

Cabinet Meeting on Wednesday 15 December 2021

Diversity and Inclusion – Principles, Objectives and Action Plan



Cllr Alan White, Leader of the Council said,

“The County Council has an important role to play in promoting diversity and inclusion, both as an employer and as a leader in the community.

It is important for our progress to be measured publicly and for us to remain proactive in ensuring that we continue moving forward and challenging prejudice in whatever form it takes.

I want those who work for the County Council, those who come into contact with it and for the wider population of Staffordshire to know that this authority is committed to equal treatment

and opportunity for all.”

Report Summary:

This report provides an overview of our equalities duties, and the outcome of recent work to identify how we can further strengthen our commitment to promoting equality, diversity and inclusion across the Council and Staffordshire. The report seeks approval for the adoption of a set of Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion Principles and Objectives. Included with the report is a proposed Action Plan to deliver against the proposed Objectives.

Recommendations

I recommend that Cabinet:

- a. Adopt the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Principles, Objectives and Action Plan, as part of the Council’s commitment to promote equality, diversity and inclusion

Local Members Interest
N/A

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Diversity and Inclusion – Principles, Objectives and Action Plan

Recommendations of the Leader of the Council

I recommend that Cabinet:

- a. Adopt the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Principles, Objectives and Action Plan, as part of the Council's commitment to promote equality, diversity and inclusion

Report of the Director for Corporate Services

Reasons for Recommendations:

1. Tackling inequalities is at the core of everything Staffordshire County Council does. The Council's proposed Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Principles and Objectives, aligned to our Strategic Plan and People Strategy, further strengthen our commitment to promote equality, diversity and inclusion across the Council and Staffordshire. The Objectives and Action Plan outlines how we will deliver this commitment over the next two years.
2. The Equality Act 2010 requires public bodies to show they are advancing the equality agenda under the Public Sector Equality Duty. Councils are required to publish at least one Equality Objective every four years to demonstrate how they will eliminate discrimination and advance equality.
3. Over the last 12 months, work has been undertaken to identify how we can strengthen delivery against our Equalities Duties, this has included reviewing the approaches of other local authorities and engaging with a range of stakeholders.
4. This report recommends the Council adopts three overarching principles, which covers our role as a place leader, deliverer of services and employers. Alongside the principles, this report recommends that the Council adopts four objectives for 2021-23, which we will focus resources and action on.
5. Progress against the principles and objectives will be overseen by the Director of Corporate Services and the Leader of the Council. An annual

monitoring report will be produced to evidence progress against the principles, objectives and action plan.

The Equality Act 2010 and Public Sector Equality Duty

6. The Equality Act 2010 provides a legal framework to protect the rights of individuals and advance equality of opportunity for all. In 2011, the public sector equality duty (the equality duty) came into force, created under the Equality Act. As a public body, the Council are required to:
 - a. Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act.
 - b. Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
 - c. Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
7. It is unlawful to discriminate against someone because of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation. These are referred to as protected characteristics protected under the Equality Act 2010.
8. The Council is also required to:
 - a. Publish an annual Gender Pay Report
 - b. Publish an annual Workforce Profile
 - c. Publish one or more objectives that it thinks it needs to achieve, to further any of the aims of the general equality duty every four years.

Proposed Principles and Objectives 2021-2023

9. Adopting a set of Principles, sets out our ambitions for equality, diversity and inclusion, in our county, in delivering our services, and as an employer. These Principles align to our core strategies, including our Strategic Plan and People Strategy.
10. The proposed Principles are:
 - 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.

11. Setting Equality Objectives, enables the Council to focus attention and resources on a number of priorities for the next two years, to help us deliver against our Principles. We are proposing that we set four Objectives for the period 2021-23.
12. The proposed Objectives are:
 - 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
13. An initial Action Plan has been developed to take forward the proposed Objectives and is outlined in Appendix 1. The Action Plan will continue to evolve and develop over time. Continuing to engage and collaborate with stakeholders, including staff, Elected Members, Trade Unions and our communities, will be key to evolving and delivering against the Action Plan.
14. Subject to approval by Cabinet, the proposed Principles and Objectives will be published on the Council website and embedded across the organisation.
15. Progress against the principles and objectives will be overseen by the Director of Corporate Services and the Leader of the Council. An annual monitoring report will be produced to evidence progress against the principles, objectives and action plan.

Legal Implications

16. Paragraphs 6-8 of this report outline the Council's legal requirements. The actions in this report, and the adoption of the proposed Principles and Objectives will contribute towards meeting our legal requirements.

Resource and Value for Money Implications

17. There are no financial implications arising as a result of this report.

List of Background Documents/Appendices:

- Appendix 1 – Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan
- Appendix 2 – Summary of Engagement
- Appendix 3 – Executive Summary Community Impact Assessment

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