

Report of	Meeting	Date
Director of Change and Delivery (Introduced by the Cabinet Member (Communities, Social Justice and Wealth Building))	Cabinet	Monday, 20 June 2022

Equality Framework

Is this report confidential?	No
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Is this decision key?	No
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Purpose of the Report

- To present the Equality Framework to Cabinet for approval.

Recommendations to Cabinet

- It is recommended that Cabinet approve the Equality Framework as a shared policy document.

Reasons for recommendations

- The reasons for the recommendation include:
 - To ensure we continue to meet our statutory duties under the Equality Act 2010 as a local authority,
 - To update and set out a clear equality framework that reflects the development of shared services enabling a consistent approach,
 - To continue to strengthen the Council's commitment and advancement of equality.

Other options considered and rejected

- The current equality policy is defined by the Equality and Diversity Objectives published in 2018. Continuing with this policy has been rejected on the basis that it does not reflect our most up to date approach towards equality and diversity as an organisation as well as best practice for local authorities.

Corporate priorities

- The report relates to the following corporate priorities: (please bold all those applicable):

An exemplary council	Thriving communities
A fair local economy that works for everyone	Good homes, green spaces, healthy places

Background to the report

6. The purpose of the framework is to set out the methods of embedding equality in to the processes and practices of the Council. It firmly sets the foundations for the Council, as a community leader, in proactively spearheading equality, diversity, and inclusion.
7. An equality framework is an essential means of meeting the Council's statutory duties under the Equality Act 2010. Public sector organisations have a specific set of responsibilities, which are to: actively promote equality, eliminate discrimination, advance equal opportunities, and support community cohesion.
8. The drafted Equality Framework is presented in **Appendix A**.

Equality Act 2010

9. The Equality Act 2010 establishes a set of responsibilities for public sector organisations and is the primary piece of equality legislation in the UK. This includes a set of specific duties that require the council to create equality objectives every four years and publish data to show compliance with the equality duties. It also establishes a set of general duties, such as advancing equality of opportunity, eliminating unlawful discrimination, and fostering good relations between communities.
10. The Equality Framework establishes and clarifies the way we strive to both meet as well as go beyond our statutory equality duties. This includes:
 - Establishing equality objectives every four years, which set out our strategy and actions for furthering equality as community leaders. This will be done separately by each Council to better respond to the equality needs of each borough and their respective communities,
 - Collecting and publishing equality related data to illustrate compliance with the act. The Council will undertake this by publishing the demographics of its workforce as well as collecting and monitoring equality data through equality monitoring questions in all surveys and consultations,
 - Ensuring equality is embedded into the decision-making process through equality comments on reports as well as conducting Impact Assessments whenever to changing or introducing a new service or policy to fully consider the equality impact.

Equality Framework

Development

11. The framework was developed undertaking the Equality Framework for Local Government (EFLG) self-assessment. The EFLG is an assessment tool designed to aid local authorities in identifying ways to improve their equality performance. Equality standards and best practice were also reviewed and analysed.

12. In April 2022, a staff working group was established with fifteen officers from across South Ribble and Chorley, to review the drafted Equality Framework. This was done to check the usability of the framework as a working policy document whilst providing an opportunity for staff to share their feedback on how equality is embedded into Council processes and procedures.

Framework Summary

13. To effectively embed equality into everything the Council does, the revised framework sets out:
 - The Council's statutory duties under the Equality Act 2010,
 - The roles and responsibilities for staff and members,
 - The purpose of the equality objectives and how they are monitored,
 - What data is used to understand our communities and inform decisions,
 - Assessment tools for measuring equality impacts and performance,
 - How equality is considered in the decision making and service planning processes,
 - The relevant equality policies and procedures relating to recruitment and employment.

Key changes from the previous policy

14. The key changes from the previous policy include:
 - A simplified equality Impact Assessment (IA) tool that is simpler to apply and consistent for both councils so that staff only have one tool. The tool also includes strategic considerations, such as impact on the Council's reputation, in addition to environmental, health, and socio-economic considerations,
 - Refreshed equality objectives set independently by each council to reflect their communities and monitored annually.
 - Clear roles and responsibilities for staff and members across the Councils

Implementation

15. In order to implement the framework across services, the following will be delivered:
 - Key officers and Senior Management Team will be provided with briefing sessions on the new framework within June/July,
 - Key messages will be communicated across the intranet for officers and members and access to the full framework will be provided,
 - The mandatory equality training package will be reviewed and updated to ensure it reflects any changes agreed as part of the new framework.
 - A central repository and tracker for completed Impact Assessments will be created in order to quality check, store, and monitor the delivery of any agreed actions within the assessments.

Climate change and air quality

16. The work noted in this report does not impact the climate change and sustainability targets of the Council and all environmental considerations are in place.

Equality and diversity

17. The framework serves to enhance the knowledge and understanding of our duties under the Equality Act 2010 whilst ensuring that we meet those duties through our practices and procedures. Therefore, the policy will have a positive impact on equality and diversity.

Risk

18. The framework acts to mitigate risks to the Council resulting from noncompliance with the Equality Act 2010 and its associated duties. It provides the tools, resources, and guidance to ensure staff are aware of their responsibilities and that equality is embedded into our practices and procedures.
19. The key risk to the framework is poor implementation, whereby officers are not aware of the requirements placed on them as well as not being provided sufficient or adequate training. To mitigate this risk, a communications will be promoted following the approval of the framework by cabinet and the equality training package will be updated to reflect the new policy.

Comments of the Statutory Finance Officer

20. There are no financial implications arising from this report.

Comments of the Monitoring Officer

21. There are no issues or concerns from a Monitoring Officer perspective. What is proposed here is designed to ensure that we can demonstrate that we are fully complying with all our statutory obligations in this field.

Background documents

22. The following documents are background items to this report:
 - [Equality and Diversity Objectives](#) (2018).

Appendices

23. The following appendices are included with this report:
 - Appendix A – Equality Framework

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