

<b>Report to:</b>	<b>EXECUTIVE CABINET</b>
<b>Date:</b>	8 February 2023
<b>Executive Member/ Reporting Officer:</b>	Cllr Leanne Feeley – Executive Member for Education, Achievement and Equalities Simon Brunet – Head of Performance, Policy and Intelligence
<b>Subject:</b>	<b>EQUALITY STRATEGY 2023 – 2027</b>
<b>Report Summary:</b>	<p>This report seeks approval to adopt a new Equality Strategy following a final period of consultation.</p> <p>Under the Equality Act 2010 the Local Authority has a duty to publish one or more specific and measurable equality objectives, and subsequently at intervals of no more than four years.</p> <p>This strategy has been developed using an LGA self-assessment tool, advice from an independent review of our approach to equalities in Tameside Council, engagement with the Partnership Engagement Network, reports delivered through the Inequalities Reference Group and a review of equalities data.</p> <p>It is proposed that this strategy forms the basis of an action plan that is overseen by the Executive Member and delivered by all services of the council with support from an officer group. Delivery will be in partnership where appropriate including work with the Health and Wellbeing Board and the Inequalities Reference Group.</p>
<b>Recommendations:</b>	That the Equality Strategy 2023 – 2027 is agreed and published.
<b>Corporate Plan:</b>	The Equality Strategy 2023 – 2027 is relevant to all Corporate Plan priorities as it underpins work to improve outcomes through reducing inequalities and increasing participation across all communities.
<b>Policy Implications:</b>	The issues highlighted in the report directly relate to meeting the requirements set out in the Equality Act 2010, and aid compliance with legislative and performance management frameworks.
<b>Financial Implications:</b> <b>(Authorised by the statutory Section 151 Officer)</b>	There are no direct financial implications arising from this report. The action plan contained within the strategy may have some financial implications however the majority should be accommodated within existing revenue budgets. Where actions require additional investment over and above existing resources, separate decisions may be required.
<b>Legal Implications:</b> <b>(Authorised by the Borough Solicitor)</b>	The legal implications are set out in the main body of the report.
<b>Risk Management:</b>	This report fulfils the commitment for equalities issues to be monitored on a regular basis and meets our statutory obligations. It also ensures awareness of the agenda across the organisation as a key plank of improving outcomes and the Corporate Plan.

## **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 Following a final period of consultation on a draft document, this report sets out a proposed response to our statutory duty to publish measurable equality objectives for the next four years in the form of an Equality Strategy. The strategy is attached at **Appendix 1**.

## **2.0 BACKGROUND**

- 2.1 The public sector equality duty is laid out in section 149 of the Equality Act 2010. It came into force on 5 April 2011, and it states that a public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to:-

- a) Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct prohibited by or under the Act;
- b) Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not share it;
- c) Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not share it.

- 2.2 The Equality Act (Specific Duties) Regulations 2011 stated that by January 2012, and annually thereafter, public bodies must publish information to demonstrate compliance with the general duty, including information about the protected characteristic status of employees, and other persons affected by our policies and practices. By April 2012, public bodies were also required to publish one or more specific and measurable equality objectives, and subsequently at intervals of no more than four years from the date of first publication. The 2011 Regulations were replaced by The Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties and Public Authorities) Regulations 2017 in March 2017.

- 2.3 The previous iteration to meet this duty was the One Equality Scheme, which was a joint strategy of Tameside Council and NHS Tameside and Glossop Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG), and ran from 2018 - 2022. With the closure of CCGs this new strategy for the next four year period is for Tameside Council specifically (as the council has a statutory duty). Development and delivery of the strategy will continue to be through partnership working with other public bodies, the third sector and communities.

## **3.0 APPROACH TO EVIDENCE**

- 3.1 The following activity was undertaken to inform the development of this strategy:
- Equality Framework for Local Government – A self-assessment tool benchmarking against good practice nationwide. We intend to repeat this process annually and explore the option of an independent assessment by the LGA;
  - All Equals Charter – an independent assessment by Manchester Pride called the All Equals Charter where they looked at systems, paperwork and physical infrastructure we have in place. We achieved a ‘role model’ accreditation which is the highest they offer but they also identified a number of areas of development which we have incorporated into the strategy;
  - Partnership Engagement Network (PEN) – On 26 July 2022 we held a PEN conference where we took the Equalities Strategy for discussion and were able to capture views of attendees on our approach to equalities and what else we need to do to address these issues;

- Inequalities Reference Group – another source of evidence for the strategy has been the work of this group and the various reports and recommendations that have been produced. Again, this has added further evidence and weight to the strategy;
- Data - We have a wealth of evidence around equalities. From information produced by services to all of the equalities data produced through the various consultations we undertake. It provides useful insight into how accessible and visible we are as a Council; and
- Consultation on the draft strategy – between 3 October and 28 November 2022 we published a draft document via The Big Conversation. We received 70 responses. As a result of the feedback from this and through other networks and partners the following changes were made to the document:
  - Refined and expanded on how the equalities dashboard would function;
  - Added a commitment to consider adopting Cared for Children and Care Leavers as a protected group under Equality Analysis;
  - Proposed that we attempt to better understand barriers that customers face when using our services;
  - Developed some new actions around improving representation of protected groups across the council; and
  - Expanded the ways in which we can celebrate diversity.

## **4.0 CHANGES TO THE STRATEGY FROM THE PREVIOUS VERSION**

### **4.1 The key changes from the previous Strategy to this one include:**

- The previous strategy was joint between Tameside Council and NHS Tameside and Glossop Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG);
- Incorporated the findings of an independent assessment of our approach and through the use of a self-assessment tool;
- Made a greater commitment to more robust monitoring of our performance in the relation to equalities than previously, including reviewing our approach to Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs);
- Go further in addressing barriers to accessing services than previously and meaningfully respond to the comments received through consultation and engagement about accessibility;
- Instill an enhanced organisational culture and practice of acceptance of different staff needs and requirements through a variety of mechanisms including celebrating diversity, staff community of interest groups and an equality network;
- A more detailed action plan published with the strategy; and
- Stronger links with the Health and Wellbeing Board and the Inequalities Reference Group (IRG).

## **5.0 NEXT STEPS**

- 5.1 Following the adoption of the new Equality Strategy 2023 – 2027 by Executive Cabinet it will be published on the Tameside Council website, circulated to key partners and shared with all staff.
- 5.2 Delivery of the action plan will then commence, overseen by the Executive Member and led by the Policy and Workforce Development teams. Although it is important to note that delivery is required by all services across the council as the strategy and action plan are a collective organisational responsibility. That work will be supported by a group of departmental champions that will be established once the strategy is agreed.
- 5.3 The new strategy will also be shared with the Health & Wellbeing Board in March 2023 as part of the wider work linked to the Inequalities Reference Group and the Anti-Poverty Strategy.

## **6.0 RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 6.1 As set out at the top of the report.