

East Herts Council Report

Executive

Date of meeting: 6 July 2021

Report by: Executive Member for Engagement

Report title: Draft Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy

Ward(s) affected: All

Summary – A new draft strategy for Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion has been developed which will be proposed for adoption by Full Council on 28th July. It was considered at Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 8 June and Committee Members recommended it be proposed for adoption via Executive.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR Executive to recommend to Council:

- a) To review the draft strategy and agree it is proposed to Full Council for adoption on the 28th July, following support from Overview and Scrutiny Committee

1.0 Proposal(s)

- 1.1 Executive review the draft strategy and process to date before it is proposed for adoption by Council on 28th July

2.0 Background

- 2.1 East Herts Council entered into a shared service with Hertfordshire County Council to provide Equalities and

Diversity support in November 2020. This equates to 2 days per week of time from the Joint Equalities and Diversity Officer. The first task of this officer has been to lead on the overall process for refreshing the East Herts strategy for Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion. The process to date has been as follows:

- A self-assessment of East Herts Council approach to equalities using the Local Government Association's Equality Framework (November 2020 – January 2021)
- Workshops and discussion with East Herts Council's Leadership Team and Senior Manager's Forum (January 2021)
- Initial engagement with key partners including Hertfordshire County Council, Broxbourne and East Herts Council for Voluntary Services, the Citizens Advice Service, GATE, Herts for Learning, (February – present)
- Discussion with Executive Members (March)
- A briefing and discussion for East Herts Members (20 May)
- Formal consideration by Overview and Scrutiny Committee (8 June)

2.2 The result of this work is a draft strategy, setting out the issues and challenges which is attached at Appendix A. This was also shared with the Overview and Scrutiny Committee was the first time the draft strategy had been placed in the public domain. The draft was generally well received with positive feedback about the tangible actions proposed. Comments from Committee Members included:

- Whether advice and guidance from the National Autism Association could be considered in the strategy to ensure we are capturing the needs of autistic residents and customers in the district (also to consider whether something could be included for this

- group in the calendar in relation to world health day
- Members commented on disability injustice, that many might not be in receipt of benefits and of the need to include some more appropriate titles and images which encompassed chronic and visible illnesses.
- Whether proposals for unconscious bias training could be made mandatory for staff and whether East Herts Council Members should also be invited to undertake this training
- That collaboration with HCC and the BAME network continues so we can ensure alignment of priorities and that any changes in language or acronyms are consistent
- A recognition that the timescales for adoption are quite tight and whether officers feel there is enough time to consult with key stakeholders

2.3 The draft strategy will be made available for public comment in the lead up to Full Council however we do not anticipate a large response through this general approach. Targeted consultation with specific groups and communities as outlined in (2.3) is more likely to result in meaningful feedback and engagement. Throughout June and July officers will be seeking formal feedback from the Citizen's Advice Service, Age Concern, CDA Herts, the Dementia Friendly Action Group and LGBTQ representatives. Alongside this a number of East Herts Councillors have offered to share the draft strategy with contacts from different communities in our district and this will be an invaluable part of the engagement process.

3.0 Reason(s)

3.1 The Council's current equalities strategy is in urgent need of refresh

4.0 Options

4.1 Alternative option is to not have an equalities strategy

5.0 Risks

5.1 The strategy mitigates risks of the Council not complying with requirements of the Equalities Act 2010

6.0 Implications/Consultations

6.1 Targeted consultation will be undertaken in June

Community Safety

No

Data Protection

No

Equalities

Yes – strategy will promote a stronger approach to equalities across the organisation

Environmental Sustainability

No

Financial

No

Health and Safety

No

Human Resources

No

Human Rights

No

Legal

No

Specific Wards

No

7.0 Background papers, appendices and other relevant material

7.1 Appendix A: Draft Strategy

Contact Member

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