

LONDON BOROUGH OF CROYDON

REPORT:	Cabinet
DATE OF DECISION	4th December 2024
REPORT TITLE:	Equality Annual Report 2023/2024
CORPORATE DIRECTOR / DIRECTOR:	<p>Katherine Kerswell, Chief Executive</p> <p>Elaine Jackson, Assistant Chief Executive</p> <p>Marie Snelling, Interim Assistant Chief Executive</p> <p>Annette McPartland, Corporate Director Adult Social Care & Health</p> <p>Nick Hibberd, Corporate Director of Sustainable Communities, Regeneration and Economic Recovery</p> <p>Jane West, Corporate Director of Resources & S151 Officer</p> <p>Debbie Jones, Corporate Director Children, Young People & Education</p> <p>Susmita Sen, Corporate Director of Housing</p>
LEAD OFFICER:	Helen Reeves, Head of Strategy & Policy
LEAD MEMBER:	<p>Jason Perry, Executive Mayor of Croydon</p> <p>Councillor Andy Stranack, Cabinet Member for Communities and Culture</p>
KEY DECISION?	No
WARDS AFFECTED:	All

1. SUMMARY OF REPORT

- 1.1. The purpose of this report is to provide an annual report on the Council's progress in delivering the Equality Strategy 2023-27.

- 1.2. The Equality Strategy supports two priorities under Outcome 1 of the Executive 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.
- 1.3. The Equality Strategy, refreshed for 2023-2027, built on the foundations of the 2020-2024 Strategy, whilst reflecting the new political direction for the Council; aligning more closely with the Executive Mayor's Business Plan.
- 1.4. It was also updated to embed 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, and a new People and Cultural Transformation Strategy is now well underway, including a pillar of work focused on building an equality driven, diverse and inclusive workplace.
- 1.5. The internal Workforce Equality Diversity and Inclusion (WEDI) board is responsible for the monitoring of the delivery of the Equality Strategy. The Board meets monthly, with representatives from all parts of the Council, and its purpose and agendas align with our longer-term cultural transformation as we look to make our Council, and the work that we do, fully inclusive.
- 1.6. At each meeting, the Board reviews progress information relating to the Equality Strategy, including regular monitoring of key staff metrics, such as staff demographic information disclosure rates, recruitment and retention stats, and our pay gap reporting. Additionally, each month, the Board takes a 'deep dive' into an area covered by the Equality Strategy.
- 1.7. With input from our WEDI Board, from elected members, and staff networks, this Annual Report provides an update on the work that has been undertaken to deliver the Equality Strategy since it was agreed by Council in October 2023.
- 1.8. Highlights include our year as London Borough of Culture, our staff development programmes and work with our staff networks, our work to improve the health outcomes of our diverse populations, our improved use of data and intelligence, and our work to ensure we genuinely listen to Croydon residents.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

For the reasons as set out in the report and appendix, the Executive Mayor and Cabinet is recommended to:

- 2.1. Consider and note the Annual Report detailing progress made in delivering the Equality Strategy 2023-27.
- 2.2. Note that the Equality Annual Report is to be referred for noting and discussion at Full Council each year, as previously agreed by Full Council to ensure that progress delivering the Equality Strategy is visible and accountable to all Councillors and the community.

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1. The Annual Report on the Equality Strategy enables the Council to comply with the statutory requirements under Regulation 4 of the Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties and Public Authorities) Regulations 2017 to annually publish relevant and proportionate information about the Council's compliance with the duties imposed under section 149(1) of the Equality Act 2010.
- 3.2. On the 11 October 2023, Full Council agreed to receive and consider annual progress updates on delivering the Equality Objectives, incorporated in the refreshed Equality Strategy 2023-2027.
- 3.3. Our Annual Report on this work further complies with our legal duty to provide an update on this work and publish certain equality information annually.

4. BACKGROUND

- 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 every four years, and to publish information/

progress against these objectives and compliance with the section 149 PSED annually.

- 4.3. The Council meets this duty through the adoption and delivery of its Equality Strategy and through this related Annual Report documenting its progress.

5. CONTRIBUTION TO EXECUTIVE MAYOR'S BUSINESS PLAN

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

6. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 6.1 Please see legal implications section, 9.4 and legal requirement on Council.

7 CONSULTATION

- 7.1 The update was considered at Scrutiny & Overview Committee, 19th November 2024. Recommendations, where possible, have been factored into this report, or will otherwise be factored into the development of future year's reports.

8. IMPLICATIONS

7.1 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1.1 This is a progress update and, therefore, there are no direct financial implications arising from Equality Annual Report.
- 7.1.2 Comments approved by James Huggett, Head of Strategic Finance, 04/11/2024

7.2 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.2.1 Section 149(1) (a) to (c) of the Equality Act 2010 sets out the public sector equality general 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:
 - 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.

7.2.2 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 4 years.

7.2.3 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.

7.2.4 The Annual Report on the Equality Strategy enables the Council to comply with the statutory requirements under Regulation 4 of the Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties and Public Authorities) Regulations 2017 to annually publish relevant and proportionate information about the Council's compliance with the duties imposed under section 149(1) of the Equality Act 2010. The publication of the information helps the public to hold the Council to account for its decision making and its equality objectives.

7.2.5 Failure to publish information to demonstrate the Council's compliance with the duties imposed under section 149(1) of the Equality Act 2010 would be a breach of Regulation 4 of the Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties and Public Authorities) Regulations 2017. The Equalities and Human Rights Commission is responsible for assessing compliance with the specific duties. It has power to issue a compliance notice in the event of non-compliance.

Comments approved by: Gina Clarke, Principal Lawyer Corporate Law and Litigation on behalf of Stephen Lawrence Orumwense Monitoring Officer [7 November 2024]

7.3 EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

7.3.1 This annual progress report showcases the positive work the Council has undertaken to deliver positive equalities outcomes for Croydon.

7.3.2 As detailed in the legal comments, in setting out this work, we are demonstrating the Council's compliance with the PSED.

7.3.3 This report details year one of a four year Strategy; further work will continue to be delivered in future years.

Helen Reeves, Head of Strategy & Policy, 31/10/2024

8 APPENDICES

8.1 Equality Annual Report 2023-24

9 BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

9.1 [Equality Strategy 2023-27.](#)

(<https://www.croydon.gov.uk/community-and-safety/equality-and-diversity/equality-and-diversity-strategies-and-publications/equality-strategy-2023-2027>)