

North Tyneside Council

Report to Cabinet

Date: 20 January 2020

Title: Corporate Equality Objectives Progress Report

Portfolio(s): Deputy Mayor

Cabinet Member(s): Councillor Bruce Pickard

Report from Service Area:

Corporate Strategy

Responsible Officer:

Jacqueline Laughton, Head of Corporate Strategy and Customer Service

(Tel: (0191) 643 5724)

Wards affected:

All Wards

PART 1

1.1 Executive Summary:

The Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) of the Equality Act 2010 requires public sector organisations to publish and implement equality objectives to demonstrate how they are seeking to meet the aims of the general equality duty.

North Tyneside Council's current Corporate Equality Objectives were agreed by Cabinet in January 2019 and implemented from April 2019. In line with the Authority's Equality and Diversity Policy governance arrangements, progress against the Corporate Equality Objectives Action Plan must be reported to Cabinet every July and December. This Equality Update Report highlights progress to date.

1.2 Recommendation:

It is recommended that Cabinet note the progress made towards the achievement of the Authority's Corporate Equality Objectives and how this work is being embedded within the Customer Service programme.

1.3 Forward Plan:

Twenty-eight days' notice of this report has been given and it first appeared on the Forward Plan that was published on 22 November 2019.

1.4 Council Plan and Policy Framework

As the Authority seeks to fulfil its equality duties by embedding equality and diversity considerations in everything it does, this report is relevant to all of the priorities in the Our North Tyneside Plan 2018-20.

1.5 Information:

1.5.1 Background

The Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) of the Equality Act 2010 requires public sector organisations to publish and implement equality objectives and to refresh them at least every four years. The objectives should demonstrate how the organisation is seeking to meet the aims of the general equality duty by having due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation
- 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

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1.5.2 North Tyneside Council has five Corporate Equality Objectives, each of which is underpinned by key actions. The objectives, key actions and progress to date are outlined below:

1.5.3 **Objective 1:** Improve North Tyneside Council's Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) process

The Authority will seek to achieve this by:

- a. Reviewing, updating and promoting EIA guidance and documentation
- b. Appointing new EIA 'champions' who will be trained and supported to help team members complete EIAs
- c. Developing and implementing a plan for the re-introduction of a fit for purpose electronic system for EIAs.

Progress to date: A new EIA form and guidance have been developed. They will be piloted prior to implementation and publication. From spring 2020 officers undertaking an EIA will be supported by trained colleagues from each service area. A new system will be introduced to provide oversight of all the EIA's undertaken across the Authority.

1.5.4 **Objective 2:** Be a good employer and promote an inclusive workforce that feels valued

The Authority will seek to achieve this by:

- a. Undertaking and implementing findings from the staff, and staff health and wellbeing surveys
- b. Understanding the specific equality and diversity issues arising from both surveys and make recommendations for action

- c. Developing and promoting an annual equalities events calendar, encouraging employees to contribute to the development of the activities it delivers
- d. Ensuring that the authority's mental health first aid approach provides increased awareness of the issues associated with specific protected characteristics.

Progress to date: Data from both surveys has been analysed and reports given to management teams across the Authority. The analysis highlighted the need to better understand the needs of employees with disabilities. Further engagement has been undertaken and action to address the issues raised will be a priority during 2020. This will also be reflected in the Authority's equality calendar activities for 2020.

Additional training on the mental health needs of people with specific protected characteristics was given to the Authority's Mental Health First Aiders during 2019.

1.5.5 **Objective 3:** Ensure staff and elected members are kept informed about the requirements of the Public Sector Equality Duty

The Authority will seek to achieve this by:

- a. Continuing to develop and deliver a programme of equality training
- b. Developing a handbook to help staff consider and respond to the needs of customers and colleagues with specific protected characteristics
- c. Ensuring that our equality duties are considered as part of the review of the North Tyneside Council Constitution.

Progress to date: Participation in the Authority's equality and diversity training for employees continues to grow with more than two-thirds of managers and more than half of all employees up to date with mandatory equality and diversity training. The on-going development of new learning methods continue to contribute to this improvement. From January 2020 this will be supported by the Authority's new Staff Equality Handbook, which explains what employees can do to help promote equality and diversity within the organisation and through the delivery of our services.

61% of elected members have received equality and diversity training. This will continue to be given to all new members as part of their induction. Reference to the requirements of the Public Sector Equality Duty will be incorporated into the North Tyneside Council Constitution from 2020, particularly in relation to the formal decision making processes of the Authority.

1.5.6 **Objective 4:** Improve the collection and use of both internal and external quality data

The Authority will seek to achieve this by:

- a. Providing guidance on the appropriate and consistent collection of equality data
- b. Improving collection of staff equality data on our Business Management System (BMS) to increase by 50% the number of staff who complete BMS data by March 2020
- c. Using staff equality data to inform the development of initiatives to support our commitment to make our workforce more representative of the borough's population
- d. Using equality data to ensure service delivery and community engagement is balanced and proportionate.

Progress to date: A set of standard equality/demographic questions and guidance have been published to support the appropriate and consistent collection of equality data. This data

will be used to ensure people with protected characteristics have an equal opportunity to access the Authority's services and engagement activities.

Further work will be undertaken, with a focus on employees with disabilities, to build upon an exercise undertaken in summer 2019 to encourage employees to update their personal details on BMS. Equality data will continue to be used to inform the Authority's recruitment initiatives, for example its apprenticeship programme and campaigns to promote the Authority's Disability Confident Employer status.

1.5.7 **Objective 5:** Ensure our buildings, services and communications are accessible

The Authority will seek to achieve this by:

- a. Reviewing and publishing accessibility statements for all of our public buildings
- b. Reviewing and acting on the findings of our EIA on council communications
- c. Delivering additional equality actions identified within our Customer Service Programme

Progress to date: Work to review and publish accessibility statements for council buildings is planned for 2020 as part of the Customer Service Programme. The initial focus will be on buildings with high footfall such as the Authority's Customer First Centres. Findings from the equality impact assessment of council communications is being used to inform the development of the Programme's brilliant basics workstream.

1.6 **Decision options:**

There are no decision options as the information in this report is submitted for the decision makers information only.

1.7 **Contact officers:**

Wendy Burke, Director of Public Health, tel. (0191) 6432401

Anne Foreman, Policy and Performance Manager, Corporate Strategy, tel. (0191) 643 2225

David G Dunford, Senior Business Partner, Finance, tel. (0191) 6437027

1.8 **Background information:**

The following background papers/information have been used in the compilation of this report and are available at the office of the author:

- (1) [Cabinet Report Equality and Diversity Policy – 21 January 2019](#)
- (2) [Cabinet Report Annual Equality and Diversity Review - 29 July 2019](#)
- (3) [Equality Act 2010: Guidance](#) Government Equalities Office and Equality and Human Rights Commission – updated 16 June 2015

PART 2 – COMPLIANCE WITH PRINCIPLES OF DECISION MAKING

2.1 Finance and other resources

The costs of delivery are included in existing service budgets and no additional costs are anticipated.

2.2 Legal

Publication of the Authority's Corporate Equality Objectives and of this progress report demonstrates the Authority's commitment to equality and diversity and to compliance with the requirements of the Equality Act 2010 and Public Sector Equality Duty provided by that Act.

2.3 Consultation/community engagement

Members of the Corporate Equality Group, Senior Leadership Team and the Deputy Mayor have been consulted on the contents of this progress report.

As identified in section 1.5.4 consultation with North Tyneside Council employees with disabilities has been undertaken to inform actions to achieve Corporate Objective 2: Be a good employer and promote an inclusive workforce that feels valued.

2.5 Equalities and diversity

Publication of the Authority's Corporate Equality Objectives and actions taken to achieve these objectives contribute to the fulfilment of the Authority's duties under the Public Sector Equality Duty and general duty of the 2010 Equality Act.

2.6 Risk management

The effectiveness of the Authority's equality and diversity processes are monitored every quarter as part of North Tyneside Council's risk management processes and are reported via the Corporate Strategic Risk Register.

2.7 Crime and disorder

There are no crime and disorder implications arising directly from this report.

2.8 Environment and sustainability

There are no environment and sustainability implications arising directly from this report.

PART 3 - SIGN OFF

- Chief Executive x
- Head(s) of Service x
- Mayor/Cabinet Member(s) x
- Chief Finance Officer x
- Monitoring Officer x
- Head of Corporate Strategy and Customer Service x