

Report of the Chief Executive

EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ANNUAL REPORT 2021/20221. Purpose of report

To provide members with an annual review of activity and outcomes in respect of the Council's equality and diversity work.

2. Background

The Council's Equality and Diversity Policy provides the framework for the Council's approach to the wide-ranging equality and diversity agenda. While incorporating the Council's legal responsibilities as a public body within the meaning of the Equality Act 2010, it also outlines the Council's aims and aspirations for achieving cohesive and inclusive communities and ensuring equal access to services. The Equality and Diversity Annual Report 2021/22 is provided at appendix 1 to this report.

Under the Equality Act, public bodies are required to publish equality objectives that will help them further the aims of the general duty. Equality objectives must be specific and measurable and are intended to help focus attention on the priority equality issues within an organisation and help deliver improvements in policy making, service delivery and employment.

Appendix 2 of the report sets out the Council's refreshed Equality objectives for 2022/23. Appendix 3 sets out progress against the objectives set for 21/22 and there follows an action plan in appendix 4 for 2022-24 based on the proposed objectives for 22/23.

Recommendation

The Committee is asked to NOTE the report including information contained in appendix 1; the progress in implementing the action plan for 2021/22 set out in appendix 3 and RESOLVE that the proposed Equalities Objectives 2022/23 and action plan for 2022/24 contained in appendices 2 and 4 be approved.

Background papers

Nil.

APPENDIX 1**EQUALITIES ANNUAL REPORT 2019/20**

This report highlights the work undertaken and the progress and achievements made by the Council and its partners in the area of equality and diversity during 2021/22.

1. POLICY CONTEXT

In Broxtowe we want a society in which everyone can contribute to and benefit from our shared ambitions and priorities. This aim is summed up in our policy statement:

‘Broxtowe Borough Council is committed to promoting equal opportunities, valuing diversity and tackling social exclusion. The Council will aim to provide opportunities that meet the diverse needs of different people and groups of people by ensuring that services and employment opportunities are accessible to all. Everyone will be treated fairly and with respect. Diverse needs will be understood and valued. The Council will aim to eradicate all forms of discrimination.’

The Council recognises that it has a duty to mainstream equality and diversity in all it does. We also understand that we have a duty to exercise leadership to promote fundamental rights such as equality of opportunity and freedom from discrimination and we accept that we are in a unique position as an employer, service provider and community leader to promote equality and prevent discrimination.

The Government has made “levelling up” a central part of government policy, recognising the entrenched inequalities which exist in many part of our communities. It has published a white paper setting out proposals to address the issues and intends that local government should play a central part in delivering more fair and equal outcomes for all communities. The reasons for inequality are complex and multi-faceted, including the prevalence of pre-existing health conditions, lower skills, the economic structure of localities and historic levels of underinvestment; the occupations of many BAME and individuals from poorer areas, overcrowding and vulnerability to redundancy from working in jobs which have little job security. Overall Broxtowe’s citizens fare better than many other areas of the UK. However, when viewed at a micro level, pockets of significant inequality exist in Broxtowe and require targeted effort and significant levels of investment. The areas of Eastwood, Kimberley and Stapleford are areas the council is working with partners to improve. There are also areas of Beeston which will benefit from a similar focus.

2. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY POLICY FRAMEWORK

Broxtowe Borough Council has a strong infrastructure to ensure our commitment to equality and diversity is put into practice. Our policy framework outlines the key elements which contribute to the Council’s approach to the equality and diversity agenda.

2.1 The Equality Framework for Local Government

The Council was recognised at the 'Achieving' level of the Equality Framework for Local Government (EFLG). The accreditation acknowledged our strong corporate and organisational commitment to equality and diversity and our collaborative work with partners in tackling discrimination and disadvantage and in improving the quality of life of our residents.

2.2 Equalities Working Group

The Equalities Working Group is chaired by the Chief Executive and is attended by senior managers and front line staff from all of the Council's departments and key service areas. Meetings of the group are also attended by trade union representatives. The membership of the group was refreshed in 2021/22 and now includes more people with minority ethnic backgrounds. The group drives the equality and diversity work across the Council and is responsible for ensuring actions and targets are mainstreamed both corporately and across service areas. During 2021/22 the group has:

- monitored progress against the Council's published equality objectives.
- Overseen progress against equality impact assessments undertaken during the year.
- Reviewed the take up of interactive training for equality and diversity through the Broxtowe Learning Zone, including training on the Equality Act 2010, visual impairment, autism awareness, deaf awareness, dementia awareness, preventing extremism and learning disability and suicide prevention e-learning framework
- Helped the Equalities Officer to develop a new Hate crime strategy for Broxtowe
- Given advice and guidance on initiatives on refugees, dementia, child poverty action plan
- Reviewed the workforce profile and in particular arrangements for recruitment and appointments
- Impact of remote working for employees especially those with neurodiverse conditions and mental health challenges
- Discussed how the Council can make progress to achieve the "Excellence" status of the EFLG and "Leader" status for employment of people with disabilities.

2.3 Equalities Impact Assessments

An equality impact assessment (EIA) is a way of determining that a policy, function or service is delivered fairly to all sections of the community and that it promotes equality wherever possible. If a negative impact on a particular equality group is identified when undertaking an EIA, steps should be taken immediately to remove it if it cannot be justified.

During the course of 2021/22 the following EIAs were completed:

- Health and Safety policy
- Corporate debt policy

- Market supplement policy
- Evaluation and re-evaluation of posts policy
- Taxi policy
- Tenancy management policy
- Customers and additional support needs policy
- Leasehold management policy
- DFG policy
- Residential caravans fit and proper person policy
- Pets policy
- Housing repairs policy
- Tenure policy
- Decants policy
- Allocations policy
- Alterations and improvements policy
- Garage management policy
- Right to buy policy
- Homelessness strategy.

The Council will continue to assess the impact of new policies, functions or services or revisions to them to ensure compliance with its legal obligations and to demonstrate that it has considered the impact of its decisions on people who share a protected characteristic.

The Council monitors information regarding its employees, and its recruitment policies, and the annual workforce profile was produced for 2020/21 and reported to the Personnel Committee.

Positive highlights relevant to this report include.

- The average length of service was 27.56% longer for employees declaring themselves as having a disability compared with employees without a disability.
- An increase of 2.43% can be seen between BAME applications received in 2018/19 and those received in 2020/21 (full 21/22 stats not yet available)
- BAME applications received accounted for 23.60% of all applications in 20/21
- 31.82% of BAME applicants who were shortlisted were successfully appointed.
- The 2011 Census declared 7.82% of the borough's population were from a BAME background. Broxtowe's current BAME representation in the workforce, of those employees who have declared their ethnicity, is 8.26%.
- The mean gender pay gap for the organisation is 0%.

Areas for consideration include

- The percentage of BAME applicants shortlisted has fallen over the past 3 years by 43.59% overall. However, it should be noted that all shortlisting is done "blind" – i.e. no names and personal details of candidates are disclosed to Managers making shortlisting decisions.
- The top 5% of women earners figure is 37.5%. The national comparison in 18/19 was 49.4%.

2.4 Training

The training section of the Human Resources division has a comprehensive equality and diversity learning programme which is fully endorsed by the corporate Equalities Working Group. As part of the corporate induction course, all new employees receive a copy of the 'Equality and Diversity at Work' handbook which is designed to reinforce the messages contained within the presentation.

By February 2022, a total of 64 e-learning courses were available to employees and Members, with 3 new courses being launched during 2021/22 (DSE and home working; ICT induction for new starters and an annual fire safety awareness course) and with 18 updated courses.

The following numbers of employees completed online learning courses relating to equality issues as at early February 2022.

Course	complete	In progress
Equality Act 2010 –(live since 2014 Updated February 2020)	413	26
Equality Act 2010 for ICT Services – (Updated June 2020)	3	1
Learning Disability Awareness includes dyslexia –(live since Oct 2016)	13	2
Autism Awareness – (live since Oct 2016)	42	8
Deaf Awareness – (live since Feb 2017)	16	3
Dementia Awareness – updated June 2019 (resources page edited 2022)	30	16
Hate Crime –(live since Oct 2017 Updated July 20)	414	10
Visual Impairment – (live since March 2018)	15	0
Mental Health Awareness – (live since May 2017 Updated June 20)	33	10

Learning Zone is accessible from a computer, laptop, tablet or smartphone, enabling users to access the site either at work, as part of their agreed learning programme, or in their own time for personal development

A range of other e-learning programmes have been developed and are made available to employees.

Knowledge and awareness of equality and diversity issues has been designed in to the Council's Core Abilities Framework, which is the competency framework against which employees are assessed and against which annual personal development plans are developed.

2.5 Community Engagement

Broxtowe's Communications Strategy provides a framework for consulting with local people and stakeholders in the planning and delivery of services. We have a number of established means of communication including Community Action Teams (CATs), consultation with our tenants and leaseholders through Open Forums, Service Review Groups and Resident Involvement Groups and the Broxtowe Disability Forum. Other opportunities for engagement occur for example through the work of the planning section in the creation of Neighbourhood Plans, local stakeholder discussions through the Broxtowe partnership, community safety action planning, work with Parish and Town Councils and so on.

In addition to these long-established and continuing consultation and engagement mechanisms, the Council undertook a number of additional bespoke consultation and/or engagement exercises during 2021/22 in order to gauge opinion, seek expert advice or to facilitate successful community projects.

Examples of these included consultation included the Budget consultation for 2022/23, reported to finance and resources committee, the consultation on the supplementary planning document for Toton area of Strategic growth; the review of the Core Strategy; consultations on re-designating Independent Living reviews and consultations connected with Stapleford Towns Fund; Eastwood Levelling up bid and Kimberley Levelling up bid.

The Disability Forum did not meet in 2021/22 at the request of the members of the group, due to the risks of COVID-19. Meetings will recommence in 2022/23.

2.6 Complaints

An annual report on complaints was presented to the Governance and Audit committee in 2021. This highlighted a breakdown of the ethnic origin of complainants, the gender and age profile of complainants. The relevant highlights of the report were

- The gender breakdown of complaints was exactly equal between male and female (77 each, with 27 who preferred not to state their gender).
- There were 9 people of ethnic origin other than white British (just under 10% of the total who chose to give this information. This is similar to the borough population profile
- The predominant age of complainants was 45-59, and second highest group over 65s. 70 people preferred not to state their age however. There were complainants in every age category including age 8-24.

- 46 people who complained had a long term condition related to their health. 79 had no such condition and 56 chose not to give this information.

3. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ACHIEVEMENTS DURING 2021/22

This section of the report is intended to highlight some key achievements and developments in 2021/22 both in meeting the needs of vulnerable people and in responding to the aspirations of our diverse communities. Outcomes are highlighted across our corporate priorities.

3.1 Housing

Work continued and will be completed by the year end to build 5 flats earmarked for veterans. This is a group who face disadvantages compared with other groups in society, often experiencing homelessness and poor mental health making it more difficult for them to find work.

Council officers within the housing section worked in partnership with a variety of agencies to ensure that everyone rough sleeping in Broxtowe was offered settled accommodation. In some cases, this provided life changing opportunities to address long standing issues and receive treatment and support to move on with their lives in a positive way. Partnership working continues to embed these improvements and built on what has been done already.

Adaptations to properties for people with disabilities were made in accordance with the policy. Total spend of £785,561 was incurred in 2021/22 including £501,603 in respect of Disabled Facilities Grants and £283,958 direct spending on the Council's own housing properties (HRA). This was lower than in the previous and current years due to the pandemic. The current year spend to 28 February 2022, including actuals and commitments to date and capital salaries is £1,377,713 (DFG £856,349 and HRA £521,364).

Our work on making Broxtowe a place where people can live well with dementia progressed, with the implementation of our dementia action plan, progress on which was reported to Leisure and Health Committee.

37 Syrian refugees from the Syrian vulnerable people's refugee programme have been housed in Broxtowe in both private and public housing. Supportive networks were put in place to ensure they felt welcomed, supported to learn English, gain work experience and achieve social integration. In addition, two Afghan families were accommodated under the Afghan resettlement programme. Between 35 and 40 asylum seekers are placed at various times in Broxtowe as they await determination on their immigration status. Through the refugee steering group a small fund has been established to provide occasional financial support predominantly to the asylum seekers who live on a very meagre allowance from government which is barely sufficient to cover their need for food and clothing. The steering group also works to support access to English learning, work experience, subsidised travel and integration into the wider community.

During the year the council recruited an additional financial inclusion officer to provide support to tenants facing financial hardship and needing help to manage their resources. The two officers we employ assist tenants in need to budget, access benefits to which they are entitled and help to ensure the funds which the government has made available to support people in financial need are used to address the needs which are presented within our housing service.

The roll out of Universal credit continued slowly. However, thanks to the investment the council made in the previous year in additional staffing for rent collection and more resource for financial inclusion and tenancy sustainability, rent arrears were kept at a low level and those who need help and advice receive that at an early stage in their difficulties becoming apparent.

3.2 Business Growth

Under this priority the Council seeks to encourage business growth, the regeneration of town centres and in particular the implementation of Beeston town centre phase 2.

During 2021/22 so far 2 work experience placements were offered to young people. The number is reduced from previous years because of the restrictions imposed on office working through the period of the pandemic. However, we are now resuming our usual practices in supporting work experience.

Work commenced on the implementation of the £21.1m Stapleford Towns Fund. One of the main focuses of this work will be to tackle problems relating to lower skill levels through creating new opportunities to reach out to young people, connect them to training and development, and make this more locally accessible for people who need this support. New employment opportunities will be created and a COVID-19 recovery grant scheme will assist local businesses to recover from the impact of the pandemic on their trade.

The Eastwood action plan continued to focus action within this area which is an area where there are higher levels of deprivation, poorer health outcomes and lower skill levels and income inequality and child poverty. This action plan is led by the communities' team.

Two new industrial units were built in Stapleford – an area where the availability of such premises is limited, providing new employment and business opportunities for the area.

Within the Eastwood and Kimberley levelling up task and finish groups projects are being developed to raise skill levels within the population and to support people to get jobs. The Eastwood community hub at Durban House is intended to provide much needed support to people with mental health difficulties and ensure they are helped to gain peer support, help with their mental health problems, work experience and help to build their skills and enter the workforce.

3.3 The Environment

The Council is committed to protecting the environment and enhancing it for future generations and seeks to achieve this aim through innovative approaches to waste management and recycling, energy reduction, and the management and enhancement of our parks and open spaces. It is standard procedure in relation to all capital projects to enhance parks and open spaces to pay attention to the needs of disabled children and accessibility for disabled people to our parks and open spaces.

We recognise that the environment belongs to everyone and we endeavour to work with our community to achieve our objectives. Tree and shrub planting schemes take place with the engagement of local residents and community groups, particularly children and young people.

Our waste and recycling service provides an assisted collections service for domestic refuse. People with disabilities, the elderly and the infirm, who may experience difficulty in placing their refuse bins at their property boundary ready for collection, receive a service which enables the bin to be pulled out for them. The service can also be offered on a temporary basis to people recovering from illness or injury or following surgery and which restricts their ability to place their bins at the appropriate collection point. In addition there are several of our housing complexes where all bins are pulled out without having to go through the application process.

3.4 Health

L Leisure, the Council's leisure company, was restricted in its activities during 2021/22 because of the COVID-19 pandemic. As people with disabilities are more vulnerable to infection the number of activities which engaged with this section of the population was reduced, and outreach activities to draw in underrepresented groups was also reduced.

However, as part of the council's response to the COVID-19 pandemic the Council responded to requests for humanitarian assistance, putting people in touch with mutual aid groups or responding directly with food and other essentials as well as information to ensure vulnerable people were supported through difficult times.

A number of food clubs were started as part of which families on low incomes are supported to buy lower cost fresh produce and provided with support and ideas on how to use this resource. In addition, the council worked in partnership to provide opportunities, activities and food during school holidays to children of families on lower incomes.

The Revenues and Benefits section and the Housing teams worked with the County Council to ensure that household support grant was targeted to people who needed support to provide food, white goods and heating for themselves or their families. The discretionary housing fund was also used to support people in these situations as well as the preventing homelessness budget.

The Health partnership task group continues to deliver a programme of activities to address health inequalities in Broxtowe. A new action plan was recently approved and includes delivery of actions to encourage breastfeeding; reduce drug and alcohol misuse, reduce obesity and improve mental wellbeing, stopping smoking and promoting healthy eating options for takeaway outlets. This all helped to tackle some of the underlying reasons for health inequalities.

The Council has developed and is delivering a child poverty action plan,

Throughout the year, we worked with partners to deliver and support a number of successful community and multi-cultural events across the borough including black history week, the season of lights event and holocaust Memorial Day.

The Council developed a new air quality action plan which is helping to improve air quality, which tends to be worse in poorer areas, reflecting busier roads and more polluted areas.

3.5 Community Safety

Crime disproportionately affects more deprived wards in Broxtowe. The Police and Crime Commissioner funded work which provided additional measures to tackle crime in Stapleford in 2021/22. A further grant was successfully bid for which improved community safety in Hickings Lane Park and improved its status from being an area which was previously an ASB/violence hotspot. A new knife crime action plan was created. Again knife crime tends to affect people and places where there are higher levels of crime and deprivation.

The community safety team worked in partnership with the police to support them in tackling drug misuse and a number of successful high profile interventions were achieved. At least one organised crime group was disrupted.

The council maintained its status as a “White Ribbon” authority and a successful annual event was held attended by the chief executive of the white ribbon campaign.

A new Hate Crime Strategy and action plan was approved. This sort of crime disproportionately affects people from BAME groups and people with disabilities and other protected characteristics.

The local community came together in January 2022 to mark Holocaust Memorial Day, which the Council is proud to have marked for a number of years. Those attending the ceremony at the Walled Garden at Bramcote Hills Park included civic dignitaries, members, officers, and community leaders, members of the public and young people from across the Borough.

APPENDIX 2**BROXTOWE'S EQUALITY OBJECTIVES**

Through these five broad headings and the targeted work identified under each one we propose to address our main priorities for improving our understanding of the inequalities in the borough, addressing identified needs and fostering good relations between our diverse communities.

Develop our knowledge and understanding of the communities we serve

- Review the impact of Coronavirus on our community to see how any pre-existing inequalities may have led to higher harmful outcomes relating to people's health, wellbeing and employment status
- Keep the borough profile under review and do "deep dives" of ward and community profiles to spot changes which might need changes to patterns of service delivery.
- Improve the quality of data about the issues affecting disadvantaged and minority groups including those protected under the Equality Act.

Identify and deliver actions which aim to narrow the gap in outcomes between disadvantaged groups and the wider community

- Work with partner agencies to identify health inequalities within disadvantaged groups and sections of the community and deliver targeted work through the Leisure and Health Committee the Health and Older People's Task Group of the Broxtowe Partnership and within the Integrated Care system and Nottinghamshire Health and Wellbeing board.
- Work with partners on the South Nottinghamshire Community Safety Partnership to deliver targeted work to tackle crime and anti-social behaviour and improve outcomes for vulnerable people.
- Deliver the pledges we have undertaken to tackle and alleviate child poverty in Broxtowe as part of our Child Poverty Strategy and under the hate crime pledge.
- Continue to deliver actions to address the needs of minority and vulnerable groups including work on supporting people to live well with dementia, work to tackle loneliness and to support those with mental health problems and learning disabilities.

Improve service design and delivery through improved communication and engagement with our communities

- promote the use of customer engagement and feedback to inform the way services are designed and delivered.

- improve and strengthen existing community engagement mechanisms through Community Action Teams, service review groups, the tenant engagement strategy, the disability forum and local community groups and ensure consultation and engagement outcomes are fed back into the policy making arena.
- Learn from case study “customer journey” studies in order to progress understanding of the experience of customers with protected characteristics of the council’s services.

Embed equalities throughout the Council

- Develop our workforce planning and profile data to improve the quality of protected characteristic information and support for employees with protected characteristics.
- Make progress to achieve the ‘Excellent’ accreditation of the Equality Framework for Local Government.
- Continue to deliver equality awareness training as part of the corporate induction process for employees and members and equality and diversity training to all employees and members on relevant subjects.
- Improve the quality and quantity of information on the Council’s website and improved monitoring of targeted outcomes.
- Improve the diversity and inclusiveness of our governance structures.

Foster good relations between our communities

- Continue to support and promote events and activities that bring people together, celebrating the diversity of the borough and contributing to community cohesion.
- Improve the way in which refugees and asylum seekers are supported within the community with the assistance of voluntary effort within the community.