

**Report by Councillor Joshua Wells,
Chair of Equality and Diversity Advisory Panel**

1 Introduction

1.1 I commenced the role of Chair of the Equality and Diversity Advisory Panel in May 2023, taking over this role from Councillor Naomi Tweddle. I would like to thank Cllr Tweddle for her time as Chair of the Panel and I look forward to continuing to work with Councillor Tweddle who remains a member of the Equality & Diversity Advisory Panel, alongside the other panel members, over the coming year.

1.2 As a reminder to members of Council, the Equality and Diversity Advisory Panel is an informal advisory working group comprising of elected members and officers. The Panel considers all aspects of equality & diversity at the council including policies, services & practices.

This collective work helps to ensure the Council continues to meet the requirements of the Equality Act 2010 and Public Sector Equality Duty.

1.3 The current elected members on the Equality and Diversity Advisory Panel are:

- Councillor Joshua Wells (Chair)
- Councillor Sue Burke (Vice-Chair)
- Councillor Ric Metcalfe
- Councillor Naomi Tweddle
- Councillor Gary Hewson
- Councillor Dylan Stothard
- Councillor Hilton Spratt
- Councillor Matthew Fido
- Councillor Natasha Chapman

1.4 In addition to the elected members above, a number of Council officers also sit on the Panel. These officers undertake equality & diversity activity on a regular basis through their areas of work. Officers attending the Panel are from the service areas of Human Resources, Corporate Policy & Transformation, Customer Services and Legal.

1.5 I would like to thank each member of the Equality and Diversity Advisory Panel and officers for their ongoing support towards equality and diversity during the past year.

1.6 Within this report I have provided a reminder of the Council's Equality Objectives and our duties under the Equality Act 2010 and Public Sector Equality Duty, outlined the key activity undertaken by the Panel over the past year, together with provided an insight into the key equality and diversity activity undertaken by the Council during this time.

2 Equality Act 2010 and Public Sector Equality Duty

- 2.1 As a reminder the Equality Act 2010 and Public Sector Equality Duty requires the Council to consider all individuals when carrying out their day-to-day work, in shaping policy, delivering services and in relation to their own employees.
- 2.2 It requires that public bodies have due regard to the need to:
- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act
 - Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not
 - Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not

3 City of Lincoln Council's Equality Objectives

- 3.1 In addition to the Panel helping to ensure the Council meets the requirements of the Equality Act 2010 and Public Sector Equality Duty, during the past year the Panel has also continued to monitor the Council's progress towards meeting its Equality Objectives, which run for the period 2020-2024.
- 3.2 As a reminder the Council's Equality Objectives are:
- 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 is at the heart of decision making at all levels within the council
 - Our workforce at all levels reflects the makeup of the local community
 - Equalities, social inclusion and community cohesion have all improved with our communities

4 Annual Equality Journal

- 4.1 At the end of each financial year the Council produces an annual Equality Journal. The Journal contains a record of the key equality & diversity focused activity delivered during the previous year by the Council towards meeting its Equality Objectives, together with the requirements of the Equality Act 2010 and Public Sector Equality Duty.
- 4.2 The Equality Journal 2022/23 was presented to the Equality & Diversity Advisory Panel in October 2023 for review. The Equality Journal 2022/23 will also be presented to Council in November 2023 before being made available on the staff intranet and the Council's website.

- 4.3 I would encourage members to view the full Equality Journal 2022/23, which will be made available via the following link when published - <https://www.lincoln.gov.uk/policies-publications/equality-diversity-1/3>

5 Equality & Diversity Advisory Panel Agenda Items from the Past 12 Months

- 5.1 During the past year, the Equality & Diversity Advisory Panel has met on two occasions as planned to discuss a range of equality and diversity topics. The meetings were held on 1st March 2023 and 11th October 2023. Below includes the agenda items discussed at each meeting.

5.2 Wednesday 1st March 2023
Agenda Items

1. Gender Pay Gap
2. Equality & Diversity Action Plan 2022/23 update

5.3 Wednesday 11th October 2023
Agenda Items

1. Equality Journal 2022/23
2. Equality & Diversity Action Plan 2023/24 update
3. Human Resources Update
4. Mental Wellbeing

6 Key Equality and Diversity Activity Progressed over the Past 12 Months across Service Areas

- 6.1 Included below are some examples of the key equality and diversity activity progressed during the past year as highlighted within the latest Equality Journal 2022/23.

A number of additional key activities have also been included below, which have been progressed since the Equality Journal 2022/23 was produced.

Continued to Ensure the Council's Website Meets Accessibility Legislation

- 6.2 The Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) is a legal requirement, which all public sector websites and applications must meet. The guidelines focus on how a disabled person accesses or benefits from a document, website, system or application, with the aim of ensuring those with a disability can access what they require in a similar amount of time and effort as someone without a disability.
- 6.3 In February 2023, the website was audited for its accessibility by the Government Digital Service. The review was a success; some minor accessibility issues were identified and these have since been fully resolved.

Provided a Wide Range of Cost of Living Support

- 6.4 Over the past 12 months cost of living challenges have continued to have a significant impact on many of our residents and businesses.

During this time, the Council and its partners have continued to provide a wide range of cost of living support to the residents of the City. This has included administering a variety of additional support payments to residents to help with increased energy bills, together with working closely with partners to deliver local initiatives to help residents to keep warm and to ensure they have sufficient food.

Gender Pay Gap 2022 Considered by the Equality & Diversity Advisory Panel and Published on the Council's Website

- 6.5 The gender pay reporting legislation requires employers with over 250 employees to publish statutory calculations every year showing how large the pay gap is between their male and female employees.
- 6.6 In March 2023, the Gender Pay Gap 2022 for the City of Lincoln Council was published on the Council's website for the period 2021/22.

- 6.7 The Council's gender pay gap headline figures as at 31st March 2022 were as follows:

- The mean gender pay gap was 1.3%
- The median gender pay gap was 1.9%
- The mean gender bonus gap was 0% (not applicable to the council as it does not have any bonus schemes)
- The median gender bonus gap was 0%
- The proportion of male employees receiving a bonus was 0% and the proportion of female employees receiving a bonus was 0%

- 6.8 The Council is confident that its gender pay gap does not stem from paying men and women differently for the same or equivalent work. Rather its gender pay gap is the result of the roles in which men and women work within the organisation and the salaries that these roles attract.

Continued to Provide Support for Refugees Arriving in the City

- 6.9 During the past 12 months the Council has supported both the Syrian and Afghan Refugee Resettlement schemes, together with been a key partner in the response to the Ukrainian war crisis.
- 6.10 As part of this response the Council has provided housing advice to those arriving under the Ukrainian Family Scheme and has also been working closely with Lincolnshire County Council, the other Lincolnshire districts, and other key partners to implement the Homes for Ukraine Scheme.

- 6.11 In Lincoln we have welcomed over 80 households into sponsor properties and continue to work to help the families settle into the community.

Council Policies

- 6.12 The Corporate Policy & Transformation Team working alongside the Legal Services Manager has continued to monitor all Council policies on a quarterly basis to ensure they are reviewed at the required frequency by service areas and continue to meet the needs of the Council and national legislation. Of these policies, 35 are managed by the Human Resources Team, with the majority having direct or indirect links to the topic of equality and diversity.

Retained Accreditation to Employee Support Initiatives

- 6.13 The Council has continued to retain its accreditation as a Foster Friendly Employer, Mindful Employer and Disability Employer. Additionally, the Council has continued to retain accreditation to the Carers Charter Quality Award and has continued to be a signatory to the Dying to Work Charter. Collectively each of these activities help to demonstrate that our employees are provided with support for a range of different circumstances. Work to retain accreditation to these worthy initiatives will continue over the coming year.

Equality Impact Assessment Awareness Training

- 6.14 In June 2023 Equality Impact Awareness Training was provided to a number of Council officers by a local organisation called Every One. The training successfully raised awareness of the importance of Equality Impact Assessments, how to complete these accurately and the possible consequences if equality and diversity impacts are not fully considered. The training was well received by officers.
- 6.15 Full consideration of equality and diversity will continue to be essential when making changes to existing service delivery and implementing new services. This reaffirms the importance of this training and subsequently it is anticipated that further training sessions will continue to be delivered moving forward.

Review of Languages included as Alternative Languages in Council Publications

- 6.16 In September 2023, a review of the top seven languages included as alternative languages in Council publications was undertaken by the Customer Services and Policy & Transformation Teams. This annual activity ensures the alternative languages we include at the end of our publications are representative of the residents of our City and our service users. A key element of this activity was reviewing the interpretations, which had been requested in the six months prior to the review taking place.

- 6.17 The review highlighted that six out of the seven languages included within the guide remained correct. One change has been made to the guide, which was to add Bangla onto the list of languages in place of Slovak. Bangla has seen an increase in interpretations requested, whereas Slovak has seen a reduction. The list will continue to be reviewed on a regular basis.

Lincoln Citizens' Panel Refresh

- 6.18 The Lincoln Citizens' Panel is a key resource used to gather feedback on the delivery of our services from residents across the City.
- 6.19 Led by the Policy & Transformation Team and working with an external supplier, a recruitment campaign was undertaken between August and October 2023 to encourage further residents to join our Panel and have the opportunity to share their views on the delivery of our services. The aim of the campaign was to ensure the Panel continues to be as representative as possible of our residents. The refresh was completed in October 2023.
- 6.20 Following this exercise, the Panel now consists of over 650 active Panel members covering all wards in the City. The age of Panel members ranges from 18 to 88 (where age has been provided), with the highest proportion of Panel members continuing to be over the age of 50 – those over 50 are usually keener to participate in feedback questionnaires. Work to recruit new Panel members will continue on a rolling basis over the coming year, and the team is currently working with the Housing service to increase the proportion of Citizens' Panel members who are Council tenants.
- 6.21 Additionally, work will also take place to explore other routes of consultation alongside the Lincoln Citizens' Panel to encourage and enable further resident engagement.

7 Equality and Diversity Action Plan 2023/24

- 7.1 The actions set out in the Equality and Diversity Action Plan 2023/24 serve to demonstrate how the Council is meeting its Equality Objectives and complying with the Equality Act 2010 and the Public Sector Equality Duty. The action plan is treated as a live document with actions being added into the plan on a rolling basis throughout the year as these are identified by service areas.
- 7.2 The actions included within the Equality and Diversity Action Plan 2023/24 consist of:
- A range of recurring equality related actions, which are undertaken on an annual basis
 - Actions requested for inclusion in the plan by the Equality & Diversity Advisory Panel
 - Equality related actions drawn from Assistant Director Service Plans
 - Actions which have been identified by service areas

7.3 At the time of writing this report there are **26** actions within the Equality and Diversity Action Plan 2023/24. Of these actions:

- **16** actions are currently being progressed
- **2** actions are complete
- **8** actions are yet to be started but are scheduled to start in the near future

The actions delivered within this plan will form the basis of next year's Equality Journal covering the period 1st April 2023 to 31st March 2024.

8 Concluding Comments

8.1 I would like to thank officers and members for their continued support and commitment towards equality and diversity at the Council over the past year. This work has been and will continue to be extremely important.

8.2 Moving forwards it is essential that equality and diversity continues to be fully considered when delivering our services. This will ensure the needs of our residents are fully understood, and importantly, accommodated for, to the best of the council's ability.

8.3 The next Equality and Diversity Advisory Panel meeting is scheduled to take place in early 2024.