

REPORT TO: Cabinet

7 December 2020

LEAD CABINET MEMBER: Cllr Neil Gough

LEAD OFFICER: Susan Gardner Craig (Head of HR and Corporate Services)

Equality Scheme 2020-24 and Summary of 2019-20 Equality Actions

Executive Summary

1. This report presents the Equality Scheme, including the council's equality objectives for the coming four years, and a review of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion activities that took place during the 2019-20 financial year.

Key Decision

2. This is not a key decision

Recommendations

3. It is recommended that Cabinet:
 - a) Review and approve the Equality Scheme at **Appendix A** (including equality objectives and actions).
 - b) Review the 2019-20 Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Actions report contained at **Appendix B**.

Reasons for Recommendations

4. Under the Public Sector Equality Duty that came into force in April 2011, local authorities are required to prepare and publish one or more objectives to meet any of the aims of the duty every four years. South Cambridgeshire District Council publishes its equality objectives within its Equality Scheme, which is now due for renewal.
5. Public authorities are also required to publish information annually to demonstrate how the Public Sector Equality Duty is being met, and one way in which this can be achieved is through the publication of information to show steps that have been taken to have due regard to the aims of the equality duty, as at **Appendix B**.
6. In addition to the legal requirements detailed above, these recommendations are required to ensure that Council policies, projects and practices achieve positive outcomes for residents and service users, including protected characteristic groups. On this basis, at the Cabinet meeting of 4 September 2019, it was requested that officers present a report

to Cabinet on an annual basis on the Council's work in respect of equality, diversity and inclusion.

Details

Equality Scheme 2020-24

7. The Equality Scheme at **Appendix A** has been created to set out how South Cambridgeshire District Council will progress the aims of the Equality Act and Public Sector Equality Duty during the period 2020-24. It does so by proposing three equality objectives, each containing actions that will contribute towards the achievement of the objective.
8. The objectives have been designed to encapsulate and build on the range of work that is planned or underway throughout the council's service areas, to combat discrimination, promote equality of opportunity and foster good relations. They reflect equality, diversity and inclusion related actions within the South Cambridgeshire District Council 2020-24 Business Plan, the district's equality profile, and commitments from the Council meeting of 14th July 2020 as part of the motion discussing racial inequality within society and the Council's role in combatting racism. These objectives have also been the subject of a workshop with Member Task and Finish Groups, where discussions took place allowing Councillors to further shape the scheme, as well as discussions at Leadership Team.
9. The proposed objectives are as follows:
 - Objective 1:** Understand the diversity that exists within the South Cambridgeshire population and identify, prioritise, and deliver actions that will narrow the gap in outcomes between disadvantaged groups and the wider community
 - Objective 2:** South Cambridgeshire District Council is an employer that values difference and recognises the strength that a diverse workforce brings
 - Objective 3:** Protected groups are included and have their voices heard in discussions about the future shape of the district
10. It should be noted that these are high level objectives that include a range of more specific actions for completion, as detailed within **Appendix A**. Actions have been designed to reflect the broad intention of what is to be achieved, rather than precise delivery approaches.
11. Although the requirement under the Public Sector Equality Act is to publish objectives every four years an annual report will be submitted to Cabinet detailing progress that has been made against equality objectives and actions. This provides the opportunity to review the objectives and actions on an annual basis to ensure that these remain appropriate.

2019-20 Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Actions Report

12. The 2019-20 Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Actions report at **Appendix B** has been created as a summary of the actions that have been taken to progress the aims of the

Equality Act and Public Sector Equality Duty during the previous financial year. This has been created in response to a request from Cabinet to provide this information annually, and also allows the council to meet one of the specific duties of the Public Sector Equality Duty – “publication of information to show steps that have been taken to have due regard to the aims of the equality duty.”

13. The information contained at **Appendix B** has been obtained through engagement with teams, reviews of the staff intranet, website and press release content from 2019-20.
14. In future years, this annual report will provide an opportunity to review progress towards each of the objectives and actions in the Equality Scheme.

Options

1. Approve the Equality Scheme (**Appendix A**) and the objectives contained within for adoption and publication.

Implications

15. In the writing of this report, taking into account financial, legal, staffing, risk, equality and diversity, climate change, and any other key issues, the following implications have been considered:-

Legal

16. The content of this report and its appendices have been created within the legal context of the Equality Act 2010 and the Public Sector Equality Duty, which came into force in 2011.

Financial

17. Although specific figures are currently unknown, there is potential for some actions included within the Equality Scheme to have associated costs. For example, this could be the case in relation to actions around the review of the arrangements for consulting on key decisions with residents and review of the Council's translation provision.

Risks/Opportunities

18. The recommendations put forward in this report are required to mitigate legal, financial and reputational risks associated with a failure to comply with the Equality Act 2010 and the Public Sector Equality duty.
19. The review, development and publication of our Equality Scheme and objectives at this time also provides opportunities, as detailed below:

Reputational – following several recent incidents at the international and national scale, awareness of equality, diversity and inclusion issues has significantly increased, including greater scrutiny of the actions of organisations to promote equality, diversity and inclusion. In some instances, organisations have faced criticism for what are seen to be public relations exercises as opposed to meaningful action to bring about change. This Equality Scheme and the objectives within provide the council with an opportunity to

demonstrate a range of meaningful actions to eliminate discrimination, harassment, and victimisation; advance equality of opportunity; and foster good relations between different groups.

Financial - whilst perhaps the most obvious cases for the recommendations within this report and the objectives within the Equality Scheme (**Appendix A**) are moral and legal, it can be argued that equality, diversity and inclusion actions also carry within them a financial case. This is clearly outlined within the 2017 'Race in the workplace: The McGregor-Smith Review', which states that "the potential benefit to the UK economy from full representation of BAME individuals across the labour market, through improved participation and progression, is estimated to be £24 billion a year, which represents 1.3% of GDP." It also states that, "a wide body of research exists that has established that diverse organisations are more successful."

Equality and Diversity

20. The Equality Scheme (**Appendix A**) and the objectives contained within set out the organisation's approach and plan for progressing the aims of the public sector equality duty, namely to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation.
- Advance equality of opportunity between those who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- Foster good relations between those who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

Consultation responses

21. Feedback from South Cambs teams and managers was been sought, collated and accounted for within the version of the draft Equality Scheme that was submitted to Leadership Team (LT) in August.

22. Following this, a member Task and Finish Group workshop took place in October 2020. Comments and discussion points from this session have been incorporated into the draft scheme and a second review has taken place at LT.

Effect on Council Priority Areas

23. The first proposed equality objective within the draft equality scheme ("Understand the diversity that exists within the South Cambridgeshire population and identify, prioritise, and deliver actions that will narrow the gap in outcomes between disadvantaged groups and the wider community") is about ensuring that equality, diversity and inclusion are carefully considered throughout the range of services and activities that the council provides and undertakes. This objective therefore links with the delivery of all priority areas within the 2020-24 Business Plan. Objective 1 also links closely with the 'A Modern and Caring Council' objective, particularly the inclusive approach promoted through this priority and actions to ensure that the council can deliver on the ambitions of our communities.

24. Objective 2 ("South Cambridgeshire District Council is an employer that values difference and recognises the strength that a diverse workforce brings") also links to the 'A Modern and Caring Council' objective, particularly actions around being an inclusive employer.

However, it can also be argued that this objective will impact on the delivery of other objectives, by helping to attract and retain a skilled and diverse set of skills, approaches and experiences within the workforce.

25. Objective 3 (“Protected groups are included and have their voices heard in discussions around the future shape of the district”) is about ensuring that disadvantage groups are not left behind when deciding what the future of the South Cambridgeshire looks like. This links to the ‘Growing Local Businesses and Economies’, ‘Housing that is Truly Affordable for all to Live in” and “Being Green to our Core” Business Plan priorities. It also links with the action within the ‘A Modern and Caring Council’ priority around ensuring that the council can deliver on the ambitions of our communities.

Background Papers

‘Race in the Workplace: The McGregor-Smith Review’ (2017)

Appendices

Appendix A: Draft Equality Scheme 2020-24

Appendix B: 2019-20 Equality Diversity and Inclusion Actions Report

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