



# Safer Stronger Communities Select Committee

## Report title: Single Equality Framework

**Date:** 14 September 2023

**Key decision:** No.

**Class:** Part 1

**Ward(s) affected:** All

**Contributors:**

## Outline and recommendations

This report reviews the Council's Single Equality Framework 2022-24, specifically focussing on the Council's five equality objectives, and provides information on work that has been commissioned to review the Council's overall approach to equalities. The setting of equality objectives is a requirement of the Equality Act (Specific Duties) 2011. The information contained in this report covers the period April 2020 to March 2023.

## Timeline of engagement and decision-making

*March 2020 – Approval of the Single Equality Framework at Mayor and Cabinet*

*September 2020 - Safer Stronger Communities Select Committee: In-depth Review  
– How Lewisham Council Embeds Equalities Across its Service Provision*

## 1. Summary

This is the first review of the Single Equality Framework (SEF) 2020-24,

which was approved by Mayor and Cabinet in March 2020. The delay in annual reporting of the SEF was due to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic.

To that extent this review incorporates information that covers the period April 2020 to March 2023.

## **2. Recommendations**

2.1 To note and comment on the context of this report.

## **3. Policy Context**

3.1 This report aligns with Lewisham's Corporate Priorities, as set out in the Council's [Corporate Strategy \(2022-2026\)](#):

- Cleaner and Greener
- A Strong Local Economy
- Quality Housing
- Children and Young People
- Safer Communities
- Open Lewisham
- Health and Wellbeing

3.2 In particular, this report is closely aligned to the Open Lewisham priority. Promoting equality, by tackling inequality, sits at the heart of the Council's public welfare role, and is connected to every corporate priority, as is stressed throughout the Council's Corporate Strategy.

3.3 The SEF 2020-24 contributes to the Corporate Strategy by helping the Council to better understand the equality implications of the various decisions that it makes in delivering on Corporate Strategy priorities and commitments.

## **4. Background**

4.4 Lewisham is home to a diverse population. As a Borough of Sanctuary, our aim is to ensure that the needs of residents are considered in the performance of Council functions and provision of services.

4.5 The Equality Act (Specific Duties) 2011 requires public bodies to set and publish one or more equality objectives on a four yearly cycle. In addition, the Specific Duties require public bodies to ensure that the objectives can be measured.

4.6 The above requirements accord with the broader framework of the Equality Act 2010 and in particular the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED), which sets out that when public authorities carry out their functions, they must have due regard or think about the need to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not share that characteristic
- Foster or encourage good relations between people who share a

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protected characteristic and those who do not share that characteristic

4.6 Within the context of the Equality Act 2010, the protected characteristics are defined as follows:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender-reassignment
- Marriage and civil partnership
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Race
- Religion or belief
- Sex
- Sexual orientation

4.7 Underlining the Council's commitment to tackling inequality is a focus on socio-economic equality. Notably, although socio-economic status is not a protected characteristic in England, the Council has ensured that socio-economic status is codified in Council policy. A 2020 Review of How Lewisham Embeds Equalities Across its Service Provision, conducted by the Safer, Stronger Communities Select Committee exemplified this commitment and led to the development of a socio-economic equalities framework: the 'Fairer Lewisham Duty'.

4.8 Not willing to draw the line at socio-economic inequality, the Council has gone even further by incorporating a wider range of communities of identity and experience into its equality analysis assessment framework. This has enabled services to describe the likely equality impacts of their decisions in ways that are most relevant to the lived experience of residents.

4.9 In March 2020 a commitment was made to present a report to the Safer Stronger Communities Select Committee each year. This report fulfils that requirement.

## **5. Single Equality Framework**

5.1 The SEF is a statement of equality objectives reflecting the Council's public welfare role in promoting the social, economic and environmental well-being of the borough. In addition, the SEF describes the assurance mechanism within which those equality objectives sit.

5.2 The application of the Framework is intended to help the Council to better understand the equality implications of the decisions that it makes, the functions that it performs and the services that it provides.

5.3 The Framework is informed by the socio-economic context of inequality in Lewisham, builds upon existing strategic priorities and reflects the likely equality implications and impacts of current events.

5.4 The SEF is a lens through which the Council can test and assess the way it does things and understand whether it is doing things in the right way. The three main elements of the SEF are set out under the sub-headers below.

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## **a) Equality Objectives**

The equality objectives are the only statutory component of the SEF. The objectives have been designed and developed to reflect a maturing of the Council's understanding of its communities and what equality means in light of that. The Council's five equality objectives are as follows:

- To ensure equal opportunities for marginalised and seldom heard communities.
- To reduce the number of vulnerable people in the borough by tackling socio-economic inequality.
- To improve the quality of life of residents by tackling preventable illnesses and diseases.
- To ensure that services are designed and delivered to meet the needs of Lewisham's diverse population.
- To increase the number of people we support to become active citizens.

## **b) Six equality prisms**

The six equality prisms speak to the fact that in order to address the characteristics of inequality there needs to be a clear understanding of what those features are, how prevalent they are and how they affect different communities. The six equality prisms are as follows:

- Due Regard (i.e.: is the Council doing anything either directly or indirectly, that may be contributing towards inequality)
- Disproportionality
- Intersectionality
- Unfairness
- Marginalisation
- Unconscious basis

## **c) Data digest**

A data digest was published alongside the SEF in March 2020. The aim was to refresh this annually with new equality data. However, since late 2020 the Council has procured the services of an external supplier to maintain an Observatory, which is now the primary resource for equality related data about the borough and which is accessible to the public. The observatory includes information showing how the Council compares to London and nationally. Elected Members have previously been trained in the use of the tool and a new workshop is planned for the benefit of those councillors elected since the tool was last demonstrated to Members.

## **6. Review of the Single Equality Framework**

- 6.1 This is the first annual review of the SEF. The delay in annual reporting was due to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. The various sources of information that have been used to frame the review are as follows:

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- The wide-ranging impact of the Covid-19 pandemic
- Contextual data eg: 2021 Census
- Outcomes of public engagement and resident satisfaction
- Outcomes of projects and programmes
- Systems and service redesign
- Policy development and application

## **7. The Lewisham equalities context: 2020-21, 2021-22 and 2022-23**

7.1.1 In March 2020, when the Council's five equalities objectives were agreed by Mayor and Cabinet, the population of the borough stood at just over 300,000. Then as now, significant demographic and socio-economic diversity characterised Lewisham. This diversity also manifested itself in the way in which inequality presented across the borough. Some of the key data framing the Council's understanding of inequality in Lewisham for the period April 2020 to March 2023 are as follows:

- Comparatively higher levels of relative deprivation – Lewisham ranks 63rd out of 317 local authorities nationally, for overall deprivation, with particularly high levels of relative deprivation in respect of barriers to housing (13th out of 317), income deprivation affecting older people (18th out of 317), living environment 20th out of 317), income deprivation affecting children (37th out of 317).
- The four most deprived wards in the borough are Bellingham, Downham, Rushey Green and New Cross. In Bellingham, Rushey Green and New Cross, the majority of the population is of BAME heritage.
- The number of businesses contained within the borough has fallen from roughly 10,290 in 2020, to 9,945 in 2022. However, this follows a sharp increase from the 2010 figure of 6,135.
- The percentage of private renting increased from 24.3% in 2011 to 27.2% in 2021. Simultaneously, the percentage of residents who owned their home decreased from 42.4% to 41.9%.
- In 2011 the average house price in Lewisham was more than 7.8 times cumulative gross annual earnings. By comparison, in 2022, the average house price in Lewisham was nearly 12 times cumulative gross annual earnings.
- In 2021, Lewisham was home to around 61.1 people per football pitch-sized piece of land, compared with 56.0 in 2011. This makes Lewisham among the top 5% most densely populated English local authority areas.
- Whilst the employment rate (78.2%) in Lewisham is comparable to the London average, our average income is the 8th lowest out of 33 London boroughs.
- The youth unemployment rate (16-24) stands at 13% with a further 8% 'economically inactive'.
- Life expectancy at birth for a Lewisham female is 82.4 years (marginally

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below the London average) and 77.7 years for a male (below the London average of 80.3 years).

- In terms of life expectancy and causes of death, Lewisham performs significantly worse than England with respect to average life expectancy at birth for males and under 75 all-cause mortality. By contrast, the borough performs in line with England with respect to life expectancy at birth for females, under 75 mortality rate from all cardiovascular diseases, under 75 mortality rate from cancer and suicide rate.

## **8. The Covid-19 pandemic**

8.1 The onset of Covid-19 distorted and exacerbated inequalities across the borough, whilst also bringing the same issues into sharper relief. More than a public health crisis, the pandemic highlighted just how precarious the lives of so many Lewisham residents had become. Particularly as it relates to household income and earnings, and the reality of in-work poverty.

8.2 In the wake of Covid-19, a 'new normal' has been established. Evidence of this can be seen in the residual economic effects of the pandemic such as the JSA claimant count, which has remained above 12,000 for more than two years. Some of the relevant contextual data relating to the pandemic is set out below:

- In January 2021, Lewisham had reported more than 21,000 Covid-19 cases and more than 500 Covid-related fatalities.
- The data relating to Covid-19 cases and fatalities indicated that older residents and those of BAME heritage were disproportionately impacted.
- Just over half of the nearly 1,700 emails sent to the C-19 inbox between March and August 2020 sought help on financial advice for residents or were residents experiencing vulnerability. This highlighted the precarious nature of the financial position of residents.
- In March 2021, roughly 21,000 Lewisham residents were claiming out of work benefits (up from 8,400 in March 2020).
- Nearly 56,000 employments in the borough were furloughed.
- Advice Lewisham reported a 334% Increase in employment advice (from March 2020) when compared to the same period in 2019.
- Between November 2020 and January there were nearly 4,300 emergency helpline requests to Lewisham's Community Hub with nearly 2,600 referrals made to food aid organisations.
- More than 1,200 requests for food parcels were made by residents who were 'shielding.'

## **9. Progress against equality objectives**

9.1 The onset of Covid-19 made any intentional roll-out of the SEF unrealistic as the Council's immediate focus was directed towards repurposing functions and services to tackle the pandemic and save lives. In addition to this, a series of organisational changes at a senior level within the authority, including the oversight of the equalities function, has presented challenges to effectively and consistently monitoring the Council's progress.

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- 9.2 This report takes an aggregate view of the Council's activities, achievements and challenges over the past three years as they relate to the Council's equality objectives. It also sets out the work that will be undertaken, and is already in progress, that will mean the Council sees a step-change in its approach to equalities over the next twelve months and will ensure that our actions meet our rhetoric in delivering the ambitious equalities agenda that Lewisham has.
- 9.3 Despite the challenges to monitoring the Council's progress which are outlined above, the following assertions can still be clearly seen:
- Even without knowledge of what was to come, the design and development of the five equality objectives demonstrates that the Council was 'tuned in' to existing equality challenges facing residents and therefore focusing on the right things.
  - Evidence gathered over the past three years shows that even against the elevated challenges presented by a global pandemic, the performance of Council functions, provision of services as well as the activities of the wider community were able to meet the moment.
- 9.4 Taking the above into consideration, the sub headers below highlight areas where progress has been made in meeting the Council's equality objectives. It should be noted that there are points of intersection and overlap between the progress summaries presented, which itself highlights our understanding of the interconnected nature of inequality and the means by which it should be addressed.

## **10. To ensure equal opportunities for marginalised and seldom heard communities.**

- 10.1 This objective has been developed specifically in recognition of the needs of those in the borough whose voices are not often heard and whose needs may therefore be overlooked. In respect of this objective, the Council has:
- Been recognised as a borough of Sanctuary and has resettled 100 refugee families in the borough.
  - Signed up to the Safe Passage's pledge, committing to accept an additional 100 children over the next 10 years
  - Helped 60,000 residents apply for EU Settled Status to protect their rights after Brexit. Of these, about 58,000 have been granted either Settled Status or pre-Settled Status.
  - Continued to be an active voice for refugees and migrants at the City of Sanctuary Steering and the Council of Europe's Committee of Experts on Intercultural Integration of Migrants.
  - Launched a new programme hiring out iPads through libraries and community centre to reduce digital exclusion and reduce loneliness.
  - Set up a Disabled People's Commission to review Council services and functions and make recommendations as to how they can be improved.
  - Launched the 'voices of Lewisham' project to give a diverse range of residents and stakeholders an opportunity to share their personal accounts and experiences of the Covid-19 pandemic. Dozens of

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residents and stakeholders groups participated in the project.

- Continued to take active steps to ensure that Council employees at senior management level, are more representative of the diverse community that it serves.
- Been acknowledged by 81% of 2021 Lewisham Residents Survey respondents as a welcoming borough. A measure we will use to track progress against the next residents survey.

## **11. To reduce the number of vulnerable people in the borough by tackling socio-economic inequality**

11.1 This objective recognises the pervasive nature of socio-economic inequality, irrespective of protected characteristic. It also underlines the Council's commitment to recognise socio-economic inequality, whether or not such recognition is provided for in legislation. In respect of this objective the Council has:

- Helped 5,000 vulnerable and low-income households reduce their energy costs and carbon footprint, and relieved an estimated £38,000 of debt across south London.
- Utilised the Household Support Fund to support thousands of vulnerable residents with the cost of food and utility bills. This includes specific support for households receiving housing benefit or Council Tax reductions, and for households with children receiving free school meals.
- Served 1,500 notices to private sector landlords forcing them to improve the state of rented homes following a complaint from the tenant.
- Distributed £1.29m in funding, to 676 households that were struggling to cover shortfalls in their rents to secure their tenancies and avoid homelessness.
- Awarded Citizens Advice Lewisham with financial support to increase their capacity to deliver income maximisation and debt support
- Procured the Low Income Family Data Tracker. A tool which allows the Council to improve our understanding of the most vulnerable Lewisham residents, and better plan and deliver our support for them.
- Awarded Selce (the South East London Community Energy co-operative) £100k funded by the third Household Support Fund to provide practical support to residents at risk of / experiencing fuel poverty.
- Created a new equalities impact test: 'the 'Fairer Lewisham Duty'. The Duty, which was developed by the Safer Stronger Communities Select Committee, has been designed to help officers to better understand the likely socio-economic implications of proposals that they are developing.
- Provided £358k to 716 Lewisham residents who would have lost income through being asked to self-isolate when testing positive or being in close contact with someone who tested positive for COVID.

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## 12. To improve the quality of life of residents by tackling preventable illnesses and diseases.

12.1 This objective recognises the impact of health inequality not just as a determinant of life chances, but also a determinant of quality of life. In respect of this objective, the Council has:

- Helped the NHS to vaccinate over 100,000 Lewisham residents from Covid-19.
- Installed 'green screens' around school playgrounds in the most polluted areas to protect pupils from the effects of air pollution. In addition, we have launched 16 new School Streets, taking the total to 26 School Streets reduce car emissions, improve air quality and create a safer environment for our young people and their families.
- Launched the Lewisham Food Justice action plan and funded a programme of food justice community grants to support food giving organisations provide nutritious and culturally appropriate food to residents in need.
- Funded 21 Warm Welcome hubs to ensure access to warm spaces across all wards in Lewisham in winter 22/23. Not only did these hubs help keep people warm but also enabled them to connect to the local community and services to support their wellbeing.
- Launched the 3 year suicide prevention strategy and action plan tackling the risk factors for residents who self-harm or die by suicide.
- Worked with the NHS to deliver polio vaccinations to children aged 0-9 years old in the borough in response to polio pathogens being identified in sewage across London.
- Worked with our provider to increase the uptake of NHS Health Checks for residents aged 40-74 resulting an annual uptake above the London and England average. The NHS Health Check screens for common cardiovascular diseases and offers the opportunity for prevention as well as earlier diagnosis and access to treatment for residents.
- Developed a harm reduction initiative, in partnership with a local business, to support smokers to quit using e-cigarettes. Over 60% of those who took part in the programme quit smoking including 5 pregnant women and 4 of their partners.
- Launched the report of the Birmingham and Lewisham African and Caribbean Health Inequalities Review (BLACHIR) to tackle inequality in health and care in those from African or Caribbean backgrounds.
- Facilitated the recruitment of Health Equity Fellows, based in Lewisham's 6 Primary Care Networks to work with local community organisations to understand and tackle issues facing residents around their health and wellbeing.
- Opened the Clyde Family Hub in April 2023. This is the first of 4 Family Hubs to be opened across Lewisham during 2023/24. Family hubs are accessible, physical and virtual points of contact for families, children and young people age 0-25. These family hubs form the core of a transformation

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programme that aims to provide a more connected and localised approach to improving access to early intervention and prevention support for children and families across health, education and social care.

### **13. To ensure that services are designed and delivered to meet the needs of Lewisham's diverse population**

13.1 This objective recognises the fact that in order to address inequality the Council must ensure that services are designed and delivered in a way that is nimble, agile and resident-centred. In respect of this objective, the Council has:

- Secured over £1m in external funding for our Athena service, which supports hundreds of victims of domestic abuse and wider gender-based violence each year. This funding means we can support more children who are victims of domestic abuse. We have supported more than 1,000 people through domestic abuse services during the pandemic.
- Secured over £5m to invest in tackling the climate emergency, including by retrofitting council buildings and schools. We are using this investment to support carbon reduction and tackle fuel poverty.
- Introduced new Mental Health Support Teams in 19 schools, providing direct help to young people when and where they need it. Head teachers tell us this support has been valuable in supporting children after pandemic school closures.
- Enshrined the role of the Young Mayor in the work of the Lewisham Strategic Partnership, ensuring that the voice of young people is heard by the Council and by its partners across the borough. The youth elections for the Young Mayor are the longest running in the UK, achieve a consistently high turnout and are recognised as national best practise.
- Begun a process of co-production, working with residents where possible to ensure that services are designed by them, for them. Examples would include utilising the Portage Service, to ensure that adventure playgrounds can be co-developed alongside disabled children and their families.
- Begun the process the adding capacity to the Council's equalities function, ensuring that Lewisham Council has the skills and expertise required to provide expert advice to teams across the organisation which design and deliver services.

### **14. To increase the number of people we support to become active citizens.**

14.1 The objective recognises that to tackle inequality it is simply not enough to focus on equal rights and entitlements. A commensurate focus must be given to equal obligations, duties and responsibilities. In respect of this objective, the Council has:

- Partnered to create the Lewisham Community Response Hub. During the Covid-19 pandemic, nearly 2,500 people signed up as volunteers across the Hub as a whole. A detailed report on the work of the Lewisham Community Response Hub by Goldsmiths University, provides

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additional valuable information on social activism in the borough in response to the pandemic.

- Recruited over 100 volunteers to become Lewisham COVID-19 Champions and come from a range of backgrounds including voluntary community sector groups, Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) community groups, staff groups, health providers, business owners, local councillors and faith leaders.
- Trained over 900 people within the borough as Dementia Friends, significantly contributing towards our ambition to become a dementia friendly borough.
- Raised over £300,000 for Lewisham projects including the 999 Club and Lewisham food banks, through the generosity of Lewisham residents.
- Reviewed and re-established its internal Corporate Equalities Board. The Board continues to be chaired by an Executive Director and now also includes Director-level representation from across the Council as well as representation from all staff groups. During the period of review the Board has:
  - Routinely requested/ received updates on work being done by the Council to tackle inequality affecting employees. As part of this, the Board has received updates and facilitated numerous discussions relating to tackling race and disability inequality (e.g.: the Board has considered several presentations of the Council's work to address pay inequality by the Director of People and Organisational Development).
  - Taken steps to ensure follow-through on the five recommendations of the Safer, Stronger Communities Select Committee's In-Depth Review of Equalities in Service Delivery. including work on promoting staff engagement, development of a practical approach to assessing socio-economic risk and developing the Council's approach to Equality Analysis Assessments (EAAs).
  - Overseen EAAs for 2022/23 budget savings. The Corporate Equalities Board is also overseeing the Council's wider EAA forward plan, including proposing changes to the way in which EAAs are conducted to ensure that the process is more efficient and outcome-focused.
  - Routinely received updates on equalities work being undertaken within directorate service areas (eg: Education have had "Tackling Race Inequality" briefings with teachers. These included leadership, behaviour management approaches to tackling race inequality in schools).
  - Refreshed its Corporate Equality Policy to reflect learning from the Covid-19 pandemic as well as opportunities to further strengthen accountabilities for the delivery of equality objectives.
  - Continued to ensure that it reports on the cumulative impact of budget savings proposals including the likely impact of savings proposals on the delivery of the Council's equality objectives. The cumulative impact assessment also includes a focus on the likely socio-economic impact of budget savings proposals.

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- Played an active and involved role in the London Council Tackling Race Inequality Group (TRIG). As part of this, Lewisham leads on the work of the TRIG Data Sub-Group through a co-chairing position, and has been influential in encouraging London local authorities to explore best practice in the use of ethnicity data.

## 15. Challenges

- 15.1 As set out in this report, the equality landscape in Lewisham can no longer be described as business as usual. In addition to comparatively higher levels of deprivation, the residual impact of the Covid-19 pandemic has left additional scars on the borough.
- 15.2 Looking forward, the most significant challenges the Council faces in reducing inequity are summarised below:
- The necessity for data at a much more granular level to evaluate impacts of decisions on protected characteristics and understand features such as disproportionality and intersectionality.
  - Growing socio-economic inequality exacerbated by Covid-19, which is now further exacerbated by the ongoing cost of living crisis.
  - Lewisham's growing population and the implications of this on increased demand and complexity of need.
  - The ongoing cumulative impact of public spending cuts on Lewisham households – specifically as it relates to intersectionality.
  - Ensuring consistent and careful application of the equality analysis screening tool and equality analysis assessments to enable the Council to better understand the likely impact of its decisions on different protected characteristics.

## 16. Lessons learned

- 16.1 Although we've achieved a lot over a challenging period, there is no doubt that we could have achieved more if the distraction of covid didn't mean we hadn't been able to formally communicate our ambitions on equalities, or benchmark ourselves to create an effective baseline which the organisation could consistently work against.
- 16.2 The recommendation to consider socio-economic status throughout the decision making process was the correct one, but the impact of doing this has not been effectively documented over the last three years. When reviewing what impact the consideration of socio-economic status had on the Council's decision making process, it is challenging to quantify what would have happened had this status not been considered.
- 16.3 Having said this, over the course of the last three years there have been strong examples of best practice, where consideration of socio-economic status has driven decision making. This can be seen in various Equalities Analysis Assessments (EAA). For example, the Distribution of the Government's Household Fund 4 EAA acknowledges how the decisions may have a differential impact on residents of different socio economic status, and utilises this information to arrive at a decision. Over the next 12 months, the Council

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can use examples such as this one to ensure that other decisions make the same considerations through using the EAA tool.

- 16.4 An additional lesson from the last three years has been that the Council has not effectively recorded its progress against the London Councils standard which it signed up to (*noted in paragraph 27*). Going forward, the Council should focus more on benchmarking its current position, and using that information to measure progress against the ambitious objectives that it is committed to. Although signing up to this standard was the correct course of action, there is a challenge to measuring Lewisham's effectiveness at meeting it.
- 16.5 Finally, it would be important going forward to ensure a strong reporting mechanism is put in place, so that officers, Cabinet Members and Scrutiny Members are kept up to date with the Council's work and progress against its equality objectives. Although the intention at the creation of the Single Equality Framework to review it annually was the correct one, this series of reviews was interrupted, and as such progress reporting has not been consistently completed. Effectively utilising the regular meetings of Cabinet, the Safer Stronger Communities Committee and the Corporate Equalities Board could ensure a more effective reporting mechanism, which delivered regular progress updates.

## **17. Further work**

- 17.1 Over the next 12 months, the Council's work on equalities will continue apace. Some of the key areas of focus are set out under the sub-headers below.

## **18. Lewisham Disabled Peoples Commission recommendations.**

- 18.1 The Lewisham Disability Commission was a commitment from the previous Council administration. The work of the Commission was delayed due to the Covid-19 pandemic. However, the Commission has recently concluded its work and drafted recommendations.
- 18.2 These recommendations will be responded to via a report to Mayor and Cabinet, and work has been undertaken to begin early delivery on the commitments outlined in that Mayor and Cabinet report.

## **19. Armed Forces Covenant Duty**

- 19.1 A new statutory Armed Forces Covenant Duty has been introduced by the government. When a specified body exercises a relevant function, it must have due regard to: (a) the unique obligations of, and sacrifices made by, the Armed Forces; (b) the principle that it is desirable to remove disadvantages arising for Service people from membership, or former membership, of the Armed Forces, and (c) the principle that special provision for Service people may be justified by the effects on such people of membership, or former membership, of the Armed Forces.
- 19.2 The Council will continue its commitment to supporting the Armed Forces community, retaining its offer on school admissions, health and wellbeing, housing and re-integration and employment.

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## **20. 2021 Census data releases**

20.1 Further releases and analysis of 2021 Census data continue to be scheduled. To facilitate this, a Census Insights programme was developed to ensure that the data is analysed so that key learning can be used to inform the formulation of policy, development of strategy as well as the design and commissioning of services.

## **21. Borough of Sanctuary re-application in 2024**

21.1 The Council is due to reapply for Borough of Sanctuary status in 2023. Activity is being undertaken to review progress made against previous commitments, gather evidence on new areas where progress has been made and identify areas for improvement. In pulling evidence for the re-accreditation, the Council will be working alongside community partners.

21.2 Specific actions relating to the Council's reapplication for Borough of Sanctuary status include:

- Sanctuary awareness raising is included into everyday business of the local authority, e.g. staff induction/training.
- LA to demonstrate how it has embedded the concept of welcome and inclusion at all levels of the organisation (strategy).
- Commitment to supporting initiatives that embeds welcome and fosters solidarity between receiving communities and people seeking sanctuary
- LA publicly highlights its work in support of welcome and inclusion by making it visible on its website and noticeboards
- Identify national policy issues to make collective representations to government to encourage change

## **22. Tackling climate change**

22.2 In 2019, Lewisham Council declared a 'climate emergency' recognising that climate change is the only equality issue with existential implications. In 2020, the Council specifically developed an equality objective with the need to address climate change in mind. The Council will continue to take active steps to tackle climate change by encouraging households and businesses to reduce CO2 emissions.

## **23. Implementation of the BLACHIR recommendations**

23.2 Following completion of the ground-breaking work of Birmingham and Lewisham, which focused on Black and Caribbean health inequalities, a final report has been published. Over the next 12 months and beyond, the recommendations of the review and report will be implemented and embedded across a range of council services, and the work of partner organisations.

## **24. Lewisham Strategic Partnership**

24.1 The Lewisham Strategic Partnership (LSP) is currently operating with one of its four working groups focused on Race and Equality. This group is Co-Chaired by Cllr Juliet Campbell, and a senior partner from the LSP. The purpose of this

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working group is to develop and deliver collaborative action to improve equity within the borough. This can focus either on improving the actions that organisations within Lewisham take to help develop their own employees, or actions that are external facing and support residents within the borough.

## **25. Developing equality objectives for 2024-28**

25.1 Later in 2023, the Council will commence development of equality objectives for 2024, Informed by the review of equalities currently being carried out (see paragraph 28 below). The process will incorporate reflections on the existing five equality objectives as well as relevant information relating to the borough-wide equalities context. The Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties 2011) does not prescribe how equality objectives should be designed, other than to dictate that they should be specific, measurable, achievable and time-bound.

## **26. Application of the Safer Stronger Communities In-depth Review: How Lewisham's Embeds Equalities Across its Service Provision**

26.1 Application of this review continues, and has progressed over the previous three years. Work has been undertaken relating to the four key recommendations within this review, focused on staff forums, how the Council completes EEAs and the overall organisational approach to the Public Sector Equality Duty. Examples of how this work has been undertaken, and progress made against the review, can be found in Appendix A.

## **27. Anti-Racism and Race Equality**

27.1 As a part of the Tackling Racial Inequality Group, coordinated by London Council's, Lewisham signed up to both the London Local Government Anti-Racist Statement, and the Chief Executives London Committee's Tackling Racial Inequality Standard.

27.2 The collective commitment to achieve racial equality focuses on what London councils can do together to have a positive impact on life outcomes at all stages, including in relation to health and wellbeing, employment and education. This is about social justice and promoting equality because all Londoners should be able to reach their potential in all spheres.

27.3 To be proactive in meeting this commitment, all local authorities commit to:

- Build a picture of what the key inequalities are in their area and then to look at what is driving these.
- Shape solutions by listening to residents, communities and frontline staff and by responsibly drawing on their lived experience and understanding of what the issues are and what works, without putting the burden on them to educate us.
- Set expectations of leaders to make the connection between achieving positive outcomes and their own leadership style and diversity, and to take personal responsibility for what they can do now to bring about change. This acknowledges residents have worked hard to achieve social justice and

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rightly expect to see leadership that reflects their position, to see action, and to be part of solution.

## **28. Review of the Councils' Equalities Approach**

- 28.1 In addition to the work above, and in order to give focus to it and ensure that the Council's approach to equalities is effective and meeting the needs of its diverse population, a review of the Council's approach to equalities has been commissioned.
- 28.2 This work is being undertaken by DWC Consulting, who are conducting a review of the Council's approach to equalities, what Lewisham does well in this area and what action the Council could take to drive forward its ambitious agenda. This work will provide Lewisham with a measurable standard, in line with national and regional benchmarks, that the Council can use to measure the effectiveness of future work. Following the outcome of this review the Council will be creating an action plan in response, utilising the benchmarking information provided to measure progress.

## **29. Financial implications**

There are no direct financial implications arising from this report. Any expenditure in relation to the Council's equality objectives and review of them will be contained within existing budgets.

## **30. Legal implications**

The Equality Act 2010 (the Act) introduced a public sector equality duty (the equality duty or the duty). It covers the following protected characteristics: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.

In summary, the Council must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to:

- eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act.
- advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

It is not an absolute requirement to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation or other prohibited conduct, or to promote equality of opportunity or foster good relations between persons who share a protected characteristic and those who do not. It is a duty to have due regard to the need to achieve the goals listed in this report.

The weight to be attached to the duty will be dependent on the nature of the decision and the circumstances in which it is made. This is a matter for the Mayor, bearing in mind the issues of relevance and proportionality. The Mayor must understand the impact or likely impact of the decision on those with protected characteristics who are potentially affected by the decision. The extent of the duty will necessarily vary from case to case and due

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regard is such regard as is appropriate in all the circumstances.

The Equality and Human Rights Commission has issued Technical Guidance on the Public Sector Equality Duty and statutory guidance entitled “Equality Act 2010 Services, Public Functions & Associations Statutory Code of Practice”. The Council must have regard to the statutory code in so far as it relates to the duty and attention is drawn to Chapter 11 which deals particularly with the equality duty. The Technical Guidance also covers what public authorities should do to meet the duty. This includes steps that are legally required, as well as recommended actions. The guidance does not have statutory force but nonetheless regard should be had to it, as failure to do so without compelling reason would be of evidential value. The statutory code and the technical guidance can be found on their website.

The Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) has previously issued five guides for public authorities in England giving advice on the equality duty:

- The essential guide to the public sector equality duty
- Meeting the equality duty in policy and decision-making
- Engagement and the equality duty: A guide for public authorities
- Objectives and the equality duty. A guide for public authorities
- Equality Information and the Equality Duty: A Guide for Public Authorities

The essential guide provides an overview of the equality duty requirements including the general equality duty, the specific duties and who they apply to. It covers what public authorities should do to meet the duty including steps that are legally required, as well as recommended actions. The other four documents provide more detailed guidance on key areas and advice on good practice. Further information and resources are available at:

<https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/advice-and-guidance/public-sector-equality-duty-guidance#h1>

### **31. Equalities implications**

As this report is a review of the Council’s Single Equality Framework, which includes an assessment of progress against the Council’s five equality objectives, the equality implications are set out in the main body of the report.

### **32. Climate change and environmental implications**

The framing of one of the Council’s five equality objectives acknowledges the importance of resident empowerment. Empowering residents to make decisions that promote social responsibility will make an important contribution to ongoing efforts to tackle climate change. Addressing this issue requires a concerted and determined effort from all sections of society.

### **33. Crime and disorder implications**

There are no direct crime and disorder implications but the Council will work closely with the Police to respond to any hate crime that occurs against refugees and migrants in the borough.

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### **34. Health and wellbeing implications**

The health and wellbeing implications are contained in the main body of this report.

### **35. Background papers**

[Single Equality Framework 2020-24](#). The Framework can be accessed via the Council's website.

Learning from the Lewisham COVID-19 Response Hub, Goldsmiths University, December 2020

Lewisham's Corporate Equality Policy 2022-24

### **36. Report author(s) and contact**

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Comments for and on behalf of the Executive Director for Corporate Resources

Peter Allery – Financial Implications

Jeremy Chambers – Legal Implications

### **37. Appendices**

- A. Safer Stronger Communities In-depth Review: How Lewisham's Embeds Equalities Across its Service Provision (*report*)
- B. Corporate Equalities Board Terms of Reference
- C. Lewisham Council EDI Assessment Interim Report
- C1. Appendix 1 to Lewisham Council EDI Assessment Interim Report – Benchmarking Matrix
- D. Draft Response to the recommendations of the Disabled People's Commission Report

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