



City of Westminster

Cabinet Member Report

Decision Maker:

Councillor Less

Date:

18/02/2024

Classification:

General Release

Title:

Refreshed Equality Objectives

Wards Affected:

All

Policy Context:

The Council is subject to the Equality Act 2010 and the Public Sector Equality Duty. This requires the Council to have an up to date set of specific and measurable Equality Objectives, including annual progress updates.

The Council has developed policies in relation to inclusion within the organisation and staff recruitment and investing in our communities. The Council has also committed to developing a wider strategy around community equality. This document is the progress update for 2023.

Key Decision:

No

Financial Summary:

Any financial implications will be met within existing budgets and resources.

Report of:

Francis Martin, Executive Director of Environment, City Management, Public Protection and Communities.

1. Executive Summary

The purpose of the report is to release publicly information on the progress made for our equality objectives over the year of 2023.

2. Recommendations

This is an update against the agreed upon Equality Objectives for 2022 – 2024. These objectives will be updated in October 2024. The objectives are set out below:

- **Staff will represent the demographic of our communities at all levels of the organisation.**
- **Understand our diverse communities and embed that understanding in how we shape all that we do across the Council.**
- **Support Westminster’s communities to be sustainable, socially inclusive and empowered to act, when they are best placed to do so.**

Demonstrate inclusive leadership, strategic partnership and a clear organisational commitment to be a leader in equality, diversity and inclusion in the city.

3. Reasons for Decision

The Equality Act 2010 and the Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties and Public Authorities) Regulations 2017 requires us to publish equality objectives every four years. These objectives replace the previous objectives 2016-2020.

4. Background, including Policy Context & Progress Made

4.1 Public Sector Equality Duty

Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 outlines the Public Sector Equality Duty. This Duty is a statutory duty and requires all public sector organisations, like Westminster City Council, to progress equality.

Under this Duty, the Council must, in exercising our functions, have due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited under the Act.
- Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant 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.

The protected characteristics covered by the Equality Act 2010 are: age, race, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, religion or belief (including lack of belief), sex and sexual orientation. In addition, Westminster City Council has adopted Care Leavers as an additional characteristic.

Equality Objectives should help the City Council to focus on key area to improve outcomes for communities.

We have selected four objectives that focus on areas where the Council has an impact due to its activities, and that we can meaningfully report on.

These are:

- Our Staff and Leadership
- Our Services
- Our communities
- Tackling inequality

4. 2. Our Staff and Leadership

Westminster City Council values the diversity of its staff to be able to deliver inclusive services that meet the needs of our diverse community, which includes our residents, businesses, and students.

Objective

Staff will better represent the demographic of our communities at all levels of the organisation.

It is important that at all levels our organisation reflects the communities we serve. Significant work has already taken place to increase the number of Westminster residents who work at the Council, to increase representation at senior levels within the organisation, and to embed inclusion across all our services. We know there is more work to do to ensure we have a diverse and inclusive workforce.

To measure our progress, we will continue our work to reduce our ethnicity, disability and gender pay gaps, and the number of women and people from a Black, Asian or other multiple ethnic (Global Majority) backgrounds in senior management roles. We will also measure the characteristics of our staff against the local population.

As well as measuring our staff, we will also measure these characteristics for our elected Members. While we recognise Members are selected through a political process and cannot be impacted through the work of the Council, the Council have decided to publish this data. We have seen with our ethnicity and gender pay gap data, that having specific measurable data can focus priorities to improve equalities and putting this in the public domain creates an incentive for continual improvement.

Closing our pay gaps continues to be a corporate priority for us. We are committed to tackling inequality and increasing diverse representation at all levels across the

organisation particularly, at senior levels. Being an inclusive organisation is an essential part of that, where staff feel valued and confident that they can progress at all levels across the organisation.

Last year we committed to close our pay gaps by 2025, but we know that this is only a milestone and requires long-term sustainable change. We have been working hard to address under-representation and pay inequity across the organisation, by maintaining a level of intensity and accountability from our Executive Leadership Team.

What we have done

The Council has been taking active steps towards closing the pay gaps and good progress has been made in the last 5 years (pay gap report 2022) but we know we need to do more. To address this challenge, we have implemented a range of actions:

- Specific support to those areas of the organisation with the most challenging pay gaps,
- Consistent and careful analysis of data to identify factors that are contributing to pay inequity to ensure targeted action can be taken.
- Application of 'positive action' in the recruitment process to ensure shortlists are diverse, inclusive, and unbiased
- Ensuring that hiring managers who are involved in recruitment processes participate in unconscious bias and inclusive recruitment training.
- Scrutiny of the recruitment for senior management roles and leadership
- Corporate apprenticeship programmes and workforce development and mentoring programmes

What we will do

We will continue to drive this agenda through a corporate programme of measures. This will include supporting our executive team with the development and delivery of their equalities action plans and proactively and intentionally supporting talent development and progression, inclusive recruitment, and workforce planning that help to contribute to the reduction in pay gaps.

We will continue to work towards having a workforce that reflects the diverse communities that we serve. We will do this through the work of our People Services team to increase the diversity of our workforce. To develop a more diverse workforce we will continue to focus on three areas, promotion to senior roles within the organisation, recruitment of new staff to the organisation, and by expanding our training around becoming an Anti-racist organisation.

Our recruitment processes will continue to include:

- Positive Action Policy: enabling/encouraging people who meet the requirements of a job role but are from an underrepresented backgrounds to apply and requiring diverse shortlists.
- Diverse Panels: Ensuring recruitment panels are representative
- Inclusive recruitment training
- Becoming a London Living Wage Employer

We need to ensure that all teams understand the benefits of inclusion both in the recruitment process and creating welcoming teams. We will do this by ensuring accountability from our leaders, and through relevant training programmes and support to ensure that everyone is engaging in the diversity and inclusion agenda, supporting our workforce, supporting our staff networks and by supporting our diversity and inclusion champions in our services, who lead on service-related changes.

What we will measure

Our ethnicity, disability and gender pay gaps, and the number of staff with disabilities, women and Black, Asian and multiple ethnic staff, and LGBTQ+ staff in our senior management teams. [See our 2021 Pay Gap Report.](#)

4.3 Our Services

Our services need to be easy to access for all residents. It is important to ensure that our services are accessible to everyone who needs to use them whether it is a universal service provided to everyone (such as waste collection), a service that people can choose to use (such as leisure services) or an intervention where people did not choose to use the service (such as safeguarding children).

Objective

Understand our diverse communities and embed that understanding in how we shape all that we do across the Council.

What have we done

- Collate data on who is accessing our services across all of our service areas and develop performance requirements that help to drive improvements where they are needed.
- Support services through training and the implementation of a quality improvement board to become more accessible in our consultation and engagement with communities. This training has focused on cultural competency, unconscious bias, and anti-racism.
- Deliver new training programmes for staff, partners, and residents centring lived experiences in our decision making.

- Build capacity in communities so they have the skills and knowledge they need through programmes like our Westminster Community Change Makers, Community Leadership Programme, Black on Board, and Operation Black Vote.
- Deliver events, and activities, to bring people together across communities and ages, to build relationships and to promote social cohesion.
- [Re-opened Bayswater Children's Centre](#) and began a long-term co-design & co-production process for our Community Hubs programmes, and supported the local community to open a temporary community space in Queens Park, [the happiness hub, ran by community partners](#).

What we will do

- [Continue our community funding programmes](#) that enable local people to act on things that are important to them.
- Continue to build capacity in communities for civic participation and leadership; including a [civic leadership programme](#), training for recruitment of council staff vacancies, assessment of community grants programmes, and governance involvement at the programmatic level.
- Continue to support events, activities, and organisations to bring people together across communities and ages, to build relationships.

What we will measure

Deliver our measure our Community Investment Strategy to enable local communities to deliver their priorities.

4.5 Tackling Inequalities

We need to do more to involve our communities in developing strategic objectives that will deliver improved outcomes. It is important that together we tackle the very real issues communities are facing now around the cost of living, and the impact of poverty on the future opportunities of children and families.

Objective

Demonstrate inclusive leadership, strategic partnership and a clear organisational commitment to be a leader in equality, diversity and inclusion in the city.

What have we done

- [Begun consulting and co-producing a Community Equalities Strategy](#) approach that will embed equalities in all the work that we do with communities.
- Developed our approach to Equality Impact Assessments.
- [Published our public commitments to becoming an Anti-racist organisation](#). Alongside delivering training to Senior Leadership and officers, a full policy review through the lens of anti-racism and develop our first anti-racist action plan.
- Delivered new training programmes for staff partners, and residents – disseminating the tools for innovation, and centring lived-experience in our decision making.
- Undertaken a Joint Strategic Needs Assessment with other statutory services to better understand health disparities in Global Majority Populations within Westminster.

- Undertaken a poverty review to identify further opportunities to address economic inequality and the causal mechanisms of poverty in Westminster.
- Develop new opportunities for civic participation through the public opening of General Council, allowing the general public to scrutinise our work in a formal governance setting.
- Create more opportunities for residents to hold us to account through expanding our resident expert panels, allowing staff to get vital input and feedback from residents at all critical planning stages in the work we do.

What we will do

- [Consult and co-produce an overarching external Equalities Strategy](#) approach that will embed equalities in all of the work that we do with communities.
- Use this strategy and other key pieces of work to steer our next set of Equalities objectives.
- We will also continue to develop our approach to Equality Impact Assessments, expanding our capacity to conduct and implement changes to make our consultation, engagement and services more accessible.
- Continue to expand opportunities for civic participation through our [Register of Active Residents](#), resident panels, and our Youth council.
- Continue to develop our #2035 programme to reduce health inequalities through the services the Council provides, our relationships with our communities and our work with partners in the health service and other public services.

What we will measure

Development of a strategy around improving access to services and building community cohesion.

Next Step

These objectives will be published on the City Council website and reporting mechanisms will be put in place. The Communities Directorate will be responsible for ensuring these objectives are monitored and delivered by the relevant sections of the Council. Regular updates will be brought to the Cabinet Member for Communities and Public Protection.

5. Financial Implications

This work is being undertaken using existing resources.

6. Legal Implications

6.1 Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 states: -

A public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to –

- a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;

- b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
- c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

6.2 The Council should also consider the March 2022 Equality and Human Rights Commission guidance entitled 'The Essential Guide to the Public Sector Equality Duty: England.' It states that the Council must publish one or more equality objectives that it thinks it needs to achieve the further the aims of the general equality duty. This is required to be done by 30 March 2018 and then at least every four years thereafter. The objectives must be specific and measurable. The objectives must also be published in a way that is accessible to the public, as a separate document, or in another document.

6.3 Regulations 5 and 9 of the Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties and Public Authorities) Regulations 2017 provides the statutory framework for the Council to prepare and publish the equality objectives in order to achieve the outcomes of the Equality Act 2010 as noted in section 149(1) of the Equality Act 2010.

7. Carbon Impact

The decisions in this report are policy decisions and do not relate to activity that could increase or reduce carbon.

8. Equalities Implications

The proposals in this paper directly relate to how the Council can advance equality and diversity.

9. Consultation

This set of Equality Objectives were developed in consultation with;

- Community organisations and Council services, including those representing residents with protected characteristics under the Equalities Act, to develop the community proposals.
- Discussions around access to services have taken place with diversity and inclusion leads from services.
- Development of proposals around staff have taken place with our staff networks representing staff members with protected characteristics and builds upon the City Council's Inclusion Strategy which has been developed in conjunction with staff from across the organisation.
- The Global Majority JSNA has been developed with insights from communities.

If you have any queries about this report or wish to inspect any of the background papers, please contact:

Shama Sutar-Smith, Communities Directorate, Innovation and Change
sssmith@westminster.gov.uk

NB: For individual Cabinet Member reports only

For completion by the **Cabinet Member for Communities and Public Protection**

Declaration of Interest

I have <no interest to declare / to declare an interest> in respect of this report

Signed: _____ Date: _____

NAME: _____

State nature of interest if any:

(N.B: If you have an interest, you should seek advice as to whether it is appropriate to make a decision in relation to this matter)

For the reasons set out above, I agree the recommendation(s) in the report entitled **‘Refreshed Equalities Objectives’** and reject any alternative options which are referred to but not recommended.

Signed: _____

Cabinet Member for Communities and Public Protection

Date: _____

If you have any additional comment which you would want actioned in connection with your decision you should discuss this with the report author and then set out your comment below before the report and this pro-forma is returned to the Secretariat for processing.

Additional comment:

If you do not wish to approve the recommendations, or wish to make an alternative decision, it is important that you consult the report author, the Director of Law, City Treasurer and, if there are resources implications, the Director of People Services (or their representatives) so that (1) you can be made aware of any further relevant considerations that you should take into account before making the decision and (2) your reasons for the decision can be properly identified and recorded, as required by law.

Note to Cabinet Member: Your decision will now be published and copied to the Members of the relevant Policy & Scrutiny Committee. If the decision falls within the criteria for call-in, it will not be implemented until five working days have elapsed from publication to allow the Policy and Scrutiny Committee to decide whether it wishes to call the matter in.

Appendix A

Other Implications

- 1. Resources Implications**
- 2. Business Plan Implications**
- 3. Risk Management Implications**
- 4. Health and Wellbeing Impact Assessment including Health and Safety Implications**
- 5. Crime and Disorder Implications**
- 6. Impact on the Environment**
- 7. Equalities Implications – See section 8**
- 8. Staffing Implications**
- 9. Human Rights Implications**
- 10. Energy Measure Implications**
- 11. Communications Implications**
- 12. Counter Terrorism and Security Implications**

Note to report authors: If there are particularly significant implications in any of the above categories these should be