



Title of meeting: Cabinet

Date of meeting: 5 March 2024

Subject: Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy

Report by: Director of Corporate Services

Report author: Head of marketing, communications and engagement

Cabinet Member: Councillor Steve Pitt, Leader

Wards affected: All wards

Key decision: No

Full Council decision: No

1. Purpose of report

1.1 To seek Cabinet's approval of the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2024-2027.

2. Recommendations

2.1 Cabinet is recommended to approve the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion strategy 2024-2027, attached as appendix A.

3. Background

3.1 The strategy is based on the Local Government Association's [Equality Framework for Local Government](#). The Framework has three levels: developing, achieving and excellent.

3.2 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 the strategy, appendix A.

3.3 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.

- 3.4 As well as assessing our current position, the self-assessment exercise asked for a view on what it would take to improve against the various criteria, and this has given an indication of how the council may achieve a better rating in the future.
- 3.5 In many areas plans are already in train or in development to improve equalities outcomes which would be expected to lead to improved scoring on the Equality Framework for Local Government.
- 3.6 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. A full list of protected characteristics can be seen in the Local Government Association web page on equalities listed at the end of this report
- 3.7 By reaching out through voluntary and community sector organisations we recruited to two workshops and carried out an online survey. An informal workshop was also conducted with members of the Youth Cabinet. The recruitment was successful in reaching those with protected characteristics, with a greater proportion taking part in the survey and workshops than would be found in the average sample of Portsmouth residents as illustrated in table 1 below.

Table 1

Characteristic	Census 2021 Portsmouth (%)	Survey respondents (%)	Workshop participants (%)
Sexual orientation other than heterosexual	5	21	12
Identifying with a gender different to sex registered at birth	0.7	2	4
Ethnic group other than white British	22	27	59
Have a disability	20	22	26

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](#)

- 3.8 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 prioritise activity with a set of realistic and achievable targets to work towards. Therefore, a draft strategy was developed using the self-assessment and targeted community research focusing on plans for the coming years to move the council to achieving level and set the foundations in place to reach excellent level in the future while we continue to embed an inclusive culture.

In September 2023 Cabinet approved consultation on the draft strategy. A consultation ran for six weeks and attracted 565 responses a sample size that ensures a 95% confidence level in the results with a margin of error of 4%. Full results can be seen on the council website under [Equality, Diversity and Inclusion \(EDI\) Draft Strategy Research](#)

- 3.9 The survey results show the majority of respondents agree with the contents of the strategy and only a small percentage disagreed as shown in table 2 below:

Table 2

EDI strategy area	% disagreeing
Mission statement	16
Framework approach	14
Ultimate aim of 'excellent'	15
Interim aim of 'achieving'	18
Key area: improve use of data	5
Key area: build community relationships	5
Key area: embed awareness across council	9
Key area; support staff and create diverse workforce	12

- 3.10 The majority of those disagreeing either gave no explanation for their view or fell into the following themes:

Table 3

Reason for disagreeing	Response
Feeling equalities work is unnecessary as people are already equal or just need to integrate into local communities.	This strategy aims to support that integration.
Concerns about segregation by singling out groups.	There are no plans in place that would do this.
Concerns about resources equality work would take away from other council activity.	No additional resource is being requested for this work, currently improvements are to be delivered through business-as-usual work
Questions about the suitability of the framework either coming from commercial businesses.	The framework is not from the business world, it has been created for local government
Questions about how the framework would be tailored for Portsmouth.	The framework does not set any specific actions, these will be formed locally by council departments based

Reason for disagreeing	Response
	on local information about what local communities need from them.
Concerns about how specific operational detail might be implemented.	No specific operational detailed is covered in the strategy, concerns can be passed to specific departments where relevant.
Concern having an interim target of reaching 'achieving' level would mean not going for 'excellent' level.	The aim is to reach 'excellent' level, achieving level is merely a step towards that and recognition of the work to be done and the limited timeframe this strategy covers.
No mention of a specific protected characteristic.	No protected characteristics are singled out as the aim is to support everyone equally.
The council should already be doing these things.	Often elements are in place but this is about improving what we have and ensuring a consistent approach. These comments saying the council should be doing this is effectively support.

4. Reasons for recommendations

- 4.1 The strategy will help focus the organisation's efforts to improve in the areas of equality, diversity and inclusion.
- 4.2 It is based on an established framework and best practice and was developed with input from stakeholders representing those most likely to experience discrimination.
- 4.3 The consultation shows strong levels of public agreement with the strategy.

5. Integrated impact assessment

An integrated impact assessment is not required as the recommendations are about developing an equality, diversity and inclusion strategy, not specific details of how it would be implemented so therefore do not have a significant positive or negative impact on communities and safety, regeneration and culture, environment and public space or equality and diversity.



6. Legal implications

The Equality framework assists councils in seeking to meet and ingrain their obligations under the Equality Act 2010 and their Public Sector Equality Duties. The development of a strategy underpins the demonstration of those duties.

7. Director of Finance's comments

There are no financial impacts arising from the contents of this report. All actions arising from the strategy represent work already planned or underway within existing budget provisions.

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Signed by:

Appendices:

Appendix A - Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2024-2027

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
Office for National Statistics Census custom data sets	https://www.ons.gov.uk/datasets/create
Local Government Association, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion in the Workforce	The Equality Act and protected characteristics Local Government Association

The recommendation(s) set out above were approved/ approved as amended/ deferred/ rejected by on

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Signed by: