



**General Purposes Committee**  
25 February 2015

**Report from the Director of  
Human Resources**

For Action

Wards affected:  
ALL

**Equality Strategy**

**1.0 Summary**

- 1.1 The new Equality Strategy 2015 – 2019 sets out a refreshed vision and approach underpinned by the values of fairness, respect for people, valuing diversity and excellence in all our services. The strategy sets out Brent's determination to be an exemplar of good practice in equality, diversity and human rights by achieving an 'excellent' assessment in the Equality Framework for Local Government in 2015.

**2.0 Recommendations**

- 2.1 The General Purposes Committee is asked to approve the new Equality Strategy 2015 – 2019 and action plan.

**3.0 Detail**

- 3.1 The Equality Strategy sets out how effective equality and diversity practice will be fully integrated into everything the council does – as a locality leader, as a provider and commissioner of services and as an employer.
- 3.2 The Equality Strategy is central to the achievement of our vision for the borough of Brent, agreed with partners, which is to make Brent a place that creates the right opportunities for all who live and work here to change their lives for the better. Understanding how the work of local services affects different people, advancing equality of opportunity for all, tackling discrimination where it exists and fostering good relations between the different communities in the borough contributes to better services and improved outcomes for everyone. Good equality practice is always essential to operate effectively in a diverse setting. In our current context, in one of the most diverse boroughs in the UK, it is more relevant than ever as we respond to a challenging financial climate which is impacting heavily on our residents and on the services that are provided and commissioned by the council.

- 3.3 The council set the following strategic equality objectives in 2012:
- a. To develop a strong evidence base of information to help identify and address inequality and needs.
  - b. To gather and analyse performance data across the nine protected characteristics that will allow us to understand and address the causes of differential outcomes and influence service delivery.
  - c. To work in partnership with voluntary and community led organisations to ensure that services are delivered to the wider community.
  - d. To encourage residents to participate and engage with us in order to help us to shape local priorities and improve our performance in service delivery across the protected groups.
  - e. To ensure that sound equality practices underpin our procurement and commissioning processes.
- 3.4 The Equality Strategy 2015 – 2019 replaces and builds upon these equality objectives to respond to our current context. It sets new equality and human rights objectives in order to achieve key equalities outcomes for those who live and work in Brent. The Strategy will also ensure that we fulfil our duties under the Equality Act 2010 and support our determination to be recognised as a model of excellent practice in equality and human rights.
- 3.5 The priorities and objectives set out in the Strategy have been developed following extensive consultation with councillors, employees, the Corporate Management Team, the Diversity Reference Group, Departmental Management Teams, trade unions and with stakeholders across the borough, including residents, through Brent Connects Service User Forums, partner organisations, including those in the community and voluntary sector, councillors, Trades Unions and staff. The Equality Team also benchmarked against good practice in the sector, using the Equality Framework for Local Government. Recommendations from the recent review of HR and Equalities Policies have also been taken into consideration although a separate action plan will be developed to roll out the key findings of this review. The themes identified through consultation and benchmarking were:
- a. improving knowledge and understanding of all our communities;
  - b. involving our communities effectively in civic and community life;
  - c. demonstrating leadership in equalities and human rights and organisational commitment to excellence;
  - d. ensuring that local public services are responsive to different needs and treat users with dignity and respect;
  - e. developing and sustaining a skilled and committed workforce able to meet the needs of all local people.
- 3.6 The Equality Strategy 2015 – 2019 proposes five equality and human rights objectives linked to these themes and to Brent's strategic priorities. Working towards these priorities will enable the council to embed excellent diversity and equality practice across all our activities. The Action Plan sets out milestones to assess if the council is delivering against these objectives. The Action Plan is an annual plan which will be replaced each year of the life of the strategy.
- 3.7 Everyone who works for the council, whether directly or through commissioning, will be responsible for ensuring that the objectives of the Equality Strategy are reflected in the planning and delivery of their services. The Equality Team, overseen by the HR Director, will be responsible for the operational management of the strategy and its monitoring and review. The Equality Team will provide 6-monthly monitoring and evaluation reports and an annual report evaluating progress and outcomes achieved to CMT for review.

#### **4.0 Implementation Date**

4.1 Although some of the activities identified in the action plan are already underway, it is recommended that the strategy and action plan become live on 1 April 2015 and be published on the council's website to enable wide access, transparency and scrutiny.

#### **5.0 Financial Implications**

5.1 Any costs associated with the delivery of the Equality Strategy and action plan will be accommodated from existing budgets.

#### **6.0 Legal Implications**

6.1 The new Equality Strategy will help the council to demonstrate that it is meeting its obligations under the Equality Act 2010 and follows good practice.

#### **7.0 Diversity Implications**

7.1 The Equality Strategy sets out how the council will promote equality of opportunity, eliminate discrimination and foster good relations.

#### **8.0 Staffing/Accommodation Implications**

8.1 The Equality Strategy and Action Plan set out principles and actions to develop and sustain a skilled and committed workforce able to meet the needs of all local people.

8.2 The Equality Team will develop equality partnerships with local organisations delivering services to Brent residents, such as Brent Housing Partnership, and will expand to deliver funded equality work programmes for these organisations.

#### **Background Papers**

##### **Contact Officers**

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