



Report of: The Leader of the Council

Meeting of	Date	Ward(s)
Executive	16 July 2015	All

Delete as appropriate	Exempt	Non-exempt
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SUBJECT: EQUALITY OBJECTIVES REVIEW

1 Synopsis

- 1.1 Local authorities, and other public sector bodies, have a statutory duty to set one or more equality objective(s) to comply with the Public Sector Equality Duty. Two years ago the Council agreed five equality objectives – tackling inequalities around stop and search, educational attainment, fuel poverty, smoking, and employment – and have made significant progress in tackling these and reducing inequalities.
- 1.2 Although we are only required to review our equalities objectives every four years, we feel that sufficient progress has been made against the objectives that we are confident they can be delivered as part of our mainstream service activity. So it is now time for the Council to champion and tackle a new set of equalities challenges.
- 1.3 This report sets out progress against the previous equality objectives, and proposes four new objectives to take forward from 2015 onwards. It explains the rationale for why these have been chosen, which groups are most affected, and how we will measure success.

2 Recommendations

- 2.1 To note the progress against previous equality objectives (Appendix A), and agree that while work will still continue in these areas, they will cease as equality objectives.
- 2.2 To agree the focus of the proposed new equality objectives for the council and the associated targets, as set out in section 4 and Appendix B.

3 Background

- 3.1 The Equality Act 2010 imposes a general Public Sector Equality Duty upon public sector bodies which requires that the Council, in the exercise of its functions, has due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation, and to advance equality of opportunity, and foster good relations, between those who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not share it.
- 3.2 Further, specific equality duties, established by regulation, amongst them require public sector bodies to set one or more equality objectives, which that organisation should achieve in order to carry out the aims of the Public Sector Equality Duty and in so doing focus attention on the priority equality issues, for which an organisation is responsible, in order to deliver improvements in policy making, service delivery and employment.
- 3.3 Islington last set equality objectives in March 2013, and renewed targets March 2014. Equalities targets were included in the corporate performance management suite to ensure ongoing monitoring and regular reporting. Progress against these objectives is outlined in Appendix A. These objectives have been achieved in the majority of cases, are well embedded in the work of the relevant service, and we can now move on to new challenges for 2015 onwards.
- 3.4 While developing new objectives we considered all of the protected characteristics covered by the Public Sector Equality Duty. The protected characteristics are; age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, gender and sexual orientation.
- 3.5 In order to help us identify new objectives we not only looked at evidence around inequality for each protected characteristic, but also at those areas where the council has responsibility and the ability to work with partners to drive change and make a difference.
- 3.6 The starting point was to get feedback from voluntary sector organisations and Council departments on what they felt were the key inequalities faced by their service users. A number of workshops were held with Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) organisations to explore various themes. These were well received, with representatives from around 50 organisations attending. They welcomed the Council's commitment to tackling inequality and the opportunity to be involved in identifying and tackling challenges. Suggestions from the workshops were shared with relevant Council services and departments to compare with their own data and insight on key issues for service users and to agree mechanisms for achieving the objectives that were specific, measureable, achievable, realistic and timely.
- 3.7 It is important to note that in many areas around the council, work is happening to advance equality for people sharing protected characteristics without the specific focus of an equality objective being required to drive this work. Examples include work to tackle domestic violence against women, and projects to reduce fuel poverty for older and disabled people.

4 Proposed new equality objectives

4.1 Based on discussions with the VCS and departments, we propose that the Council's equality objectives for 2015-19 should be to:

- **Tackle hate crime**

There is strong anecdotal evidence from voluntary sector organisations of increased incidents of racial and religious hate crime and hate crime against disabled and LGBT people. However, the Police statistics do not reflect these reports. The number of reported offences is lower than the anecdotal evidence would suggest, particularly for disabled people. This indicates under-reporting of hate crime. Additionally, when incidents are reported, the numbers which are resolved (sanction detections) are reducing. If victims think nothing will happen, this will deter them from reporting.

We will reduce hate crime and ensure that victims of hate crime feel able to report it and receive justice when they do.

- **Increase employment for disabled people**

The Islington Employment Commission found that many disabled people, and those who have a long-term health condition, or mental health problems, want to work but the evidence tells us that Islington has a lower rate of employment for disabled people and those with long term health conditions than most other London boroughs.

We will work with health, employment and voluntary sector partners to provide targeted employment support to disabled people, and with employers to encourage and support them to offer employment to disabled people

- **Reduce social isolation for older and/or disabled people**

National research tells us that older people are particularly vulnerable to social isolation, owing to loss of friends and family, mobility or income, and that mental health problems are both a cause and an effect of social isolation.

Local data shows us that among our service users of Adult Social Care, disabled people with physical impairments may be more likely to be socially isolated.

We will reduce social isolation for disabled people and / or older people.

- **Work towards having a level of senior management which is generally representative of our workforce as a whole**

If we are to deliver services that meet the needs of Islington's diverse population, and inspire a range of staff, including our BME and disabled staff, to progress to senior positions, we need to ensure that those managing our services and making decisions are more representative of our workforce as a whole and the communities we serve. Although BME staff make up 36% of the Council's workforce, they account for only 20% of the top 5% earners. Some BME groups

also show lower rates of progression than other non-BME groups. Disabled staff make up 6.9% of our workforce, but account for only 4.2% of the top 5% earners. We also believe there is significant under-reporting of disability among our staff.

We will work towards a senior level workforce that is generally representative of the council workforce as a whole, through fair recruitment and development opportunities. Initially we will focus on improving staff development throughout the organisation to ensure equality of progression prospects towards senior levels. We will review the focus on particular protected characteristics on an annual basis to ensure it is still appropriate.

5 Next steps

- 5.1 Once agreed, more detailed plans setting out key actions and lead services will be developed for each objective and progress monitored on a regular basis.
- 5.2 Equalities objectives will be incorporated within the Council's Corporate Performance Indicator Suite and reported on a quarterly basis to the Policy and Performance Scrutiny Committee. The Chairs of the relevant theme based scrutiny committees will be encouraged to ensure relevant equalities objectives are covered in reports to their committees. Latest progress and performance information will be published on the Council's website.
- 5.3 Objectives will be reviewed in April 2016. The Hate Crime objective, which has been set for one year only and is due to end in March 2016, will be reviewed to see whether it is appropriate to continue it for another year. If so, refreshed targets will be set for the period April 2016 to March 2017.
- 5.4 The longer term objectives (employment, social isolation and staff progression), will also be reviewed on an annual basis, until 2019, to ensure that their focus remains relevant and that we are meeting our targets.
- 5.5 As part of the annual review process, in May 2016 we will report to VCS organisations on progress made and work done on the equality objectives. Organisations will be given the opportunity to comment, and this will inform our approach to reviewing the objectives in 2016.
- 5.6 With each annual review we will consider whether there are any new objectives we should introduce. Potential areas will be identified by using data and research relating to inequality in the borough and feedback from relevant council services, the VCS and other partners. We will continue to ensure that the objectives cover a range of protected characteristics and that we focus on areas where we can make a difference through concerted work.

6 Implications

Financial

- 6.1 None

Environmental

6.2 None

Legal

- 6.3 Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 requires that the Council, in the exercise of its functions, has due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation, and to advance equality of opportunity, and foster good relations, between those who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not share it. The Council must also have due regard to the need to remove or minimise disadvantages, take steps to meet needs, in particular steps to take account of disabled persons' disabilities, and encourage people to participate in public life. The council must have due regard to the need to tackle prejudice and promote understanding.
- 6.4 The Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties) Regulations 2011, (SI 2011/2260) require the Council to prepare and publish one or more objectives that it considers it should achieve in order to carry out the aims of the Public Sector Equality Duty.
- 6.5 The objectives, initially, had to be published not later than 6 April 2012 and thereafter at intervals of not greater than four years beginning with the date of last publication. Objectives must be specific and measurable (regulation 3). Information about objectives must be published in a way that is accessible to the public (regulation 4).
- 6.6 The Equality and Human Rights Commission has power to enforce performance of the specific duties by court action.
- 6.7 When considering any measure by way of positive action to implement the Equality Objective concerning staff progression rates and the composition of senior management, the Council will need to have regard to the provisions (amongst others) of sections 158 and 159 of the Equality Act 2010 and implement their requirements as appropriate

Resident Impact Assessment (Equality Implications)

- 6.8 A Resident Impact Assessment has not been completed because the process of reviewing the equality objectives demonstrates 'due regard' for the three aims of the Public Sector Equality Duty. Not only are there no predicted negative impacts for protected characteristics as a result of the review of equality objectives, but the whole focus of the review is on the measures that can be adopted to actively promote equality of opportunity for groups with protected characteristics.

Appendices

A: Previous Equality Objectives and Progress Report

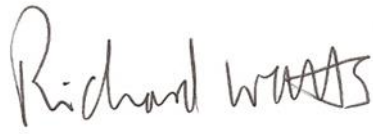
B: Proposed New Objectives

Background papers:

None

Final report clearance:

Signed by:

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Richard Watts". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'R'.

8 July 2015

Leader of the Council

Date

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