

LONDON BOROUGH OF CROYDON

REPORT:	COUNCIL
DATE OF DECISION	11 OCTOBER 2023
REPORT TITLE:	Refreshed Croydon Equality Strategy 2023-27
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 purpose of this report is to seek approval of the Croydon Equality Strategy, refreshed for 2023-2027 and the updated Equality Objectives.
- 1.2 In early 2021 the Council adopted a new Equality Strategy which it was anticipated would run to 2024. The Strategy was adopted amid a period of dramatic change, with the Covid-19 Pandemic still affecting local communities and resulting in long-term changes to working practices, and the Council undergoing significant transformation following the 2020 Report in the Public Interest.
- 1.3 This Equality Strategy, refreshed for 2023-2027, seeks to build on the foundations of the 2020-2024 Strategy, reflect the results of those changes and embed the initiatives the Council has introduced since 2021. For example, 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 Programme. Each of these initiatives and others have been incorporated in the refreshed Strategy, which has also been aligned with the Mayor’s Business Plan, adopted by Council in 2022.
- 1.4 Following feedback from the Mayor, Cabinet Member, Equality Diversity and Inclusion Board and Scrutiny Committee, the format of the Strategy has been updated to reduce

duplication and focus on actions and measurable outcomes wherever possible. The four outcomes of the original strategy have been reduced to three and the objectives redistributed between the remaining outcomes. It is primarily the actions, performance measures and narrative sections which have been updated. In addition, there are slight amendments to Outcome 3 (formerly Outcome 4) to better reflect the Council's responsibilities for health and social care, and two additional objectives under Outcome 1 have been added, to deepen accountability and effect systemic change within the authority, and reflect its work to become an anti-racist organisation.

- 1.5** The original Strategy was based on 2011 Census data as this was the latest available at the time of adoption. The refresh uses data from the 2021 Census, giving a more accurate picture of the challenges in Croydon.
- 1.6** As part of the CELC Tackling Racial Inequality (TRI) programme, each council is requested to adopt the London Local Government Anti-Racism Statement, developed by the CELC, to declare its commitment to achieving racial equality. The purpose is to ensure a consistent approach, underpinned by CELC TRI standards, to drive systemic cultural change across London councils. The standards also require that each council appoint a Senior Responsible Officer (SRO) for race from both the organisational and political leadership.
- 1.7** On 27 September 2023, the Executive Mayor in Cabinet formally adopted the CELC TRI and appointed the Chief Executive as the internal SRO and the Executive Mayor as the political lead. He also delegated authority to the co-chairs of the Council's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Board, in consultation with the Executive Mayor and Cabinet Member for Culture and Communities, to approve and monitor the delivery plan for the refreshed Equality Strategy once adopted.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

The Executive Mayor in Cabinet recommends that full Council:

- 2.1** approve the refreshed Equality Strategy 2023-2027 (Appendix A) and the updated Equality Objectives at paragraph 4.11.
- 2.2** note the adoption on 27 September 2023 by the Executive Mayor in Cabinet of the London Local Government Anti-Racism Statement, developed by the London Councils Chief Executives London Committee (Appendix B).

3 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1** Adoption of the updated Equality Objectives, incorporated in the refreshed Equality Strategy 2023-2027, complies with the Council legal requirement to publish its equality objectives every four years.

- 3.2 Adoption of the [London Local Government Anti-Racism Statement](#) and appointment of a Senior Responsible Officer and political lead for race will ensure that the Council goes beyond compliance, taking a systemic approach to equality and inclusion and working in line with the [CELC Tackling Racial Inequality Standards](#) to become an anti-racist organisation.

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. This refreshed Equality Strategy sets out the Council’s intended 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.

Strategy outcomes and objectives

- 4.4 The current Equality Strategy was adopted by Cabinet and Council in early 2021 and runs until 2024.
- 4.5 Since the strategy was adopted, there has been significant change in both the Council and global environment, which includes:
- The Covid 19-Pandemic and its long-term impacts.
 - The Black Lives Matter movement.
 - Significant changes in working practices post-pandemic.
 - Croydon Council Reports in the Public Interest and Section 114 notices.
 - Establishment of a new Corporate Management Team and an Equalities Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Board.
 - Development and adoption of the Mayor's Business Plan 2022-2026.
- 4.6 These factors have driven changes in Croydon’s approach which the refreshed Equality Strategy seeks to address. The refresh builds on the progress in delivering the current strategy, incorporates equality initiatives, draws on 2021 Census data and reflects the

priorities of the Mayor's Business Plan. The original objectives have been broadly retained and built upon, with actions and associated outcomes shaped to be more easily measurable.

- 4.7** Since 2021, initiatives and policies have been adopted which have been incorporated into the refreshed Strategy, including:
- People and Cultural Transformation Strategy 2022-26: seven pillars for organisational change, one of which is focused on equalities, diversity and inclusion.
 - Croydon Equality Pledge (2022).
 - George Floyd Race Matters Pledge (2022).
 - CELC Tackling Racial Inequality Standard.
 - Council adopted definitions of Anti-Semitism and Islamophobia.
- 4.8** The number of outcomes in the refreshed strategy has been reduced from four to three. As Outcome 2 in the 2020-24 Equality Strategy ('We work with our residents to better understand our communities') read more as an action than an outcome, it has been deleted and its three objectives have been redistributed between two other outcomes.
- 4.9** In addition to two objectives moved from Outcome 2 of the 2020-24 strategy, Outcome 1 has two new objectives. Objective 6 deepens the transformation of the Council, moving on from the training specified in Objective 3, to strengthen internal challenge and accountability and tackle systemic issues. Objective 7 is derived from one of the Council's George Floyd Race Matters pledges.
- 4.10** Outcome 3 (formerly Outcome 4 in the 2020-24 strategy) has been reshaped to better reflect the interdependence of health and social care and the scope of the Council's responsibility within the system, but the impact sought by the objectives is the same.
- 4.11** The refreshed strategy therefore sets out three outcomes, each with a set of objectives that inform the actions that will be delivered over the course of the next four years:

Outcome 1: The Council addresses social inequities as a community leader and employer

Objectives

1. The Council acts as a role model and champions a fair society.
2. Continue to increase our network across underserved groups (from Outcome 2 in the original strategy).
3. Data about local communities is more effectively collected, analysed and used to inform decisions and improve services (from Outcome 2 in the original strategy).
4. The Council's workforce reflects our diverse communities at all levels.
5. We ensure equality training is central to the way we work, is regularly undertaken, and is reviewed to meet changing needs.

6. Council staff proactively hold challenging, targeted conversations, holding ourselves to account, listening, learning, believing and taking action on systemic issues concerning inequality (a new objective).
7. The Council demonstrates that it is becoming an inclusive, diverse and anti-racist organisation, by embedding this principle in its strategies, decision-making, actions and behaviours, and promotes anti-racist practice (a new objective).

Outcome 2: Use partnerships to improve access and meet individual needs as they arise

Objectives

1. Information about the Council's work towards tackling inequality is easy to access and understand.
2. Enable better education outcomes by offering support to groups who need it most.
3. Systemic inequalities that lead to school exclusions and young people entering the criminal justice system are addressed.
4. Support the creation of jobs that enhance quality of life.
5. Services are proactive in targeting groups that have accessibility issues.

Outcome 3: People in Croydon are supported to lead healthier and independent lives for longer

Objectives

1. Work with partners to tackle social isolation.
2. Work with our partners to understand and reduce health inequalities.
3. Work with our partners to ensure equitable access to health and care services, and enable residents to know where and how to access services.

4.12 The actions and performance measures have been updated, taking account of achievements so far, as well as commitments in the People and Cultural Transformation Strategy, the Croydon Equalities pledges and guidance by the Chief Executives London Committee Tackling Racial Inequality Programme. It will maintain the ambition of the Council to achieve the vision and go beyond compliance to best practice.

4.13 At its meeting on 12 July, the Council agreed a motion proposing to recognise 'care experienced young people' as a local protected characteristic. In response, the Executive Mayor stated his intention to seek the view of the Corporate Parenting Board on how principles set out in the motion could be best adopted with input from care experienced young people themselves. As this process is ongoing, reference to 'care-experience' is not made in the Strategy. However, it could be incorporated at a later date pending the recommendations of the Corporate Parenting Board.

- 4.14** In February 2023, the Council agreed to be a pilot organisation in the Chief Executives London Committee (CELC) Tackling Racial Inequality (TRI) Programme. As part of the programme, each council is requested to adopt the London Local Government Anti-Racism Statement. This sets out the purpose behind the statement, how it was developed, the commitment required from organisations and the reasons for all London local authorities to adopt it. It is key to driving systemic cultural change across London authorities and is attached at Appendix B. On 27 September 2023, the Executive Mayor in Cabinet adopted the London Local Government Anti-Racism Statement.
- 4.15** The CELC TRI standards also require that each council appoint a Senior Responsible Officer (SRO) for race from both organisational and political leadership. The Chief Executive and Executive Mayor were appointed as the internal officer and political SROs on 27 September 2023.

5 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 5.1** Retain the 2020-2024 Equality Strategy until it expires. There is no legal obligation to review equality objectives until 2024, but revision now supports implementation of the equality pledges made in 2022 and work to become an anti-racist organisation and provides clarity by bringing together into one strategy the actions and targets contained in various equality policy documents.

6 CONSULTATION

- 6.1** At its meeting on 25 July 2023, the Scrutiny and Overview Committee considered the Council's proposed approach in updating the Equality Strategy. It welcomed confirmation that the Equalities Impact Assessment was being refreshed and endorsed the approach of requiring the equalities implications of a decision to be assessed at an early stage in the decision-making process, rather than being left to a later stage when it could be more challenging to meaningfully take account of the potential equalities implications. The Committee welcomed that the Equalities Strategy Delivery Plan would focus on measurable outcomes using SMART targets, which ensure that its success could be assessed.
- 6.2** The Committee made the following recommendations. Responses will be published as an addendum to this report once finalised:
- 6.2.1 that there be further consideration of how the refreshed Equalities Strategy can reflect the intersectionality between protected characteristics.
 - 6.2.2 that a process for holding regular challenge sessions with those officers responsible for specific actions/workstreams within the Strategy be developed as part of the ongoing monitoring of delivery, in order to improve accountability for the delivery of the Equalities Strategy.
 - 6.2.3 that given its scope, the Equalities Strategy should have a longer-term end date, but that key review points be built into the Strategy at appropriate intervals to allow for adjustments and the opportunity to refocus as needed; and that the

refreshed strategy be sufficiently dynamic to take account of any new initiatives or legislation that may arise over its lifespan.

6.2.4 That the EDI Board consider embedding Equalities Champions within directorates to complement existing structures and systems within the Council aimed at promoting equalities and inclusivity.

- 6.3** The Council has consulted on individual elements that make up significant parts of the strategy, such as the Equality Pledge and George Floyd Race Matters Pledge in 2021. There has been extensive staff engagement in the development of the Council's People and Cultural Transformation Strategy. Both the Pledges and the People and Cultural Transformation Strategy have informed the update of the Equality Strategy. Moreover, the updated strategy retains the original objectives, with a few minor adjustments detailed at paragraphs 4.8, 4.9 and 4.10.
- 6.4** Workshops have been held with staff to receive their feedback on the update of the strategy. In addition, officers across council directorates have been involved in reviewing and updating supporting actions and performance measures to ensure that they are effective and fit for purpose.
- 6.5** The Council will continue to engage with residents on equality issues during the life of the strategy. It will also ensure that council employees have an opportunity to give their views on the progress achieved and co-create where possible. In particular, as part of the CELC TRI initiative, staff will be involved in exploring anti-racism, which will be followed by public engagement on residents' perceptions of the Council as an anti-racist organisation.

7. CONTRIBUTION TO COUNCIL PRIORITIES

- 7.1** 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.
- 7.2** We will work to increase opportunities for residents to get involved in decisions and improvements that affect their lives and to put local voices at the heart of the Council's work. We will ensure that all residents are treated fairly, with respect and dignity. We need to strengthen leadership and management, develop behaviours aligned with the Council's values, improve staff skills, and create a psychologically safe and inclusive environment for all staff. We will support, develop and value our staff to ensure the Council is accessible and visible to our diverse communities and that it delivers the proactive and respectful services they expect and deserve.

8. IMPLICATIONS

8.1 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1.1** There are no direct financial implications arising from the updated Equality Strategy 2023-27.
- 8.1.2** Comments approved by Lesley Shields, Head of Finance for Assistant Chief Executive and Resources on behalf of the Director of Finance. 17/08/23.

8.2 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 8.2.1** Section 149(1) (a) to (c) of the Equality Act 2010 sets out the public sector equality duty (PSED) with which the Council is required to comply. This provides that 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.
- 8.2.2** The Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties and Public Authorities) Regulations 2017 imposes specific duties on the Council to enable better performance by the Council of the PSED. Under Regulation 4 ('Publication of information') the Council must publish information to demonstrate its compliance with the duty imposed by section 149(1) of the Equality Act 2010. Under Regulation 5 (Equality Objectives), the Council is also required to publish one or more objectives it thinks it should achieve to do any of the things mentioned section 149 (1) (a) to (c). Regulations 4 and 5 both require the information to be first published not later than 30th March 2018 and thereafter, in respect of Regulation 4 yearly and Regulation 5 at intervals not greater than every 4years.
- 8.2.4** Regulation 6 ('Manner of publication') provides that the requirements in regulations 4 and 5 to publish information are requirements to publish the information in a manner that is accessible to the public. The Council may comply with the requirements to publish information by publishing the information within another published document.
- 8.2.5** The Equality Strategy enables the Council to comply with the statutory requirements under Regulation 4 to 6 of the Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties and Public Authorities) Regulations 2017.
- 8.2.6** The Equality Strategy, which includes the equality Objectives, is part of the Council's Policy Framework under Article 4 of the Constitution and must be adopted or approved by Full Council. In addition, the adoption or approval of plans and strategies comprising the Policy Framework must comply with the provisions of the Budget and Policy Framework Procedure Rules in Part 4C of the Constitution.

8.2.7 Failure to publish information to demonstrate the Council's compliance with the duties imposed under section 149(1) of the Equality Act 2010 together with one or more Objectives that the Council can achieve to do any of the things mentioned in paragraphs (a) to (c) of subsection (1) of section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 set out above would be a breach of Regulation 4 and Regulation 5 of the Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties and Public Authorities) Regulations 2017.

Comments approved by: Director of Legal Services and Monitoring Officer.

8.3 EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

8.3.1 As a public body, the Council is required to comply with the Public Sector Equality Duty [PSED], as set out in the Equality Act 2010. The PSED requires the Council to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment or victimisation, advance equality of opportunity, and foster good relations between different people when carrying out their activities and functions. Failure to meet these requirements may result in the Council being exposed to costly, time consuming and reputation-damaging legal challenges.

8.3.2 The update of the 2020-24 Equality Strategy seeks to achieve the same vision: for Croydon to be "a place of opportunity where everyone can belong, addressing the needs and aspirations of all those who live and work in the borough." The updated strategy also retains the equality objectives the Council adopted for 2020-2024 but updates the actions and performance measures for the period 2023-2027, to take account of the progress achieved so far and maintain the ambition.

8.3.3 The revised strategy will help the Council to meet the PSED in full, and the supporting Action Plan, along with the approach to monitor its success and deliverability, will also assist the Council in meeting its specific duties imposed by Regulations made under Section 153 of the Act, thus minimising any reason or likelihood of a successful legal challenge on this.

8.3.4 The 2020-24 strategy was developed in partnership with Croydon's residents, businesses, Voluntary, Community and Faith Sector (VCFS) and staff. We gathered information from a range of impact and needs assessments, identified key challenges and invited a range of internal and external stakeholders to confirm these. We also utilised information a range of national and local sources, some of which are outlined in section 6 of the report. The refreshed strategy takes account of Croydon's Equality Pledge and George Floyd Race Matters Pledge which were consulted on in 2021. The renewed strategy also includes our commitment to systemic change with regard to anti-racism as detailed in the London Local Government Anti Racism Statement and includes objectives from the People and Cultural Transformation Strategy 2022-2026.

8.3.5 The Council is taking a positive action approach to equality, which is permissible under Equality Act 2010. Positive action is defined as taking

“proportionate” steps to improve equality in the workplace by removing or reducing barriers faced by certain groups with shared protected characteristics.

8.3.6 An equality analysis (Appendix C) has been completed and highlights the positive impact that the revised strategy has on all protected characteristics. It also includes data about our residents from Census 2021, along with data about our employees including non-disclosure and details of some of the initiatives that are being carried out to address our public sector duty. We are committed to improving the lived experience of all our residents and employees, in particular those who are underserved. We will listen to our residents and employees and ensure that the systemic change that we are making benefits those who live, work and visit our borough.

8.3.7 Comments approved by Denise McCausland, Equalities Programme Manager. (09/08/2023)

OTHER IMPLICATIONS

8.4 HUMAN RESOURCES IMPACT

8.4.3 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.

8.4.4 The strategy will help the Council achieve its ambition to be an organisation that is collaborative, inclusive and innovative, an employer that lets talent flourish and build workforce capability to meet our ambitions and reflect Croydon’s communities.

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

9 APPENDICES

- 9.1**
- A. *Croydon Equality Strategy 2023-27*
 - B. *London Local Government Anti-Racism Statement*
 - C. *Equality Analysis Form*
 - D. *Scrutiny and Overview Committee Minutes, 25 July 2023*

10 BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

- 10.1 None