteria but this is something that would need to be explored further.

2. Integration of equality objectives into planned service outcomes

Level - Developing

There are significant inconsistencies with some areas meeting Achieving and Excellent criteria and others scoring lower. Successes around objectives are SMART, past performance is reviewed and gaps are identified in who is and isn't using the services. It seems many service plans are not written with equality objectives in mind and objectives are not underpinned by equality analysis. A feature of feedback was departments a lack of training or resource (time and budget) makes embedding equality objectives into planned service outcomes and business as usual challenging.

3. Service design and delivery

Level - Developing

Overall, the organisation has systems to collect, analyse and measure how satisfied sections of the community are with all services. Specific areas advised there are examples of where the human rights of individuals have been threatened and the organisation has ensured that they are safeguarded and safeguarding outcomes for under-represented groups improved, which are both Excellent criteria.

Feedback suggests a lack of data, systems, and resource to identify current participation, while satisfaction data is not disaggregated based on protected characteristics, and these are areas that need to be improved in order to measure whether all sections of the community are able to access services.

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Module 4: Diverse and engaged workforce

Level - Developing

1. Workforce diversity and inclusion

Level - Developing

The organisation understands its local labour market and has mechanisms in place to monitor its workforce against protected characteristics. HR is working on improving data gathering and workforce profile so comparisons can be made with Census 2021 data sets. Specific areas are working on diversifying recruitment and ensuring under-represented groups are represented, this is done in tandem with HR. The organisation continues to support, engage with and grow employee network groups to progress the work on wider equality, diversity and inclusion. Resource would assist in facilitating staff network groups, setting clear terms of reference, and promoting participation. There is ongoing work on embedding values and behaviours linking in new performance management processes to assist with fairness, equality, and inclusive culture.

2. Inclusive strategies and policies

Level - Developing

The organisation's workforce strategies and policies include equality considerations and objectives. New and major changes are assessed via the IIA. Some Achieving criteria are met, such as having set of policies and practices to enhance workforce equality and diversity including equal pay, flexible working and family friendly policies, harassment and bullying incidents being monitored and analysed and staff led equality networks have been established. There is also ongoing work to develop recognised steps for reasonable adjustments and improvements to process to report bullying and harassment. It was noted where it is necessary to implement positive action into policies and processes specific project support may be required, this may be around recruitment, training and policy changes.

3. Collecting, analysing, and publishing workforce data

Level - Developing

Work is underway to improve data gathering relating to HR processes in an employee's lifecycle (such as recruitment, onboarding, training, grievances, and leavers) although a specific resource to support this would be required to inform where change and positive action is needed. A review of job advertisements, job design and interview processes will be undertaken to assess whether they are

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inclusive. Training and setting performance metrics will be implemented to measure effectiveness. Additional resource is required to increase capacity to be able to provide improved accurate workforce data recording and reporting with regular access for HR and managers.

4. Learning, development, and progression

Level - Developing

Assessments of the training, learning and development needs of members and officers, in order that they understand their equality duties and take action to deliver equality outcomes, is inconsistent. An assessment is being undertaken as to what equality-related training, learning or development is required in the organisation. There is currently no easy way of knowing if course advertisement is reaching all staff and this needs to be investigated, also there is currently no specific support for the progression of under-represented groups but this is an area being looked at. There is also an opportunity to look at ways of improving appraisals to have more focus on equality and diversity. Additionally, a review of exit interview data is being completed to understand changes in the workforce profile and identify trends affecting career progression that are linked to equality. For the organisation to progress to the Achieving category, an learning management system that supports a talent management approach, tracks training and supports career progression is required as this would feed into the above analysis. Additionally, recruitment of a project support officer would assist with the development of career pathways and performance framework, also linked to behaviours framework (as per the Workforce diversity and inclusion category above).

5. Health and wellbeing

Level - Developing

The organisation has begun to consider how EDI issues are linked to employee health and wellbeing. Alignment of wellbeing coordinator and absence management has commenced so that wellbeing initiatives are driven by the needs of the workforce and introduction of hybrid working to enhance flexible working. An Employee Assistance Program is available. Training has been secured for staff development relating to wellbeing. Work that needs to progress in all areas is related to promotion of a positive health and wellbeing culture throughout all levels and areas of the organisation, linked to values, behaviours, flexible working, and wellbeing champions. The above evidence illustrates that the organisation has assessed all aspects of the working environment to ensure the health and safety needs of all its employees are met including around COVID-19. A range of inclusive mechanisms are in place to engage and involve staff. The organisation has considered working arrangements and patterns in the light of the COVID pandemic. Resource to work

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with wellbeing champions is required to improve staff wellbeing across all services with an EDI lens and evaluate the impact of current initiatives on wellbeing and absence levels.