



## Safer, Stronger Communities Select Committee

### Single Equality Framework 2020-24

**Date:** 04 March 2020

**Key decision:** No

**Class:** Part 1

**Ward(s) affected:** All

**Contributors:** Interim Chief Finance Officer

### Outline and recommendations

The purpose of this report is to present the Council's draft equality objectives and assurance process, which are set within the Single Equality Framework 2020-24. In particular the report:

- Presents the draft equality objectives for the next four years (a requirement of the Equality Act 2010 [Specific Duties] 2011); and
- Presents the draft assurance framework within which the draft equality objectives sit.

The Safer, Stronger Communities Select Committee is invited to:

- Note the draft equality objectives set out in paragraph 14 and in the attached Appendix; and
- Note and consider the draft assurance framework, which is attached to this report as a supplementary Appendix.

## Timeline of engagement and decision-making

**November 2019** – presentations and facilitation of ‘pressures and issues’ discussion at Executive Management Team.

**November 2019 – January 2020** – engagement activity with voluntary and community stakeholders.

**January 2020** – presentation to the Corporate Equalities Board and Executive Management Committee

**January 2020** – presentation of draft Single Equality Framework at Mayor and Cabinet Briefing.

**March 2020** – presentation of draft Single Equality Framework at Safer Stronger Communities Select Committee.

## Summary

1. This report presents the draft equality objectives and assurance process underpinning the the Single Equality Framework 2020-24. The Single Equality Framework replaces the Comprehensive Equalities Scheme 2016-20, which comes to the end of its life in March 2020.

## Recommendations

2. Safer, Stronger Communities Select Committee is recommended to:
  - i) Note the draft equality objectives set out in paragraph 14 and in the attached Appendix; and
  - ii) Note and consider the draft assurance framework, which is attached to this report as a supplementary Appendix.

## Policy context

3. Promoting equality, by tackling inequality, sits at the heart of the Council’s public welfare role. The performance of this role is framed within the Council’s Corporate Strategy 2018-22 and given specific expression through the seven Corporate Strategy priorities as follows:
  - Open Lewisham – Lewisham is a welcoming place of safety for all where we celebrate the diversity that strengthens us.

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- Tackling the housing crisis - everyone has a decent home that is secure and affordable.
  - Giving children and young people the best start in life - every child has access to an outstanding and inspiring education, and is given the support they need to keep them safe, well and able to achieve their full potential.
  - Building an inclusive local economy - everyone can access high-quality job opportunities, with decent pay and security in our thriving and inclusive local economy.
  - Delivering and defending: health, social care and support - ensuring everyone receives the health, mental health, social care and support services they need.
  - Making Lewisham greener - everyone enjoys our green spaces, and benefits from a healthy environment as we work to protect and improve our local environment.
  - Building safer communities- every resident feels safe and secure living here as we work together towards a borough free from the fear of crime.
4. The Single Equality Framework 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 priorities and meeting Corporate Strategy commitments.

## Background

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.
6. The above requirements are set within the broader context of the Act and in particular the Public Sector Equality Duty 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 protected characteristic and those who do not share that characteristic
7. 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

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- Sex
  - Sexual orientation
8. The Single Equality Framework builds on and replaces the Comprehensive Equalities Scheme, which was previously used as the vehicle for the Council's equality objectives from 2012 to 2020.

## **Single Equality Framework 2020-24**

9. The Single Equality Framework is a statement of equality objectives reflecting the the Council's public welfare role in promoting the social, economic and environmental well-being of the borough. In addition, the Single Equality Framework describes the assurance mechanism within which those equality objectives sit. 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.
10. The Framework is informed by the the socio-economic context of inequality in Lewisham, builds upon existing strategic priorities and reflects the likely longer term impact of current events such as Brexit and the climate crisis.
11. The Single Equality Framework is not a strategy or a plan; rather, it is a lens through which to test and assess the process through which the Council does things and a way for it to better understand whether it is doing them in the right way. However, arrangements are being made to design an assurance framework of proxy indicators based on the broader aims of this framework. This will help to ensure that evidence of the effective application of the Framework can be tested.

### **a. equality objectives**

12. The Single Equality Framework objectives are set at an intentionally high-level and are intended to ensure that every resident regardless of their background, can recognise themselves or the experience of others in them.
13. The setting of the objectives in this way is the part of the underlying aim of equality, which is implicit in the Corporate Strategy and predicated on the idea that the most effective tool for tackling inequality is mutual understanding of the diverse life experiences and life stories that make Lewisham such a unique place as well as a willingness to treat eachother with dignity and respect.
14. The draft equality objectives for the Council's Single Equality Framework are as follows:
- Promote access to opportunities for the seldom heard
  - Tackle socio-economic inequality affecting the most disadvantaged and vulnerable in the borough
  - Improve the quality of life of residents by tackling preventable illnesses and diseases
  - Promote Lewishqam as a borough of inclusion for all
  - Promote active citizenship and social responsibility
15. The intention is that at the end of each financial year, the Safer Stronger Communities Select Committee will receive information setting out progress made to meet objectives.

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The range of information that will be presented to Committee will include some or all of the following (depending on what is available):

- Progress updates against relevant equality performance indicators
- Evaluation of equality analysis assessments that have been undertaken during the course of the year
- Case studies reflecting the successful application of the Single Equality Framework or from lessons learnt

## b. equality prisms

16. The equality prisms are a series of questions that are intended to help the Council to better understand the specific dimension of inequality that it is trying to tackle. Set out below is the list of equality prisms that have been developed to support this Framework:

- Has consideration been given to the 'due regard' duty?
- Is disproportionality a factor?
- Is intersectionality a factor?
- Is unconscious bias a factor?
- Is unfairness a factor?
- Is marginalisation a factor?

17. The equality prisms are not an exhaustive list of questions, but rather a guide to the dimensions of inequality that could be of material significance in the policy formulation, strategic development, service re-design, financial planning, service commissioning and other areas of the Council's business system.

## c. data digest

18. The Single Equality Framework will be supplemented by a data digest that will be updated annually. The data digest will provide a basic equality profile of the borough's residents - viewed through the prism of Equality Act protected characteristics and other dimensions such as socio-economics.

19. The intention is that the data digest will be used as a starting point to help those who are utilising the Framework to better understand different dimensions of inequality. It is not intended to be a comprehensive compendium of equalities data, as it is acknowledged that a much broader suite of data is collected by and available to Council services and partner agencies on an ongoing basis.

## Roll out and engagement

20. It is recognised that the successful application of the Single Equality Framework will rely on effective engagement with the organisation. As part of this, the following activities will be initiated over the next 12 months:

- Briefings for Members
- Workshops for staff
- Targeted one to ones with service leads

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- Regular briefings for service and directorate management teams
- Publicity and promotion

## **Review of the corporate equality policy and member-led review**

21. The Single Equality Framework is part of wider review of the Council's approach to equality which includes the Safer, Stronger Communities Select Committee's in-depth review of equality and an ongoing corporate review of the Council's corporate equality policy.
22. As part of this, the corporate equality policy review, which commenced in January 2020 is being intentionally 'slow-walked' to ensure that it aligns with the publication of the Committee's in-depth review recommendations.

## **Financial implications**

23. There are no direct financial implications from noting the contents of this report.

## **Legal implications**

24. The Equality Act 2010 (the Act) introduced a new public sector equality duty (the equality duty or the duty). It covers the following nine protected characteristics: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.
25. In summary, the council must, in the exercise of its function, have due regard to the need to:
  - a) eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act;
  - b) advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not;
  - c) Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.
26. The duty continues to be a "have regard duty", and the weight to be attached to it is a matter for the decision maker, bearing in mind the issues of relevance and proportionality. It is not an absolute requirement to eliminate unlawful discrimination, advance equality of opportunity or foster good relations.
27. 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 at:

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## Equalities implications

28. The Single Equality Framework 2020-24 sets out the Council's equality objectives for the next four years and through the assurance framework, within which the objectives sit, describes how the Council will further assure its business system. In particular the Single Equality Framework will help the Council to:

- More clearly demonstrate the equality implications and impact of Council decisions
- Increase the assurance of democratic decision-making and management action
- Better understand and mitigate the risks that might arise from decisions made and actions that can be taken to mitigate those risks
- Better evidence the contribution that the Council is making to tackling inequality and promoting equality and fairness

## Climate change and environmental implications

29. This report proposes: 'promote active citizenship and social responsibility' as one of the Council's draft equality objectives for the next four years. As part of the development of the above-mentioned objective it is recognised that active citizenship and social responsibility make a significant contribution towards tackling climate change and by so doing, will help to mitigate the impact of actions taken by individuals and entities that could have a negative effect on the life chances and quality of life of current and future generations.

## Crime and disorder implications

30. This report proposes: 'promote Lewisham as borough of inclusion for all' as one of the Council's draft equality objectives for the next four years. As part of the development of the above-mentioned objective it is recognised that tackling crime and particularly hate crime make a significant contribution to perceptions of public safety.

## Health and wellbeing implications

31. This report proposes: 'improve the quality of life of residents by tackling preventable illnesses and diseases' as one of the Council's draft equality objectives for the next four years. As part of the development of the above-mentioned objective it is recognised that tackling preventable illnesses will improve the health of the population and contribute to both increased life expectancy and improved life experience. This in turn will have practical benefits for Lewisham residents including greater sense of wellbeing, increased independence, choice and access.

## Background papers

32. The following background documents have shaped and informed the development of this report:

- Lewisham's Corporate Strategy 2018-22
- Draft Single Equality Framework 2020-24
- Local Democracy Review

## Glossary

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Term	Definition
Due regard	The Public Sector Equality Duty of the Equality Act 2010, sets out that in the discharge of their duties, public bodies must have due regard to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination, foster good relations and promote opportunities for advancement for and between protected characteristics.
Disproportionality	The ratio between the percentages of persons in a particular racial or ethnic group experiencing an event (eg: imprisonment, school exclusions) compared to the percentage of the same racial or ethnic group in the overall population.
Intersectionality	The interconnected nature of social categorisations such as race, class, and gender as they apply to a given individual or group and the extent to which these connections result in an overlapping and interdependent systems of discrimination or disadvantage.
Marginalisation	A form of social exclusion whereby people or communities are relegated to the fringe of the communities within which they live.
Unconscious bias	Unconscious biases are social stereotypes about certain groups of people that individuals form outside their own conscious awareness.

## Report author and contact

33. If there are any queries about this report then please contact Paul Aladenika (Service Group Manager, Policy Development) on x47148 or email [paul.aladenika@lewisham.gov.uk](mailto:paul.aladenika@lewisham.gov.uk)

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