

BACKGROUND TO THE COUNCIL'S EQUALITIES INITIATIVES

Background

1. Southwark Council has a long history of equality, diversity, social inclusion, community cohesion and community engagement work with communities of interest since the 1990s. The council had an Equality, Diversity and Cohesion policy in 1999, reviewed and further developed in 2003. Over many years the council, has prioritised tackling inequalities within all of its policies and in 2010 became a beacon authority for Community Cohesion. Equalities work was initially led by a corporate Social Inclusion Division that included equalities and community involvement and development teams, then by Corporate Strategy, and more recently by the Communities Division and Place and Wellbeing Department.
2. From 2002 to 2008, the council developed successive Equality and Human Rights Schemes and alongside these Corporate Equality Action Plans. A Southwark Approach to Equality was produced in 2011 and again revised in 2014. This replaced the Equality Schemes and prioritised a mainstreaming approach to equalities and inclusion work across the authority.
3. In 2004, following a complaint of institutionalised racism in the Planning Department, Lord Herman Ouseley undertook an independent review of the Council's Equality and Diversity Framework, related policies and procedures. This made a number of recommendations, the implementation of were led from 2005 by the Chief Executive and a Chief Officer's sub-group. The recommendations included:
 - A scrutiny review by the Audit Committee of the Council's equality framework and work in 2006.
 - Improving the availability and use of equality and diversity monitoring data.
 - Integral importance of data, especially service user data/feedback data for effective equality impact assessment
 - Establishing better processes for community consultation and engagement, especially in major regeneration areas.
 - Equality and Diversity policy implementation.

Current Approach

4. The current Council Approach to Equality makes seven key promises and these are:
 - **Approach 1 - Making equality and human rights part of everything we do and creating opportunities for local people and business** – an integrated and mainstreamed approach with equality and human rights as part of everything we do.
 - **Approach 2 – Carrying out equality analysis to generate insight and understand the effects of decisions on different groups** – considering if there are any unintended consequences for some groups and if the policy or service change will be fully effective for all target groups.
 - **Approach 3 – Setting equality Objectives as part of normal business planning processes** - equality objectives set through the council plan and departmental business plans so that we can be held to account on our progress.
 - **Approach 4 – Engaging with the community** - ensuring that we engage with the community through a wide range of channels. This included the commissioning of a community organisation, Forum for Equality and Human Rights in Southwark (FEHRS) to act as a 'critical friend', to challenge the council and help us to ensure that our policies are as fair as possible.

- **Approach 5 – Being transparent and accessible, publishing equality and other information in an open, transparent and easily accessible way** – including data on our staff and our service users and an annual workforce report.
 - **Approach 6 – Embedding into employment and training in the workforce** - developing and implementing strategies that ensure equal access to recruitment, training, career development, promotion and retention and to fair treatment in the application of the disciplinary procedure.
 - **Approach 7 - Embedding equality and human rights considerations into our policies on commissioning and procurement** - ensuring all functions carried out on behalf of the council (including by private bodies or voluntary organisations) show due regard to the council's obligations under the public sector Equality Duty.
5. The approach also sets out that every member and officer within the council has a role to play in delivering on this approach and sets out the following specific responsibilities:
- **Cabinet member with responsibility for equality** - to put in place and champion a framework for the council to meet its equality ambitions and duties.
 - **Council's Cabinet** - to consider equality implications in its decision-making and to advance equality outcomes in cabinet members' respective portfolio areas.
 - **Scrutiny function** - to ensure appropriate checks and balance within the context of delivering the approach.
 - **All elected members** - to play a community leadership role in promoting equality and challenging discrimination.
 - **Corporate Management Team** - to provide strategic leadership for the organisation in delivering on the equality and human rights approach across the council and delivery within specific areas of responsibility.
 - **Senior managers** - to promote awareness of this approach and for supporting learning and development opportunities to enable departments, services and business units and staff to support the implementation of this approach. Through business planning, all managers are responsible for developing and delivering on relevant equality objectives and in undertaking equality analysis as part of business planning and considering this when developing new policies, strategies or plans or making decisions about changes to services.
 - **Individual staff** - to comply with the requirements of the approach and apply the good practice learnt in their training and development opportunities.
6. In 2016 alongside the Equality Approach the council's cabinet agreed a diversity standard. This document was intended to complement the 2014 Approach to Equality. This was also intended to be a shared commitment between the council and other organisations in the borough to making Southwark a place that promotes equality and welcomes and values the borough's rich diversity.

Southwark Equality Framework

7. We recognise that the current Approach is not working as effectively as it could. The proposed Southwark Framework for Equality will help to strengthen this including a revisiting of the Leadership and Organisational responsibilities and oversight.
8. Prior to Covid and the Southwark Stands Together work a commitment was made by the Cabinet lead to refreshing the approach to equality and replacing the Southwark Diversity Standard. The intention was to agree a new overarching Equality Framework for the council and a new Equality Diversity and Cohesion Charter to replace the existing Diversity Standard that clearly set out the council's commitments following a review conducted in 2019. This work was delayed to ensure that it could take on board and

connect with the learning from Covid-19 and Southwark Stands Together and the two elements will now be integrated into one document

9. The Equality Framework is based on the Equality Framework for Local Government (EFLG) which is a self-assessment framework that contains key indicators drawn and built upon a body of good practice across a range of local authorities and also legislative requirements. The aim is to build upon the EFLG and develop a bespoke one to meet needs of Southwark. This will include integrating the PSED, Fairer Future For all principles and values, SST and key policy commitments. The Southwark Equality Framework will provide the Equality and Diversity policy and strategic framework for the Council. It also contains within it principles which enable on-going development, performance and improvement.
10. The Southwark Equality Framework is intended to involve six core areas:
 - Leadership and Organisational Commitment
 - Knowing your communities and equality mapping
 - Neighbourhoods, Place shaping and Partnerships
 - Responsive, accessible and appropriate services and customer care
 - A skilled, representative and diverse workforce
 - Commissioning, procurement and equality
11. The Southwark Equality Framework will also clearly state levels of responsibility for development and implementation of Council's equality and diversity commitments and approach. The Southwark Equality Framework will, once embedded, hopefully enable more consistent and systematic development and implementation of the Council's equality and diversity commitments and overall approach. The Southwark Equality Framework will be developed in the first half of 2021.
 - A full review of the process of developing the equalities analysis for budget decision making will take place as part of the implementation of the Equality Framework.
12. We have already begun to implement change e.g the new Borough Plan incorporates clear equality objectives. Tackling Inequalities runs throughout. These will all now be performance managed and supports the Council to meet its obligations under the PSED and the way in which we have approached the equalities analysis for the budget 2021 – 22 demonstrates a commitment to strengthening our approach to equalities.
13. The Diversity Standard review in 2019 received feedback from FEHRS and the Equalities and Human Rights Panel that there is a need for a clearer statement of Council equality, diversity and cohesion vision and commitments to promoting equality, inclusion, diversity, justice and fairness and to tackling inequality and disadvantage. This will be incorporated into the Southwark Equality Framework.
14. This is also in part addressed by the diversity, inclusion and cohesion council assembly motion from July 2019, and the SST pledges we are inviting partners to sign.

Community Impact and Equality Analysis

15. As part of the key tools for the implementation and mainstreaming of equalities in the organisation, a revised Equality Impact and Needs Analysis (EINA) guidance and template will be produced. This will be produced as part of the implementation work of the Southwark Framework for Equality. Key to this work will also be the integration of EINA process within all key decision making and planning processes of the Council.
16. Currently all are expected to undertake the following:

Community Impact/Equality Analysis statements should *summarise* the findings of the equality analysis that has been undertaken to consider how we meet diverse needs and any potential positive or negative impacts on the protected characteristic groups and the ways in which any adverse impacts of the decision can be mitigated.

It is important to consider how the duty helps us to positively promote equality and promote good community relations in all areas relevant to the duty; how the duty links with the Council's Fairer Future For All principles. It is a positive duty to consider how we can promote equality in all areas relevant to the duty and is not just about preventing unlawful discrimination.

A Community Impact/Equality Analysis statement should point Members to the relevant parts of the analysis which helps to inform the decision/area at hand.

17. The PSED requires public bodies to consider the potential consequences of decisions for meeting the needs of people who share protected characteristics and to take these into account before a decision is finalised. It does not prevent public bodies from making decisions. It requires public bodies to consider equality impacts as part of weighing up all considerations in the council's decision making processes. In addition, the Council has its own commitments made in the Borough Plan, which include equality and diversity objectives and actions. EINAs are thus an opportunity to always consider how we can improve and promote equality in all that we do wherever possible.

COVID-19 and an accelerated focus on tackling racism, injustice and inequalities

18. Southwark's response to COVID-19 has already demonstrated a bold new approach to delivering services, with organisations and volunteers working together to meet the complex and multifaceted challenges our communities face together. We know too however, that although we are one borough, we have not all been equally affected by COVID-19. As the impact of the virus has become better understood, it is evident that COVID-19 has shone a light on wider inequalities in our society as a whole.
19. Further, the death of George Floyd in the US and the proper revulsion which has been felt around the world has once again reminded us all of the need to constantly challenge ourselves to tackle racism, injustice and inequality, and stand together with our Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) communities to deliver positive change.
20. In June 2020 the council therefore launched, a new programme, called Southwark Stands Together (SST) to respond to the inequalities exposed by COVID-19 and other recent events, and articulated by the Black Lives Matter protests. SST is a long-term programme of positive action, education and initiatives for the council to be actively anti-

racist and work in solidarity with Southwark's communities and the council's staff to tackle racism, injustice and inequality.

21. In September 2020, a report was presented to Cabinet setting out what the community told us over the summer of their experience of racism, racial inequalities and injustice. In reviewing the findings the cabinet agreed a set of recommendations grouped by specific 'work streams' of the actions we can do together to build on positive action to date and to bring about change.
22. Further, in October 2020, the Cabinet under new leadership reaffirmed their commitment to SST. In doing so, the Cabinet agreed a new commitment to work to ensure the top of the council's workforce is representative of the ethnic diversity of the local working age population by 2030. The Cabinet requested that work be undertaken, in consultation with staff, unions and the local community, to put in place the actions to achieve this ambition as well as short and long term success measures.
23. The Cabinet also agreed the following principles for incorporation into the council's values and refreshed Council Plan; that we will as a Council
 - a. Always work to make Southwark more equal and just
 - b. Stand against all forms of discrimination and racism
24. As part of the work to support teams address the unequal impact of COVID on our communities the staff working in the division are part of the comms and engagement team for the prevention pillar of the test and trace operational plan. In particular we have been working closely with different communities to support messages to reach different communities about COVID prevention and vaccination. This has included our various Faith communities, BME communities, and people living on our estates.

Communities' contribution to Southwark Stands Together

25. In addition to the work on the Southwark equalities framework we have also prioritised work on two of the 5 commitments communities made as part of Southwark Stands Together.
 - Work with partners to increase representation of Black, Asian and minority ethnic communities on Southwark boards and in other community leadership positions for example on Tenants and Residents Associations committees
 - Review our grant making and commissioning processes to remove any barriers to equal access to funding and delivery opportunities.
26. We are currently anticipating both pieces of work will be completed by July 2021. We have also begun discussions on how we will deliver the commitment to work with resident involvement services to open up access to community spaces to a wider range of organisations.

Communities work to promote inclusion

27. We have active work streams currently supporting a number of groups
 - We support the work of the Forum for Equalities and Human Rights

- We work closely with Faith organisations meeting regularly and co delivering two conferences a year and are currently working on two projects one on domestic abuse, the other on mental well being.
- We are working to develop a women's network for the borough
- Working with our Latin American organisations.
- We are supporting the LBGTQ+ network especially engagement on the delivery of a new space for the community.
- Working to develop a youth parliament as part of the delivery of the review of youth services.

28. New Work for the department on inclusion includes

- work on EU resettlement
- encouraging take up of Windrush compensation
- Development of a forum for the Borough of Sanctuary

29. Work on being Age friendly will resume when lockdown ends.

Council Plan data and accountability for addressing inequality

30. Within the new council plan to ensure that there is oversight of progress on addressing racism and structural inequality there a number of new commitments to report on:

- Number of Black, Asian, Minority Ethnic community engagements with our online consultations
- Number of Black, Asian, Minority Ethnic community organisations supported through our grant making
- Number of Black, Asian, Minority Ethnic community members of boards and committees in VCS and TRA organisations supported by us.