

## **Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee – 12 December 2022**

### **Equality, Diversity and Inclusion – Progress Update**

#### **Recommendations**

I recommend that the Committee:

- a. Note the progress of the Council's work to further strengthen its approach to equality, diversity and inclusion, including delivery of the action plan.
- b. Note the Council's Gender Pay Gap report and Workforce profile as reported in April 2022.
- c. Provide comments and feedback on the emerging priorities for 2023/24 as part of the Council's continued commitment to promote equality, diversity and inclusion.

**Local Member Interest:** N/A

#### **Report of Cllr Alan White, Leader of the Council**

#### **Summary**

##### **What is the Overview and Scrutiny Committee being asked to do and why?**

1. The Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee are being asked to:
  - a. Consider progress undertaken in the last 12 months to deliver against the Council's equality, diversity and inclusion principles, objectives and action plan.
  - b. Note the Council's Gender Pay Gap report and Workforce profile as reported in April 2022.
  - c. Comment and feedback on the emerging priorities for 2023/24.
2. This feedback will be used to inform future work to further strengthen the Council's delivery of equalities, diversity and inclusion, which will be taken to Cabinet for discussion in February 2023.

## **Report**

### **Background**

3. Everyone having the opportunity to prosper, be healthy and happy, is at the core of the County Council's vision. The Council's ongoing work to deliver against its agreed equality, diversity and inclusion principles and objectives continues to further strengthen the Council's approach to promoting equality, diversity and inclusion both within both the organisation and across Staffordshire.
4. The Equality Act 2010 requires public bodies to show that they are advancing the equalities agenda under the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED). Specific requirements on Councils include publishing at least one Equality Objective every four years, as well as key information through the annual Gender Pay Gap report and Workforce Profile on 1st April each year, to demonstrate how they will eliminate discrimination and advance equality.
5. A great deal of work was undertaken during 2021 to review the Council's approach to delivering against the Public Sector Equality Duty. It was recognised that equality considerations are embedded across the organisation with a strong corporate focus on responding to, and addressing the Gender Pay Gap, together with improving collection and analysis of the workforce profile data. Key information through the Gender Pay Gap report and Workforce Profile is published annually on 1<sup>st</sup> April. A range of other activities and initiatives were also identified as having a significant impact on tackling inequalities both within the County Council and wider communities across Staffordshire.
6. It was however acknowledged that more could be done to strengthen the Council's approach. Therefore, in December 2021 Cabinet agreed to adopt a new set of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) principles and objectives, along with an associated delivery plan.

### **Principles and Objectives 2021-2023**

#### **Principles:**

- a. Staffordshire is a place where there is equality of opportunity for all, regardless of circumstances.
- b. Staffordshire County Council is an inclusive and diverse employer, where our people feel they have the opportunity to succeed and progress.
- c. Staffordshire County Council develops and delivers services that are inclusive and accessible to all.

## **Objectives:**

- a. Review and strengthen our recruitment and retention processes and practices.
  - b. Review and strengthen our diversity and inclusion training offer to employees.
  - c. Strengthen our approach to engaging and collaborating with our workforce and communities on diversity and inclusion issues.
  - d. Raise awareness of and celebrate diversity.
7. Following Cabinet's adoption of these, it was agreed that Audit also undertake an advisory review of the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan. The key findings from the audit report included: ensuring there is an appropriate action plan, informed by data, for equalities, diversity and inclusion; that governance structures are in place for reporting progress against the plan and that risks are identified and reviewed; methods for measuring the effectiveness of the plan are identified; and communicating expectations to staff for equality, diversity and inclusion.
8. In response to this, the action plan was further refined to reflect the recommendations made by the audit review. The agreed action plan can be viewed at Appendix 1.

## **Year 1 Review 2022/2023**

9. During the last twelve months we have continued to engage and collaborate with stakeholders, including staff, Elected Members, Trade Unions in delivering against the principles, objectives and action plan. This section summaries our in-year key highlights and achievements across the organisation.
- a. A new **Gender Pay Gap and Workforce Profile** report was published on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2022, detailing our data and the steps we are taking to develop a more diverse and inclusive workforce, and in turn, improving our gender pay gap. The latest report can be viewed at Appendix 2 and will be refreshed on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2023.
  - b. A new **Translation and Interpretation** contract was launched in November 2022, based on a one-stop shop delivery model, that enables officers to access telephone, video, face-to-face interpretation and written translation services. The service enables our communities to receive information in different languages or suitable formats ensuring we are accessible to all.

- c. The Council's **Community Impact Assessment** (CIA) policy was reviewed and strengthened in early 2022. The refreshed policy sets out a clear, consistent approach to how we assess the impact of potential service changes, commissioning and/or decision making on our most vulnerable residents. This included strengthening the consideration of impacts on the protected characteristic groups, as defined by the Equality Act 2010, to ensure consideration of how inequalities could arise between the different groups is taken into account. This is fully embedded in the Council's governance arrangements and promoted through internal communications channels.
- d. Launched an **inclusive and representative employer brand** in 2021, which is now supporting the development of the Council's employee value proposition. Recent recruitment campaigns are promoting the Council as an attractive and inclusive employer with the aim of reaching more diverse candidates.
- e. Implemented a **new applicant tracking system**, WeRecruit, in October 2022. This is providing opportunities to increase accessibility and improve the candidate experience, as well as promoting the Council as an inclusive employer. The system also captures key equality information about prospective and new employees, including declarations for criminal convictions and care leavers.
- f. Implemented an **Anti-Harassment and Bullying Policy** in September 2022, promoting a zero-tolerance approach to bullying and discrimination in the workplace. As this is fully embedded across the organisation, work will take place to assess its impact.
- g. A range of **communications activities**, promoting key dates and events, has taken place throughout the year to celebrate equality, diversity and inclusion. Activities aligned to this include signposting colleagues to further information and opportunities to get involved. A review is due to take place in early 2023, in consultation with employee groups and the wider workforce.
- h. A new **equality, diversity and inclusion mandatory e-learning module** for our staff has been commissioned, alongside an e-product to support hiring managers to deliver inclusive and accessible recruitment. These will launch in early 2023 and deliver an improved learner experience, supported with the latest information and guidance for all staff. During the past 12 months 795 members of staff have completed the current e-learning and following the launch of the new product, future training numbers will be monitored and communications targeted as appropriate.

- i. Guidance to **support employee groups** to form is being developed drawing on best practice and the experience of the established Black Workers Forum, together with wider consultees from across the Council.
- j. **Supported job seekers facing barriers to employment** to secure work experience placements enabling progression into paid work through the Council's Open Door Staffordshire employability programme. Since its launch in 2010, 1,500 candidates with significant challenges to employment have been supported to ensure a successful placement. Strong relationships have also been built with businesses and communities across Staffordshire, such as prison establishments, Staffordshire Police and the Department for Work and Pensions to enable a diverse range of candidates to be supported.

### **Looking Ahead to 2023/24**

10. Reflecting on work undertaken during 2022/23, there is opportunity to build on existing work to date, in order to further strengthen the Council's approach to the delivery of equality, diversity and inclusion.
11. Set out below are a number of proposed areas of focus for 2023/24:
  - a. Continue to meet the Public Sector Equalities Duty by further improving current reporting on the Council's Gender Pay Gap and Workforce Profile, enabling the targeted recruitment and improvement of employment policies that will enhance the diversity of its workforce and reduce the gender pay gap.
  - b. Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion will continue to be a prominent thread throughout the new internal People Strategy 2023-27 and will be an integral consideration to the design and delivery of people and culture related activities. During the roll-out of the new strategy in 2023, People Services will encourage everyone to play a role in its delivery, promoting inclusion across the organisation.
  - c. Further development of recruitment and employment policies, demonstrating a strong organisational commitment to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion, will provide the Council with a significant competitive advantage in an increasingly challenging talent market.
  - d. Embed the new equality, diversity and inclusion mandatory e-learning module across the organisation, including a campaign to increase completion of the mandatory training following its launch.

- e. Engage and collaborate with a range of staff groups to inform the development of a new workforce led communications approach and set of activities for 2023, promoting key dates and events that celebrate diversity.
- f. Continued work to ensure apprenticeships provide nationally recognised work-based qualifications to people from diverse and under-represented backgrounds.
- g. Further strengthen our training offer to the Council's workforce, including development of a reciprocal mentorship scheme that enable colleagues from different backgrounds and levels to share and learn together. In addition, a range of learning resources will be developed that enable individual colleagues and groups to develop their leadership understanding and practice.

### **Delivery and Governance**

- 12. An officer Diversity and Inclusion Steering Group has been established within Corporate Services, which brings together lead senior officers, to co-ordinate, collaborate and monitor progress against the equality, diversity and inclusion action plan
- 13. The Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan is overseen by the Leader of the Council and the Deputy Chief Executive and Director for Corporate Services.
- 14. This area of work also features as a key deliverable within the Council's Corporate Delivery Plan, with progress routinely reported on a quarterly basis through the Integrated Performance Management process. In addition, Cabinet and Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee is provided with an annual monitoring report that evidences progress against the action plan and wider equalities work for further oversight and scrutiny.

### **Link to Strategic Plan**

- 15. The Council's commitment to promote equality, diversity and inclusion is a core part of our Strategic Plan and one of the four 'How We Work' statements. Therefore, ongoing work to deliver diversity and inclusion, and ensure diversity of our workforce, is key to the delivery of all strategic priorities.

## Community Impact

16. The Council's Community Impact Assessment policy ensures the impact of our most vulnerable groups, including consideration of protected characteristics, is taken into account as part of strategy development and in its decision making processes. Good practice guidance and e-training, ensuring we are meeting equalities duties, is available to all staff on the Staffordshire County Council's Learning Hub.

## List of Background Documents/Appendices:

Appendix 1 – Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan 2022/2023

Appendix 2 – Gender Pay Gap and Workforce Profile Report March 2022

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