

Subject:	Brighton & Hove City Council Equality & Inclusion Policy Statement and Strategy		
Date of Meeting:	26 January 2017 23 January 2017 – Neighbourhoods, Communities & Equalities Committee		
Report of:	Executive Director for Adult Social Care & Health		
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Ward(s) affected:	All		

FOR GENERAL RELEASE**1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND POLICY CONTEXT**

- 1.1. This report presents the new Equality & Inclusion Policy Statement and Strategy ('the policy') for the city council (appendix 1). The policy refreshes and updates the council's previous Equality & Inclusion Policy 2012-2015.
- 1.2. To ensure that the new policy incorporated the findings of both the Fairness Commission and the Equality Framework for Local Government assessment, an extension to the 2012-15 policy was agreed by the Neighbourhoods, Communities and Equalities Committee on 5th October 2015.
- 1.3. The policy addresses key priorities and city issues from the Corporate Plan 2015-19, and draws on the recommendations of the 2016 Fairness Commission and Equality Framework for Local Government (EFLG) peer assessment of the council in September 2016.
- 1.4. The policy describes the council's vision and defines a measurable corporate objective to promote, facilitate and deliver equality within the council and in the city. This ensures that the council meets a legal obligation under the Equality Act 2010: for the local authority to set a minimum of one equality objective.
- 1.5. High level strategic improvements are also identified within the strategy. These are underpinned by directorate level and service level actions defined annually and monitored through the council's business planning process.
- 1.6. Equality and inclusion is a central priority for the city council. This new policy and strategy builds on good work and processes already underway, defines a clear corporate objective for the council and defines how the council will achieve this.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 2.1 That Committee welcomes and provides comment on the new Equality & Inclusion Policy Statement and Strategy as set out in appendix 1.

- 2.2 That Committee recommend the new Equality & Inclusion Policy Statement and Strategy for approval by Full Council.
- 2.3 That Committee instruct officers to provide an annual update to this committee on progress on the actions identified within the strategy to achieve excellent.

3. CONTEXT/ BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 3.1. The previous Equality & Inclusion Policy covered the period 2012- 2015 and was due for review at the end of that time. However in order to ensure that the new policy incorporated the recommendations of both the Fairness Commission report and Equality Framework for Local Government external peer assessment, an extension to the policy was agreed by the Neighbourhoods, Communities and Equalities Committee on 5th October 2015.
- 3.2. To ensure ongoing accountability, progress updates for all the actions in the last policy were provided through Community Works and circulated to community and voluntary sector groups in the city. Equality actions have continued, along with Equality Impact Assessments and all other work within the policy.
- 3.3. Our Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) process will continue to support the refreshed policy and its objective and actions, informing all council services, policies, strategies and employment practices. This will make sure that barriers, needs and opportunities relating to people's protected characteristics are identified in all aspects of the council's work and appropriate actions defined and completed.
- 3.4. The policy aligns with and complements the Workforce Equality Action Plan (WEAP) 2013-19 which specifically describes how the organisation will improve equality in employment.
- 3.5. The Equality Framework for Local Government (EFLG) Assessment, run by the Local Government Association, is an external peer assessment that judges local authorities' performance in relation to equality in five key areas:
 - Knowing your communities
 - Leadership, partnership and organisational commitment
 - Involving your communities
 - Responsive services and customer care
 - A skilled and committed workforce.
- 3.6. This policy is structured around and builds on these five headings, ensuring it covers all aspects of the council's work.
- 3.7. BHCC was assessed by external peers on 28th / 29th September 2016. The council was found to be 'achieving' in line with its self-assessment in preparation for the assessment. See appendix 2 for the draft report of the EFLG assessors.
- 3.8. Key findings of the EFLG assessors:
 - 3.8.1. **Strengths**
 - Data, specifically the JSNA, is strong, and readily available

- Strong awareness of and commitment to equality throughout the council
- Good examples of engagement
- Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) process is well-embedded and partners recognise the value of the process, especially budget EIAs and redesigning services
- After Global HPO report, the issues and actions are clearly identified

3.8.2. **Weaknesses and where these have been addressed in the new policy**

- Consistency (eg: use of data and application of equality approaches)
 - See section 3.1: We will make more of the data we have so that it is analysed and used to inform service planning and delivery and helps us identify who is and is not accessing our services and who could be getting more from them.
 - And see section 3.3: We will continue to work with residents, partners and others to identify and complete needs assessments on different groups so that we keep an up-to-date picture of the city's populations.
- Improve work to improve communication between different levels in the organisation
 - See section H3: We use our communications methods to deliver our equality priorities, respond to the needs of our communities and foster good relations. This is essential to achieving our equality and inclusion objectives.
- Little evaluation of impact of strategies
 - See section 1.2: We will ensure that we better monitor outcomes and can demonstrate how our actions are leading to improvements.
 - See section 4.1:
- Relationships with BME communities need improvement
 - See section 3.2: We will establish stronger links with BME groups and communities so we work better together, hear different people's views, and learn from what is working well or not.
- Using customer data effectively, also identify who isn't using our services
 - See section 3.1: We will make more of the data we have so that it is analysed and used to inform service planning and delivery and helps us identify who is and is not accessing our services and who could be getting more from them.
- Need for consistency in approach to culture change and corporate programmes, even when senior leadership changes
 - See section 2.2: We will introduce our new behaviour framework, which will be supported by a range of tools for staff and managers including short courses, toolkits, guidance and e-learning. We will also identify areas across the council which will receive focused equality learning and development; revise and improve our e-learning offer; and increase opportunities for formal and informal equality learning opportunities.

3.9. The recommendations and findings from the peer assessment (see appendix 2 of report) have been used to inform and shape the policy and to improve and strengthen equality aims throughout the council.

4. ANALYSIS & CONSIDERATION OF ANY ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

4.1 There are no alternatives. As well as being best practice and a legal requirement the council has prioritised 'Increasing Equality' within its current Corporate Plan.

5. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT & CONSULTATION

5.1 A consultation document was widely circulated twice to over 100 community and voluntary sector organisations via a Community Works mailshot. This also gave information on how to access the consultation via the online consultation portal and dates, times and venues of staffed drop-in events across the city for people to feed back in person if preferred.

5.2 The policy and short survey were available from May to the end of September on the consultation portal; this was promoted externally via Community Works and the Equality & Inclusion Partnership (EquiP) and internally through council's staff forums, Equality Steering Group and Departmental Equality Groups.

5.3 During June and September six staffed drop-in sessions were held at accessible libraries in central, west and east venues across the city

5.4 The following table details the key themes that emerged from the consultation:

Key themes	How have these been incorporated into the policy
Include groups outside of the legally protected characteristics i.e. poverty, homeless, substance misuse.	We are referencing groups beyond those covered by the law; this was also picked up in Fairness Commission findings.
Accessibility: make the policy available in alternative formats if requested, using Plain English and avoiding academic/business language	The Policy will be available in different formats on request and the language has been simplified. Use of BSL was also picked up in the Fairness Commission and the council is considering how to take this forward
Ensure references to all groups in the policy	The policy is inclusive and actions cover all people: staff, residents and elected members.

5.5 Thanks and responses to feedback have been provided to the community and voluntary sector via Community Works and to named individuals. Also a feedback statement was added to the council's portal and Intranet.

5.6 As part of the council's commitment to measuring and reporting on the impact and effectiveness of the Policy an annual consultation event will continue to be held with community and voluntary groups, organised and supported by the Communities, Equality & Third Sector Team.

6. CONCLUSION

6.1 The council is required by law to approve an equality policy setting at least one objective.

- 6.2 Full Council is required to approve the policy as stated in Part 3.1, paragraph 3.20 (ii) of the council's constitution.

7. FINANCIAL & OTHER IMPLICATIONS:

Financial Implications:

- 7.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from the recommendations made in this report. The objectives set out in the policy are expected to be delivered within existing resources and reflected by services in budget planning.

Finance Officer Consulted: Name: Mike Bentley

Date: 04/10/16

Legal Implications:

- 7.2 The policy recommended for approval is an important element of the authority's discharge of its statutory public sector equality duty, Approving and publishing the policy ensures that the Council meets the requirements of regulations made under section 153 of the Equality Act 2010.

Lawyer Consulted: Name: Victoria Simpson

Date: 20/12/16

Equalities Implications:

- 7.3 The purpose of the policy is to set out the council's vision, objective and actions for promoting, delivering, measuring and reporting progress on equality in the council and the city. Equality groups throughout the city have been consulted on the refresh of the policy and will have an opportunity to continue being involved in the review and progress of equalities actions.

Sustainability Implications:

- 7.4 Communities in which different groups of individuals face inequality and exclusion and/or where relations between groups are not good are unsustainable socially and economically and present both an immediate and long term financial, legal and reputational risk to the local authority.

Any Other Significant Implications:

- 7.5 These are listed in appendix 1.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Appendices:

1. Other implications (below).
2. Brighton & Hove City Council Equality & Inclusion Policy Statement and Strategy
3. Equality Framework for Local Government report from the Local Government Association

Documents in Members' Rooms

1. None

Background Documents

1. None

Appendix 1

Crime & Disorder Implications:

- 1.1 The policy has a direct relationship with helping to tackle and reduce hate crime and discrimination in the city.

Risk and Opportunity Management Implications:

- 1.2 The Equality Act 2010 provides the council with the opportunity to refresh its equality and inclusion priorities and make sure that they reflect those of the city's different communities.

Public Health Implications:

- 1.3 Having a set of clear corporate equality and inclusion objectives that all teams in the council are working towards will help to prevent and reduce health inequalities.

Corporate / Citywide Implications:

- 1.4 The policy has set the council's corporate position on equality and inclusion and therefore has implications for and is the responsibility of all teams across the council.