

## Corporate and Resources Committee

13th July 2021

### Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy

Report by: Sarah Ireland, Executive Director, Corporate and Communities

Relevant Portfolio Holder: Councillor Tim Cobbett

#### Purpose of Report

To recommend to the Council that the new Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy, “Inclusive Kingston”, is adopted for 2021-25. To agree the next steps delivering on the aims within this strategy.

#### Recommendation(s)

**The Committee is asked to RESOLVE that:**

1. The Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy at **Annex 1** be approved;
2. The four objectives within this strategy, as set out in **Key Points C**, be approved;
3. The proposal to establish a leadership group to deliver on this strategy be approved;
4. The plan to engage with community groups to develop the Operational Delivery Plan be agreed, with authority delegated to the Executive Director of Corporate and Communities to approve the Operational Delivery Plan, which will be kept under annual review.

#### Benefits to the Community:

The Council is pivotal in reducing inequality in our borough, and establishing Kingston as an area with equality of opportunity, an area of fairness and an area that is inclusive. The strategy sets out how, over the next four years, the Council aims to reduce inequality, benefitting our communities.

#### Key Points

- A. “Inclusive Kingston 2021-2025” sets out the council’s equality, diversity and inclusion strategy for the next four years.
- B. This strategy has been developed with reference to the Local Government Association Equalities Framework, which sets out best practice.
- C. Community groups, residents and staff groups were involved in the development of the strategy, and they have commented on the four objectives which will frame our

work to reduce inequality over the next four years. The committee is asked to approve these objectives as follows:

1. Listen to, and learn from, the diverse communities we serve
2. Celebrate the diversity of our borough and champion our communities, making sure that Kingston is a safe borough for all
3. Deliver accessible and inclusive policies and services that meet the diverse needs of our communities
4. Be the best employer for people of all backgrounds

D. The strategy also supports the use of the six 'Marmot Principles' to tackle health inequality in Kingston. The 'Marmot Principles' are:

1. giving every child the best start in life
2. enabling all people to maximise their capabilities and have control over their lives
3. ensuring a healthy standard of living for all
4. creating fair employment and good work for all
5. creating and developing healthy and sustainable places and communities
6. strengthening the role and impact of ill-health prevention

E. A draft objective delivery plan has been created during the development of this strategy, and this is attached as part of **Annex 1**. This plan has not yet been shared with community groups, residents and staff focus groups to gather their views. The committee is asked to approve further engagement to facilitate our communities' input into the objective delivery plan.

F. The council plans to establish a new internal leadership group to oversee and steer the delivery of the strategy and objective delivery plan, and will work with stakeholders and partners to put in place the appropriate partnership governance to deliver improvements across the borough. The committee is asked to approve this.

G. The objective delivery plan will be a live document. It will be formally refreshed and reported to Committee on an annual basis.

### **Context**

5. The Council's Equalities, Diversity and inclusion Strategy represents an increase in the ambition of Kingston Council to tackle inequality and promote inclusion. This strategy and accompanying objective delivery plan will ensure that the Council not only meets its requirements under the Equality Duty but proactively works to identify and tackle the barriers to inclusion experienced by our communities.

6. Along with our Corporate Plan and other key documents, the themes within this strategy will shape our focus for the next four years.

### **Engagement**

7. Engagement with staff and community groups commenced in Autumn 2020.

8. Wider resident engagement ran from 14 January until 31 March 2021. A total of 807 residents visited our 'Let's Talk' engagement portal. 72% of respondents reported that the objectives in this strategy are the correct areas for the council to focus on.
9. Further engagement is proposed to develop the Objective Delivery Plan.

### **Financial Context**

10. The council is operating in an increasingly challenging financial environment. Kingston faced a number of financial challenges in the medium to longer term - even before the COVID-19 outbreak, which has further added to these challenges. The economic and financial consequences of the pandemic, growing demand for services, and limited government grant funding make it difficult to find adequate funds to meet the borough's needs.
11. The future of local government finance faces a significant level of uncertainty. The impact of the Fair Funding Review and a future review of business rates is currently unknown, and the lasting effects of COVID-19 on our residents, local businesses and the Council itself remain uncertain.
12. Despite these challenges the council has a drive and commitment to ensure it is doing the best for residents and communities

### **Resource Implications**

13. This strategy represents an increase in ambition for the council in proactively identifying and tackling exclusion. As such there will be resource implications for the local authority. This is expected to be managed within existing resources and through the recent increase in the data and insight team as published in the 2021/22 budget.

### **Legal Implications**

14. As a local authority, Kingston Council must comply with the Equality Act 2010, which protects individuals and groups identifying with the nine protected characteristics.
15. Under the Public Sector Equality Duty (Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010), the Council must have due regard to:
  - a. Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation and any other conduct prohibited under the Act
  - b. Advance equality of opportunity between people who share those protected characteristics and people who do not
  - c. Foster good relations between people who share those characteristics and people who do not.
16. The South London Legal Partnership has been consulted on the EDI strategy and has no comment.

## **Risk Assessment**

17. The risk of not having an equality, diversity and inclusion plan is that Kingston would lack an overarching framework within which to tackle inequalities which may limit progress in this strategically important area.

## **Equalities Analysis**

18. This strategy aims to increase inclusion and promote equality of opportunity and tackle inequality for all residents. Equalities analysis for the borough was carried out in the development of this strategy.
19. As individual policy changes take place as a result of this strategy they will be subject to separate Equality Impact Assessments.
20. The Objective Delivery Plan will be subject to ongoing equality analysis.

## **Health Implications**

21. A greater focus on equality, diversity and inclusion, including through the Marmot Principles discussed within the strategy, aims to positively impact on the health and wellbeing of the borough.

## **Road Network Implications**

22. None

## **Sustainability Implications**

23. None

**Background papers: held by author of the report** - Kate Leyland, Corporate Strategy and Partnerships Manager [kate.leyland@kingston.gov.uk](mailto:kate.leyland@kingston.gov.uk)

- LGA Equalities Framework
- London Mayor's strategy for Equality, Diversity and Inclusion
- London Mayor's evidence base
- Engagement report

## **Annexes:**

Annex 1: Inclusive Kingston and Inclusive Kingston Objective Delivery Plan