

SUBJECT:	EQUALITY OBJECTIVES 2020-24
DIRECTORATE:	CHIEF EXECUTIVE AND TOWN CLERK
REPORT AUTHOR:	HEATHER GROVER, PRINCIPAL POLICY OFFICER

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To present to proposed Equality Objectives to Equality and Diversity Group for members to consider and comment on prior to forwarding to Executive and then Full Council for approval.

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1 The Equality Act 2010 is the main legislation in respect of equality and diversity, complemented by the Human Rights Act 1998 providing legislation protecting human rights.
- 2.2 The council has specific duties under the Act which include the annual publication of equality information and setting at least one measurable Equality Objective every four years.
- 2.3 This report covers the setting of Equality Objectives. It provides a brief summary of the council's current Equality Objectives and associated actions over the four years from 2016-20 and presents proposed Equality Objectives for the forthcoming four years from 2020-2024.
- 2.4 The report includes details of the process undertaken to review the council's Equality Objectives, which resulted in the proposal that the strategic objectives remain in place for a further four years, with an underpinning annual action plan to ensure measurable progress.

3. Background

- 3.1 The Equality Act 2010 is the main legislation in respect of equality and diversity, complemented by the Human Rights Act 1998 providing legislation protecting human rights.
- 3.2 The Act makes it unlawful to discriminate against people on the following grounds (protected characteristics):
- Age
 - Disability
 - Gender reassignment
 - Marriage and civil partnership
 - Pregnancy and maternity
 - Race

- Religion and belief
- Sex
- Sexual orientation

3.3 Section 149 of the Act imposes a general equality duty (Public Sector Equality Duty) on public bodies. Public authorities and those who exercise public functions must have 'due regard' to the need to:

- Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct prohibited under the Act
- Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a protected characteristic and persons who do not share it
- Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it

3.4 Schedule 19 of the Equality Act places further specific duties on public bodies. Listed public authorities must publish:

- Information on employees (if 150 staff or more) and people affected by policies and practices to demonstrate compliance with the equality duty, at least annually
- Specific and measurable equality objectives, at least every four years

3.5 Information on employees and people affected by policies and practices to demonstrate compliance with the equality duty

3.5.1 This information is provided in the Equality Journal. The Journal is published annually and provides information on the local authority area, the council's workforce and activity which has taken place in respect of equality and diversity over the preceding financial year. It is published in September in order to include nationally released data for the area for the period covered.

3.5.2 The annual Equality Journal is considered by Equality and Diversity Group prior to publication. The [Equality Journal 2018/19](#) can be found on our website on the Equality and Diversity page.

3.6 Specific and measurable equality objectives

3.6.1 The council is required to set at least one specific and measurable equality objective every four years. It last published equality objectives in 2016 for the four years to 2020. There were five objectives measured through a detailed annual action plan.

3.6.2 This report provides a summary of progress against these objectives and includes a summary of progress made against the Equality Objectives 2016-20.

4. Equality Objectives 2016-20

4.1 The following objectives were set in 2016:

- Our services are more accessible and do not discriminate on any unjustifiable grounds.

- Local communities and stakeholders are empowered to influence the way our services are provided to them.
- Equality and diversity is at the heart of decision making at all levels within the city council.
- Our workforce at all levels reflects the makeup of the local community.
- Equalities, Social Inclusion and Community Cohesion have all improved within our communities.

4.2 The action plan has been monitored on a regular basis by the Equality and Diversity Group, with new actions being added as identified. Over the period 2016-20 the plan has included 113 actions, and these have been achieved as follows:

	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20 (to date)
Complete	27	10	14	8
Ongoing	11	10	13	15
Removed	4	0	0	1
TOTAL	42	20	27	24

4.3 Only key equality actions in any one year are included in the annual action plan. Therefore some, but not all, ongoing actions are carried forward to the following year. Those actions which have been removed either became redundant due to changes in procedures or on investigation were found to be impractical to implement.

4.4 Actions have been wide ranging with some key examples being:

- Forum to enable people with disabilities to have a say about the council's services and establishment of Housing Disability Group
- Staff training and awareness raising on a wide range of topics, e.g. autism, dementia, deaf awareness and sign language
- Review of the Corporate Monitoring form
- Introduction of a tailored Equality Analysis Form for Tenancy Services
- Installation of a 'changing places' toilet at the new bus station and introduction of these toilets at Lincoln Christmas Market
- Hosting of a coffee morning to celebrate 100 years of the vote for women
- Support for the Muslim community ensuring the building and opening of the city's first purpose-built mosque went smoothly
- Celebration of World Hello Day each year to bring people together
- Disability Confident Employer and Mindful Employer status

Further information can be found in the annual [Equality Journal](#), which not only provides equality information but also provides a summary of equality work undertaken during the year.

5. Developing Equality Objectives 2020-24

5.1 The City of Lincoln Council must set equality objectives in April 2020 for the four year period 2020-24, and these must be specific and measurable.

5.2 The current objectives provided a starting point for developing new objectives to take the council forward to 2024.

- 5.3 The process for developing equality objectives for this period began in December 2019 with a discussion at the Equality and Diversity group and at a joint meeting of the Corporate Leadership Team and Service Managers. In January consultation took place with staff, voluntary sector groups, elected members, trade unions, the Tenants Panel and members of the public. The following tables provides further details.

Group being consulted with	Date
E&D Group consider current objectives and proposals for equality objectives for 2020-2024.	December
Corporate Leadership Team and Service Managers	December
Elected Members (via letter from E&D Chair)	January
Staff (online via City People)	January
Trade unions (advised of consultation and invited to participate online at meeting)	January
Tenants Panel (advised of consultation and invited to participate online at meeting)	January
Voluntary Sector (Voluntary Centre Services newsletter)	January
Citizens Panel questionnaire (paper and online survey)	January
CMT (for comment following consultation)	February
E&D Group (for approval ahead of Executive)	18/2/19
Executive (for approval ahead of Full Council)	24/2/20
New objectives agreed by Full Council to run from 1/4/20	25/2/20

6. Consultation

- 6.1 A short survey was included as part of the January Citizens Panel questionnaire, circulated as both an online and paper survey. We also ran a dedicated equality objectives online survey for staff, elected members, trade unions, the Tenants Panel and the voluntary sector.
- 6.2 The views of senior staff and service managers were sought face to face, staff were invited to participate in the survey through our intranet, elected members were invited to participate through a letter from the member Chair of the Equality and Diversity Group and trade unions and Tenants Panel representatives informed of the survey at their regular meetings. A link to the survey was circulated, via the Voluntary Sector Services newsletter, to all voluntary sector organisations in and serving the city.
- 6.3 The results of the consultation are provided for the Citizens Panel at Appendix A and for all other consultees at Appendix B.
- 6.4 All those consulted were asked the same questions, and in respect of our current objectives were asked how well we had achieved each objective. Citizens Panel members are not as familiar with the objectives and action plans and therefore, as expected, returned a higher percentage of 'don't knows'. Positively, other consultees with more knowledge of our work to support equality and diversity returned high percentages of us having 'partly achieved' or 'fully achieved' objectives. For objectives 1, 2 and 3 this figure was 85%, and for objective 5, 75%. Objective 4, 'our workforce reflects the make-up of the local community' was the lowest at 55%.

6.5 We also asked which objectives were most important for the coming four years. Making our services accessible and non-discriminatory was identified by Citizens Panel respondents as being most important, followed by ensuring equality and diversity is at the heart of decision making. For other respondents they also identified making our services accessible and non-discriminatory as most important, with empowering local communities, partner organisations stakeholders in service delivery as second most important.

6.6 A further question asked about whether people had been discriminated against. We also asked for general comments on the objectives. Not all comments referred to a specific protected characteristic, but of those that did they can be summarised as follows:

- Age – 10 comments
- Disability – 8 comments
- Race – 7 comments
- Religion – 1 comment
- Sex – 5 comments
- Pregnancy and maternity – 1 comment
- Marriage and civil partnership – 1 comment
- Sexual orientation – 1 comment

6.7 Two comments referred to the objectives, questioning how we measure objectives and quantify success and also the time taken to achieve the objectives. Progress towards the objectives are measured through achievement of specific actions within the equality action plans. Because of the nature of what we are working to achieve we will always strive to do more, and will continuously review our policies, practices and procedures to ensure our services continue to be delivered in a fair and non-discriminatory way. The equality action plans are refreshed annually and enable us to consider comments made or issues raised which arise from engagement.

6.8 Following adoption of the 2020-24 objectives we will engage with key stakeholders as part of developing the action plan. This will help to identify any specific concerns which may need to be considered as part of our planned equality actions.

7. Proposals for Equality Objectives 2020-24 and Associated Annual Action Plan for 2020-21

7.1 Taking into consideration feedback from the consultation it is proposed that the Equality Objectives for the four years from 2020-24 remain broadly the same. The consultation indicated we had achieved these objectives over the 2016-20 period and this demonstrates they provide a good framework for developing new smart actions below each of these overarching objectives, thus enabling us to continue to measure progress. The proposed objectives are as follows:

1. Our services are accessible and do not discriminate on any unjustifiable grounds.
2. Local communities, partner organisations and stakeholders are empowered to influence the way our services are provided to them.
3. Equality and diversity is at the heart of decision making at all levels within the city council.

4. Our workforce at all levels reflects the make-up of the local community.
5. Equalities, Social Inclusion and Community Cohesion have all improved within our communities.

7.2 Our new strategic plan, Vision 2025, sets out our priorities and aspirations. The annual equality action plans will be developed through service plans, which will focus on delivery of Vision 2025, thus ensuring equality actions are closely aligned to our priorities and aspirations.

8. Strategic Priorities

8.1 The Equality Objectives contribute to all strategic priorities, helping to make Lincoln a fairer and more inclusive and cohesive city.

9. Organisational Impacts

9.1 Finance (including whole life costs where applicable)

Setting the Equality Objectives has no financial implications. There will be cost implications for some elements of the action plan, but these will be costed and prioritised as part of implementation of individual projects within service areas

9.2 Legal Implications including Procurement Rules

The setting of measurable Equality Objectives is a legal requirement. Measurement of the objectives will be through achievement of the action plan.

9.3 Human Resources

Ensuring staff receive appropriate training to enable compliance with equality legislation.

9.4 Equality, Diversity & Human Rights (including the outcome of the EA attached, if required)

As legal implications.

9.5 Significant Community Impact

The implications for the community will be beneficial, particularly in helping foster good relations.

10. Risk Implications

10.1 The risk of not adopting equality objectives is potential challenge for not complying with legislation.

11. Recommendation

11.1 That Equality and Diversity Group agree the proposed draft equality objectives set out in Paragraph 7.1 for a four year period from April 2020 to March 2024, and refer to, Executive and full Council for adoption.

Is this a key decision?

No

Do the exempt information categories apply?

No

Does Rule 15 of the Scrutiny Procedure Rules (call-in and urgency) apply?

No

How many appendices does the report contain?

Two

List of Background Papers:

None

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