

LONDON BOROUGH OF CROYDON

REPORT:	CABINET
DATE OF DECISION	27 SEPTEMBER 2023
REPORT TITLE:	Equality Annual Report 2023
CORPORATE DIRECTOR / DIRECTOR:	Katherine Kerswell, Chief Executive David Courcoux, Director of Policy, Programmes & Performance
LEAD OFFICER:	Denise McCausland, Equalities Programme Manager
LEAD MEMBER:	Jason Perry, Mayor of Croydon Councillor Andy Stranack, Cabinet Member for Communities and Culture
KEY DECISION?	No
WARDS AFFECTED:	All

1 SUMMARY OF REPORT

- 1.1 The Equality Annual Report attached to this report sets out a summary of progress made against each outcome in the Equality Strategy 2020-2024, as well as key challenges facing the organisation.
- 1.2 The adoption of the George Floyd Race Matters Pledge and the Croydon Equality Pledge have introduced new areas of focus for our equalities work; a new People and Cultural Transformation Strategy has been agreed, including a pillar of work focused on “building an equality driven, diverse and inclusive workplace.” and the Council has also participated as a pilot organisation on the Chief Executives London Committee (CELC) Tackling Racial Inequality (TRI) Programme.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

For the reasons set out in the report and its appendices, the Executive Mayor in Cabinet is recommended:

- 2.1 to note the Equality Annual Report 2023 (Appendix A).

3 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 Publication of the Equality Annual Report 2023 complies with the Council’s legal requirement to publish information annually to demonstrate its compliance with the Public Sector Equality Duty. The Annual Report also demonstrates the Council’s

progress delivering the Equality Strategy 2020-2024 and its commitment to building a fairer, more equal borough for all our residents.

4 BACKGROUND

Statutory obligations

4.1 Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 (the Act) contains the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED). The duty applies to public bodies and others carrying out public functions. The general equality duty requires the Council, in the exercise of functions, to have “due regard” to the need to:

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

4.2 In addition, the Council is required to publish one or more objectives it thinks it should achieve to comply with the general duty.

4.3 The Council meets this duty through the adoption and delivery of its Equality Strategy. The current strategy was adopted by Cabinet and Council in early 2021 and runs until 2024. It sets out the Council’s equality objectives and the associated actions it will take, both as an employer and a community leader, to meet the PSED and improve equality outcomes. A version of this strategy, updated for 2023-2027, is due for consideration by Council in October 2023, subject to Cabinet approval.

4.4 The Equality Annual Report at Appendix A sets out the Council’s progress against the strategy and equality objectives and highlights challenges against each of the strategy’s four Outcome areas. There has been significant activity over the past year, including:

- Launch of Equalities Pledge in March 2022 and George Floyd Race Matters Pledge in May 2022; so far 37 organisations have signed up for the pledges in total:
 - 19 - George Floyd Race Matters Pledge.
 - 18 - Equalities Pledge.
 - 6 – signed both the Equalities Pledge and George Floyd Race Matters Pledge.
- Designation of Croydon Council as a Spotlight Organisation for Race Equality Week 2022 and 2023.
- Bronze Trailbreaker Award for Tea Breaks from Race Equality Matters – November 2022.
- Pay gaps below London averages; zero pay gap for gender.
- Piloted Chief Executives London Committee (CELC) Tackling Racial Inequality peer review programme.
- Inclusion of gender and anti-racism in equality impact assessments.

- Establishment of new staff networks: Christian Staff Network and Young Professionals Staff network.
- Equality and Human Rights Commission invitation to be a case study for their Public Sector Equality Duty Specific Duties monitoring project.

Chief Executives London Committee Tackling Racial Inequality Programme

- 4.5** The Council's decision in February 2023 to be a pilot organisation in the Chief Executives London Committee (CELC) Tackling Racial Inequality (TRI) Programme was in line with the organisational priority to work towards becoming an anti-racist organisation, agreed in the George Floyd Race Matters Pledge. One of 12 authorities taking part, the Council agreed to undergo a three-council peer assessment with LB Ealing and LB Hackney. The peer assessments took place during May and have provided valuable feedback on improvements and good practice. The findings will be presented to the EDI Board in October for consideration.
- 4.6** The Council ceased its membership of all equality organisations in 2020, as part of its measures to reduce expenditure because balancing the books continues to be a core priority. At the same time, it developed a relationship with Race Equality Matters, a London based charity that supports organisations to develop solutions to address race inequality at work at no cost to the Council. This partnership has led to the implementation of several solutions, such as Tea Breaks and Safe Spaces for other protected characteristics, including the Women's Network and LGBT+ Network. The Tea Breaks programme provides an opportunity for staff network groups to meet the Corporate Management Team, senior leaders and other interested staff members to discuss topics which impact on their lived experience at work. Tea breaks have been broadly based around the staff network groups, however other topics have been included for example, though there is no recognised Men's Staff Network Group, a Men's Tea Break session in January 2023 focused on Men's mental health.
- 4.7** In November 2022, the Council received a Bronze Trailblazer award from Race Equality Matters for implementing the Tea break programme and other race equality initiatives. In February 2023, the Council was a [spotlight organisation](#) during Race Equality Week for the second consecutive year.
- 4.8** The authority has benefitted from Race Equality Matters solutions at zero cost. This contrasts with organisations concerned with other protected characteristics that charge membership fees. However, officers and staff network members utilise cost free webinars where possible to develop knowledge and skills in topics such as neurodiversity. The Council works on the principle that people are intersectional and have multiple characteristics. Initiatives developed for one protected characteristic will benefit the whole workplace in respect of improving management practices and workplace culture. While it would be preferable to undertake more initiatives for more people, resources and capacity are limited to two full time posts.

5 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 5.1** None. The Council has a legal obligation to publish information to demonstrate its compliance with the Public Sector Equality Duty, as set out in the Equality Act 2010.

6. CONTRIBUTION TO COUNCIL PRIORITIES

- 6.1** The Equality Strategy supports two priorities under Outcome 1 of the Mayor's Business Plan 2022-26:
- Become a council which listens to, respects and works in partnership with Croydon's diverse communities and businesses.
 - Develop our workforce to deliver in a manner that respects the diversity of our communities.

7. IMPLICATIONS

7.1 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

7.1.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from the Equality Annual Report 2023.

7.1.2 Comments approved by Lesley Shields, Head of Finance for Assistant Chief Executive and Resources on behalf of the Director of Finance. 17/08/23.

7.2 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

7.2.1 The Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties and Public Authorities) Regulations 2017 sets out that the Council must publish information to demonstrate its compliance with the duty imposed by section 149(1) of the Equality Act 2010, not later than 30 March 2018; and subsequently at intervals of not greater than one year beginning with the date of last publication. The information which the Council publishes must include, in particular, information relating to persons who share a relevant protected characteristic who are—

- a) its employees;
- b) other persons affected by its policies and practices.

7.2.2 Section 149(1) (a) to (c) sets out the public sector equality duty with which the Council is required to comply. 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 that is prohibited by or under this Act;
- b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
- c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

7.2.3 In addition, the Council is required to publish one or more objectives it thinks it should achieve to do any of the things mentioned in paragraphs (a) to (c) of subsection (1) of section 149 of the Act referenced above.

7.2.4 An objective published by a public authority in compliance with paragraph (1) must be specific and measurable and must be published in such a manner that the information is accessible to the public.

7.2.5 The report and recommendations represent the Council's annual report against our equality objectives which seek to demonstrate compliance with the Council's equalities obligations.

7.2.6 Comments approved by the Head of Litigation and Corporate Law on behalf of the Director of Legal Services and Monitoring Officer. (Date 11/08/2023)

OTHER IMPLICATIONS

7.3 HUMAN RESOURCES IMPACT

7.3.1 Equality is integral to our workforce processes, policies and practices, including becoming an employer of choice. We continue to make positive progress towards having a workforce that reflects its community and where inclusivity is embedded in our practice, though it is recognised that there is more to do.

7.3.2 Approved by: Gillian Bevan, Head of HR, Resources and Assistant Chief Executives Directorates on behalf of Dean Shoemith, Chief People Officer. (Date 10/08/2023)

8 APPENDICES

8.1 A. *Equality Annual Report 2023*

9 BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

9.1 None.