



Report to Executive

Meeting Date – 23 April 2024
Key Decision – Yes
Public/Private – Public

Portfolio – Councillor Markus Campbell-Savours, Executive Member - Governance and Transformation

Directorate – Assistant Chief Executive

Report Author – Assistant Director of Policy and Strategy

Equality Objectives (2024-2028)

Summary:

Every four years Public Bodies are required to agree one or more Equality Objectives that set out how they plan to meet the requirements of the Public Sector Equality Duty.

Equality Objectives provide the Council an opportunity to:

- state its policy position and commitment to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion;
- outline the approach it will take to addressing inequalities faced by people protected by the Equality Act 2010 (protected characteristics);
- identify specific areas of inequality for people who share a protected characteristic that it aims to address over the next four years;

The Equality Objectives will form the statutory Equality Act related element to the wider work that the Council is undertaking in relation to the delivery of the Council Plan and associated strategies and plans. It will form part of the Council's wider approach to addressing inequalities that will link across to plans and strategies to tackle poverty and socio-economic inequalities, health inequalities and inequalities related to Cumberland's geography, economy and infrastructure.

Recommendations:

It is recommended that the Executive Committee:

1. Agrees to the policy statement and approach to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion set out in this report;
2. Agrees publication of the following overarching Equality Objective (2024-2028):
To tackle discrimination and advance equality of opportunity within Cumberland.

3. Agrees to the delivery of the Equality Objective through the following four cross-cutting themes:
 - Addressing health, care and housing inequalities;
 - Narrowing the educational attainment gap and increasing access to good jobs;
 - Fostering good relations between communities in Cumberland;
 - Ensuring services, employment and places are accessible and inclusive.

4. Agrees to receiving an annual statement setting out how the Equality Objectives have been delivered and impact of the Council's activity (across employment, services, community leadership and commissioning/procurement) on people who share a protected characteristic.

Tracking

Executive:	23 April 2024
Scrutiny:	
Council:	N/A

1.0 Background and Policy Position on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

1.1 Council Plan and the Public Sector Equality Duty: The Council Plan commits to putting Health and Wellbeing at the heart of everything the Council does and to Addressing Inequalities. Equality, Diversity and Inclusion contributes to these priorities by setting out how the Council will work towards improving outcomes for the following 'protected characteristics' as required in the Equality Act (2010).

- Race; Sex; Gender Reassignment; Sexual Orientation; Age; Disability; Religion and Belief; Marital Status; Pregnancy and Maternity.

To this list the Council has formally adopted Care Experience as a protected characteristic, and has a separate duty under the Armed Forces Covenant Duty to meet the needs of armed forces personnel (including veterans) in relation to housing, education and health.

1.2 Under the Public Sector Equality Duty, the Council has a General Duty to consider the following three elements in the delivery of its functions (which includes services, employment, commissioning, community relations, leadership and partnership activity):

- To eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other unlawful conduct prohibited by the act;
- To advance equality of opportunity between people who share and people who do not share a relevant protected characteristic

- To foster good relations between people who share and people who do not share a relevant protected characteristic.

1.3 In addition, the Council has a Specific Duty to:

- Publish one or more Equality Objectives every 4 years;
- Publish information on general duty compliance with regard to people affected by the Council's policies and practices every year (including users of services, employees and the wider public).

1.4 To meet the requirements of the Specific Duty, Executive is being asked to agree a single overall objective that will be supported by four cross-cutting themes that will enable delivery to reflect the whole of the Council's activity by:

- addressing the systemic causes of inequality across health, care, education, the economy, the community and in access to spaces and services;
- recognising the links (intersectionality) between discrimination, poverty and other forms of exclusion;
- acknowledging the persistence of racism, disablism, homophobia, transphobia, misogyny and agism within our society, communities and institutions, and by showing leadership and working with people with lived experience towards eliminating them;
- embedding the Council's Equality Diversity and Inclusion work within its wider approach to community engagement, co-production, service design, lived experience and a research-led approach to addressing the wider determinants of health and other inequalities.

2.0 Equalities in the 2020s (emerging trends for Cumberland): As society becomes increasingly diverse expectations on public services are changing. In the paragraphs below, some of the key structural inequalities that are nationally relevant and relevant to Cumberland are summarised in relation to race, sex, disability and age, sexual orientation, gender identity and care experience. While the Council cannot directly address the root causes of all these disparities, they form the background for the activity that the Council is undertaking to meet the Equality Objective proposed in this report.

2.1 The following paragraphs are based on the Evidence Base set out in Appendix 1 which sets out the Census 2021 information for Cumberland and identifies locally relevant national disparities (statistically proven inequalities) between people who share a protected characteristic and the wider population.

- 2.2 Race and Religion and Belief:** Cumberland is seeing increasing ethnic and religious diversity, with the county's schools recording almost 70 languages spoken and its ethnic minority population has increased by 44% between the 2011 and 2021 Censuses (from 3.6% to 5.1%). Longstanding ethnic minority communities in the UK, such as Gypsy Roma and Travellers, Black African Caribbeans and South Asians, have increasingly moved to the area, while new diasporas from around the world are emerging through a combination of refugee programmes, asylum dispersal, international study and targeted global recruitment of hard to fill vacancies (including the Council's own recruitment). Meanwhile, the Black Lives Matter movement has shone a light on the ongoing structural impact of racism and the need for public policy to be more sensitive to the lived experience of racism in everyday life in Cumberland and in relation to health, housing, care, education and employment.
- 2.3 Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity:** Cumberland's LGBT+ population is becoming more visible and active in our communities, workplaces and institutions. The 2021 Census recorded that 2.3% of Cumberland's population identified as Lesbian, Gay, Bi-sexual or Transgender, which is higher than many shire authorities across England. Over the coming years more work will be needed in public policy to embed a sophisticated approach to gender identity, and to work alongside Cumberland's LGBT+ communities to address the ongoing legacy of historic prejudice in our communities and institutions and the continuing barriers to full inclusion. Additionally, many older LGBT+ people have experienced lifetimes of persecution and prejudice affecting health outcomes, and as LGBT+ people grow older, there's an extra level of complexity to the issues they face, an intersection between sexuality/gender identity and age affecting services for those in later life.
- 2.4 Sex and Gender:** Gender pay auditing for men and women is an explicit part of the Equality Act and the Public Sector Equality Duty. In Cumberland women experience considerable inequalities due to the historical legacy of occupational segregation in the economy, representation in higher paid jobs and expectations as care givers in the household. Additionally, while women in Cumberland on average live longer than men, they spend a significantly greater proportion of their lives in ill health and disability when compared with men. Added to this structural legacy the combination of austerity, cost of living crisis, the cost of child-care and COVID has impacted disproportionately on women. Evidence can be seen in women leaving the workforce to meet care responsibilities and for progress on equal pay to be stalled or even reversed, in some cases. Linked to these trends is the persistence of violence towards women and girls and the multiple impacts this has on women's lives; a greater need to focus on an all-age approach to women's health and address the legacy of misogyny in health and

wellbeing, and a wider focus on looking at the role of misogynous attitudes in society, employment and public institutions.

- 2.5** Historically men have tended not be a focus of equalities policy. Yet not only are males likely to die younger from preventable diseases, but the lack of provision for men to discuss health and mental health, and to be disproportionately represented in ‘deaths of despair’ (suicide, overdoses and alcohol misuse) has led to a renewed policy focus in this area. Policy in relation to family wellbeing has also highlighted the need to focus more on the role of fathers and male family members in supporting children to have the best start in life. Developing approaches that engage with and take an all-age approach to understanding the lived experience of men as well as women will be crucial in addressing many of the socio-economic and health challenges that Cumberland faces over the 2020s and 2030s. This will require action that addresses the gender norms that uphold men’s privilege over women that harms women’s and children’s health and that inculcates among boys and men a harmful and self-destructive form of masculinity.
- 2.6** **Disability:** In Cumberland over 20 percent of the population have a condition that would be classed as a disability under the Equality Act. From a public policy perspective there are three main trends to consider – disability associated with an aging population (see below), working age disability and inclusion within employment, and an overall increasing awareness of neurodiversity with particular implications for Special Educational Needs (SEND), health and employment. These trends highlight the importance of a social model of disability which recognises that it is society which disables people and the need to understand how to design for access and inclusion, and to continue to dismantle the history of stigma. In Cumberland this is particularly important due to the area’s rural geography, transport challenges and many of the access challenges in its built environment.
- 2.7** **Age:** Underpinning Cumberland’s changing population is the combination of a population that is ageing with significant health inequalities and gaps in life expectancy and a declining overall population, especially for young people and people aged under 65. While life expectancy has not declined over the past decade, the proportion of people living a healthy old age has been static since 2010 (and declined slightly for women). This has meant an increase in disability and multiple long-term conditions among older people, a rise in conditions such as dementia and pressures on families to provide increasing levels of complex care. At the same time health inequalities facing people aged 50 to the mid-60s (combined with an increase in state pension age and gaps in private pension provision) are leading to greater numbers exiting the economy and falling into

poverty, or struggling to stay in employment. A focus on healthy ageing in the community, in work and in access to public services, will be important for future policy in Cumberland.

2.8 Care Experience: National research shows that care experienced individuals experience disparities compared to people who have never been in care as a child. This can be seen in terms of educational attainment, employment, health outcomes and entry into the criminal justice system. Understanding these wider policy impacts in Cumberland would enable the Council to address the root causes of lifetime disparities in carrying out its Corporate Parenting duty.

2.9 Intersectionality: Given these social trends the focus in Equality Diversity and Inclusion has been towards intersectionality and focusing on the combination of different protected characteristics and other forms of social exclusion (such as poverty). This approach has been adopted in the development of the four cross-cutting themes of the Cumberland Equality Objective. While Cumberland's overall poverty rates are similar to the national average, the levels of social mobility and intergenerational poverty as well as the low-wage economy remain strategic challenges. Many aspects of a protected characteristics result overrepresentation among low-income households in Cumberland, including:

- women (especially single parents, but also women who make up the bulk of the lowest paid workforce in the public and private sector);
- ethnic minority and migrant women who experience further inequalities uniquely because of their intersectional identities, with variations in levels of physical activity, maternity outcomes and infancy mortality;
- ethnic minorities (especially people with No Recourse to Public Funds, migrant workers and refugees),
- disabled people (of all conditions and ages, but including disabled people in work and in school whose average pay and attainment gap is linked to poverty);
- care experience (around 30% of all cared for children come from the 14 most deprived neighbourhoods out of a total 177 in Cumberland); and
- age (where males and females in poverty have lower life expectancy than their wealthier peers or experience poorer health in old age);
- the intersection between Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE's) and trauma and particular individual or collective experiences of discrimination relating to a person's protected characteristic.

In each of these instances a co-ordinated approach to addressing poverty will help to break the link between protected characteristic status and poverty. For this reason, the Council's wider approach to addressing inequality will be crucial

in cementing the links between socio-economic status and protected characteristic status.

2.10 Intersectionality also provides a framework for considering the complex interaction between protected characteristics that can sometimes lead to tensions and misunderstandings on the grounds of race, religious belief, sexual orientation, sex and gender identity. These areas can be challenging for staff and communities and require from the Council an informed, fair and nuanced approach.

2.11 Embedding Equality, Diversity and Inclusion: The Equality Objective will be delivered entirely within existing Council resource by taking an embedding approach. To do this the Council will take an approach modelled on the Local Government Association's Equality Framework for Local Government, that focuses on embedding Equality, Diversity and Inclusion across every part of the Council. This will include:

- Working with the Health Determinants Research Collaboration to research the causes and impacts of these disparities within Cumberland and evaluate the Council's (and partner) interventions to address disparities;
- Embedding the Equality Objective across the Council Plan and through key strategies and plans.
- Ensuring that Equality is built into the budget and strategic planning process and is strengthened in decision making through the Equality component of Combined Impact Assessments;
- Working with people who share a protected characteristic to raise workforce and community awareness and to inform redesign of services and co-production;
- Ensuring that Equality Diversity and Inclusion is embedded throughout all aspects of employment, from recruitment through to career development and is addressed through all aspects of organisational change, with monitoring and evidence to demonstrate impact on staff who share a protected characteristic;
- Working with procurement, commissioning and the Council's supply chain to ensure that the Equality Objective is embedded within all the Council's contracts and supplies;
- Developing strong relations with communities in Cumberland who share a protected characteristic and any groups, organisations or networks that represent them, based on data and information on community need.

- 2.12 Evidence gathering:** To understand the specific inequalities that the Equality Objective will seek to address, the Council carry out an evidence gathering exercise. This will focus on:
- Reviewing staffing and service data held by the Council to see which services are currently gathering protected characteristic data and could potentially gather protected characteristic data;
 - Targeted community engagement with people who share a protected characteristic and qualitative feedback on the impact of the Council's work on their lived experience;
 - Using the Gender Pay Auditing process to identify potential positive action programmes to reduce the pay gap between males and females, and to explore the approach with other protected characteristics.
- 2.13 The Executive Member for Governance and Transformation Communities will have overall responsibility for the delivery of the Equality Objectives with support from the Assistant Chief Executive office in terms of strategic policy advice and ensuring that there is appropriate knowledge, skills and expertise within the organisation to take a cross-cutting and embedding approach.
- 2.14 Resourcing for the Equality Objectives will have to consider the new requirements from the Government to produce a productivity plan, which is likely to include a requirement monitor expenditure on staff diversity and inclusion programmes.
- 2.15 The resource management of the Equality Objectives will be from within existing budgets and resources.
- 2.16 Engagement:** Engagement around the development and implementation of the Equality Objectives focus on a number of interlocking elements:
- Ensuring activities relating to co-production of services and the development of people with lived experience of services who can inform and advice the Council proactively represents people who share a protected characteristic;
 - Community engagement and development with organisations representing various shared protected characteristics and fostering co-operation between these organisations;
 - Developing staff and Member champions to promote Equality Diversity and Inclusion within the organisation and the community, including a senior officer champion for each of the staff diversity networks.
- 2.17 This work will take place over three stages:

- Stage 1: Soft engagement with existing internal and community stakeholders to inform the overall strategic direction of the Council;
- Stage 2: In-depth conversations with various diversity networks internally and externally to co-produce the content of the delivery plan and develop a longer term approach to addressing Equality Diversity and Inclusion within Cumberland;
- Stage 3: Developing a network to inform progress in delivery.

2.18 There will also be a rolling programme of workshops that bring community organisations together with a cross-section of staff across the Council to examine particular themes in depth. The first workshop on How to Build an Anti-Racist Council will be followed by a series of themed workshops over summer and autumn covering different themes in the Equality Diversity and Inclusion agenda.

2.19 Equality Diversity and Inclusion Community of Practice: During the first six months work will be undertaken to develop networks of staff champions who will:

- Bring together practitioners across Directorates who can share best practice in addressing Equality Diversity and Inclusion within service delivery to the public;
- Develop a core group with enhanced professional skills in relation to Equality Diversity and Inclusion so they can extend the capacity of the organisation;
- Help develop the practice evidence base that can inform research, community engagement and the impact assessment process;
- Provide a link with the Change Champions Network and the Staff Diversity Networks to connect the wider Equality Diversity and Inclusion work in service delivery with activities focused on the organisation's culture;
- Link with wider system partners across health and education at both a regional and national level.

2.20 The staff community of practice will link in with Member Equality Diversity and Inclusion champions whose role will be to:

- Support the Executive and the Lead Member for Equality Diversity and Inclusion by picking up specific aspects of the Equality Diversity and Inclusion agenda;
- Developing Member specialisms that can inform the Council's overall policy and strategy as well as providing a contact point with specific community organisations;
- Informing scrutiny, locality working and other member committees;
- Linking with communities of practice around Equality Diversity and Inclusion in the LGA.

2.21 Communications: Part of the delivery will include an Equality Diversity and Inclusion plan that will include:

- A calendar of planned awareness raising activities linked to key dates in the calendar;
- Work with community groups and staff diversity networks to engage with the organisation around awareness;
- Provide myth busting and other information to support greater public awareness and understanding of Equality Diversity and Inclusion.

2.22 Staff and Member Responsibilities: Progress in implementing the Equality Objective will be dependent on everyone who works for the Council and the elected members.

For staff this means:

- Being aware of the council's legal equality duties as part of the Council's values and a practical understanding of what it means for their role.
- Treating service users, colleagues and residents with dignity and respect whilst responding positively and appropriately to meet diverse needs.
- Challenging and reporting to managers incidents where equality practice has not been followed, including discrimination, harassment and bullying.
- Completing online Equality training and identifying further Equality related learning and development needs in supervision and appraisal.

For managers this means:

- Ensuring all staff are aware of their personal responsibilities in relation to promoting Equality.
- Ensuring continued improvement and Equality outcomes in relation to the accessibility and delivery of services to residents.
- Creating an inclusive workplace culture, being proactive in supporting staff around reasonable adjustments and promoting the Staff Diversity Networks.
- Setting clear standards of behaviours in line with the council's values and promptly dealing with any instances of inappropriate behaviour, including discrimination, harassment and bullying.

For elected members this means:

- Championing the Equality Objective within the council and working with advice from the Policy and Strategy Team around embedding Combined Impact Assessments in all decision making, ensuring scrutiny considers equality implications and that the annual budget and strategic planning process pays due regard to the Equality Duty.
- Leading, supporting and advocating for the diverse people and communities they represent.

- Considering the Equality implications of their conduct as political representatives of the Council and the Council's legal duties under the Equality Act.

3.0 Cross-cutting theme 1: Addressing Health, Housing and Care Inequalities

3.1 The focus of this theme is on taking action to understand and address the inequalities that relate to the wider determinants of health including the underlying social policies and systems that shape health and care outcomes. This includes a focus on:

- Health disparities in relation to ethnicity, age, gender and sexual orientation in terms of access to services commissioned by Public Health, as well as the Council's interface with the wider Health economy;
- Disparities experienced by the same protected characteristics in relation to the wider determinants of health (especially housing, welfare, access to food and other basic essentials);
- Specific historical inequalities experienced by Gypsy Roma and Traveller communities that cut across health, education, housing and accommodation, planning, community cohesion and criminal justice;
- Outcome of audit review of Disabilities Facilities Grants;
- Embed the healthy aging approach across Cumberland;
- Equality and inclusion in relation to preventative support across Public Health, Children's Services and Adult Social Care, by making sure that the lived experience of people who share a protected characteristic and people who have experienced a history of exclusion is embedded in all co-production;
- Ensuring that Children and Family wellbeing understands and meets the needs of diverse communities and prevents unnecessary statutory intervention;
- Understanding the needs of diverse communities in need of Adult Social Care;
- Integrating an intersectional approach to addressing the specific impacts of housing, accommodation and homelessness on different protected characteristics.

3.2 Deliverables under this theme will include:

- Completion of local Health Needs Assessments relating to ethnic minority groups, disability, neurodiversity, LGBT+ communities and male and female health; these will apply national disparities experienced by these groups to Cumberland with recommendations for action across the authority (and partners) ;

- Apply to the Centre for Better Ageing for Cumberland to become part of the UK Network of Age Friendly Communities by demonstrating our commitment of working towards Age Friendly, and develop an action plan to address the 8 domains of health inequality relating to the areas of the built and social environment which, when acted upon, can help to address barriers to healthy ageing
- Implementation of the Local Government Association Adult Social Care Diverse by Design model. This sets out a 12-step framework for improvement in addressing diversity across the totality of Adult Social Care;
- Development of an all-age Autism and Neurodiversity strategic plan. In the first year this will include development of a young person's neurodiversity pathway based on the Portsmouth model, that aims to provide early intervention, holistic support and a reduction in the numbers of young neurodivergent people requiring statutory intervention (either via Education and Health Care Plans at school or via social care intervention);
- Development of Gypsy Roma and Traveller support action plan which takes a wider determinants of health approach to strengthen the Council's and partners' relationship with GRT communities;
- Embedding of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion in the Early Help and Prevention, and the Adult Care Transformation Programmes, so ensure that future long-term provision addresses disparities relating to people who share a protected characteristic.
- Embedding the Corporate Parenting Strategy across all directorates and across all plans and strategies to ensure that action is taken to narrow disparities for people with care experience.
- Implementation of the Housing Strategy with specific deliverables related to Equality Diversity and Inclusion.

4.0 Cross-cutting Theme 2: Narrowing the Educational Attainment Gap and Increasing Access to Good Jobs

4.1 The focus of this cross-cutting theme is on taking action to address inequalities related to the educational attainment gap for pupils on SEND, care experience, males and females and ethnic minority groups. This theme also focuses on gender, age and disability related disparities in the economy, and specific issues in relation to a genuinely inclusive approach to mental health, neurodivergence and complex health conditions in employment and training across Cumberland's economy.

4.2 Deliverables under this theme will include:

- Implementing an approach to working with Early Years, schools and post-16 education and training that addresses the underlying issues that create attainment gaps and that ensures that attendance and attainment for pupils who share a protected characteristic is being actively addressed;
- Working with Early Years, schools and community organisations to embed an approach that supports whole school communities to engage with the increasing diversity of Cumberland and that tackles prejudice and creates a safe learning space for children who share a protected characteristic;
- Ensuring that the delivery of the Council's Economic Strategy addresses inequalities and disparities in the wider economy;
- Developing apprenticeships, internships and traineeship programmes that target protected characteristics;
- Develop the alternative provision offer across Cumberland to prevent NEET.

5.0 Cross-cutting Theme 3: Fostering Good Relations between Communities in Cumberland

5.1 The focus in this theme is to take action that supports community cohesion and good relations as set out in the Public Sector Equality Duty, by ensuring that action to meet the needs of people who share a protected characteristic at a local community level, does so in the context of addressing the wider determinates of health that effect the entire community. Specifically, this would focus on:

- Groups with a protected characteristic who experience marginalisation in society and the community to have a voice in local decision making;
- Effective support to migrants including those who are on asylum dispersal programmes, refugee support programmes and people who chose to live and work in the UK, including but not limited to sponsorship schemes such as Homes for Ukraine and international recruits for health and care;
- Strong community cohesion through activities that promote inclusion and belonging and that tackle prejudice, hate crime and disinformation, while addressing the underlying societal inequalities that can exploited to create division;

5.2 Deliverables under this theme will include:

- Work with the third sector to strengthen the profile and voice of ethnic minority groups, LGBTQ+ communities, neurodiversity and disability, and to support joined up representation of common issues for public bodies to address;
- Invest time and officer support in community development activity where there are gaps in local provision to provide safe spaces and voice for people with a shared protected characteristic;

- Utilise culture, art, physical activity and the Council's community services to promote understanding and bridge building activity people from different backgrounds;
- Delivery of support programmes for people for refugees and effective community support for migrants and for asylum seekers;
- Development of a Hate Crime partnership plan, co-produced with people with lived experience of hate incidents and hate crimes and overseen by the Safer Cumberland Board;
- Development of interventions that challenge and redress harmful and unequal gender norms, roles, and unequal power relations that privilege men over women.

6.0 Cross-cutting theme 4: Ensuring services, employment and places are accessible and inclusive.

6.1 The focus of this theme is to take action on inequalities in relation to:

- Employment of people who share a protected characteristic, including recruitment, employee experience and outcomes from employment as well as specific legal duties in relation to equal pay (and equal pay reporting), disability and reasonable adjustments, maternity and harassment and victimisation;
- Developing a community hub approach to customer access to addresses the needs of diverse customers and people who share a protected characteristic when accessing any Council service;
- Development of property, assets and public spaces that are inclusive in design and can be accessed by all;
- Embedding Equality Diversity and Inclusion within the Cumberland Plan and all planning strategies and programmes.

6.2 Deliverables under this theme will include:

- Introduction of the Local Government Diverse by Design framework for employment to provide a systematic approach to embedding Equality, Diversity and Inclusion across all aspects of employment;
- Support for the staff diversity networks (Shine: disability; Rainbow Alliance: LGBT+; Race Equality Staff Network; Age Group – which includes Menopause) to act as a co-production group for HR policies and to develop their own programmes to promote diversity within the organisation, and review potential to extend the network model to other protected characteristics, with women as a priority;
- Develop a multi-layered approach to Equality training and awareness that builds on the existing e-learning as a foundation by cascading Equality Diversity and Inclusion through services and teams to make it relevant, questioning and to enable a genuine engagement with Equalities;

- Development of a rolling programme of themed cross-organisational workshops to develop an organisational culture that promote equality, diversity and inclusion (beginning with anti-racism, March 2024);
- Development and delivery of programmes related to customer contact with the Council to ensure they are accessible at first point of contact.

7.0 Implementing the Equality Objective

7.1 Following agreement of the Equality Objectives a delivery plan will be developed based on:

- Establishing an evidence base for Cumberland equality disparities;
- Establishment of cross-directorate working groups to develop a detailed action plan for each of the cross-cutting themes and to a) embed these within the Council Plan Delivery Plan; b) the Council's Transformation Programmes; c) partnership activity.
- Development of performance framework and monitoring schedule including annual reporting to Executive and scrutiny engagement.

Implications –

Legal

The report contains and addresses all legal issues arising from section 149 of the Equalities Act 2010 and regulation 5 of the Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties and Public Authorities) Regulation 2017 in respect of setting objectives. No further legal issues arise. Any legal issues arising from specific projects undertaken in delivering the Equality Objective or its four cross-cutting themes will be addressed as part of the project.

Clinton Boyce 15.3.24

Finance

Comments pending

Equality

This report sets out the Council's strategic approach to the Public Sector Equality Duty. All protected characteristics have been considered in the development of the Equality Objective and issues relating to the implementation of the Equality Objective have been outlined in the impact assessment section below.

Contribution to the Cumberland Plan Priorities –

Adoption of the proposed equality objective and associated thematic areas of work directly supports the Council Plan priority of 'addressing inequalities' by taking a proactive approach to delivering the public sector equality duty as well as addressing wider inequalities issues including around health, educational attainment and access to employment.

Relevant Risks –

- Council decisions challenged on the grounds of not paying due regard to the Public Sector Equality Duty.
- Employment tribunals on the grounds of discrimination.
- Potential reputation risks for the Council if found non-compliant with the above and impact on trust and relations with communities who share a protected characteristic (in the worst instance public bodies have been found to be institutional racist and misogynistic by communities for failing to address Equality, Diversity and Inclusion).

Consultation / Engagement –

Engagement has been focused on understanding people's needs and priorities to inform the Equality Objectives.

Stage 1: Developing the concepts behind the objectives.

- Engagement with the Council's Staff Diversity Networks (Shine, Rainbow Alliance and the Race Equality Staff Network);
- Discussions with community forums and groups representing people who share a protected characteristic;
- Sharing findings from extensive family engagement in the development of the Council's Early Help and Prevention work;
- Staff anti-racism workshop;
- Engagement with Council directorates and services.

Stage 2: Further targeted engagement to co-produce the Delivery Plan over the summer. This will be more in depth to give better representation across different protected characteristics and will include planning sessions with the LGBT+ community. This will inform the delivery plan and ongoing progress against the Equality Objectives.

Impact Assessments –

The Combined Impact Assessment has identified the following gaps that will need to be addresses in the first six months of the Equality Objectives:

- Local Government Reorganisation has impacted on being able to establish baseline Equalities data for staff and for services on a Cumberland footprint, due to the IT work required to separate different systems.
- Further work is needed to embed Equalities into the wider Community Engagement Framework that is being developed at the same time, so there is a consistent approach to engaging people with lived experience of inequalities and representative organisations.
- Basic training on Equalities in place for all staff, but further work is required to develop the full range of information, training, staff engagement and learning to enable staff to deliver a fully inclusive service;
- The Council's internal Diversity Staff Networks have strong chairs in place but require more support to become a visible and influential part of the organisation;
- The approach to supporting staff to access reasonable adjustments and for information to be provided in accessible languages and formats at first point of customer/community contact.
- In the absence of dedicated staff who deliver on Equalities, more work is required to embed Equality comprehensively across all directorates.

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Appendices attached to report:

- Appendix 1 Cumberland and National Equality Analysis
- Appendix 2 Milestones for delivering Equality Objectives