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| <b>Item No.</b><br>17.             | <b>Classification:</b><br>Open | <b>Date:</b><br>14 September 2021                                                                                                      | <b>Meeting Name:</b><br>Cabinet |
| <b>Report title:</b>               |                                | Response to the Education and Local Economy Scrutiny Commission: Review of Approach to Equality And Adoption of The Equality Framework |                                 |
| <b>Ward(s) or groups affected:</b> |                                | All                                                                                                                                    |                                 |
| <b>Cabinet Member:</b>             |                                | Councillor Alice Macdonald, Equalities, Neighbourhoods and Leisure                                                                     |                                 |

## **FOREWORD - COUNCILLOR ALICE MACDONALD, CABINET MEMBER FOR EQUALITIES, NEIGHBOURHOODS AND LEISURE**

I'd like to thank Councillor Babudu and the members of the education and local economy scrutiny commission for their report and recommendations. Embedding equalities into everything we do is a huge priority for the council and must be the responsibility of everyone.

I welcome the recommendations put forward by the commission. Many of these will be taken forward through the new equalities framework agreed by cabinet in July from improving equalities data to improving transparency around the assessment of our equalities impact. I also thank Cllr Babudu for his input into the equalities framework – a specific recommendation made by the commission.

This report also references the work carried out under the Southwark Stands Together programme to tackle racism and the recently published annual report. Whilst we have made progress there still remains a huge amount to do and we are committed to continuing to work with communities across Southwark to tackle racism and discrimination in all its forms.

I look forward to continue to engage with the commission to ensure continued scrutiny of our work to advance equalities.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. That cabinet notes the recommendations made by the education and local economy scrutiny commission and agrees the response set out in this report.
2. That officers act upon the response agreed by cabinet as part of the implementation of the Southwark Equality Framework.

## BACKGROUND INFORMATION

3. The overview and scrutiny committee delegated the matter of Equalities to the education and local economy scrutiny commission for the 2020-21 municipal year.
4. The education and local economy scrutiny commission interviewed the cabinet member for communities, equalities and neighbourhoods at its meeting on the 22 February 2021 in respect of equalities issues and sought an overview from the cabinet member on the main council equalities initiatives, plans for better understanding racial disparities in the Council and beyond and how the council is addressing the many equalities related issues arising due to the Covid-19 pandemic.
5. A detailed response was provided by the cabinet member in advance of the meeting. The cabinet member also responded to questions at the commission meeting.
6. At the subsequent meeting of the commission, the education and local economy scrutiny commission drafted recommendations arising from the information and responses provided by the cabinet member.
7. The commission's recommendations were reported to cabinet in June 2021 and are set out below.
8. On 13 July 2021 cabinet agreed the Southwark Equality Framework and an action plan for implementing it.
9. The framework:
  - Sets out eight equalities objectives, which demonstrate specific areas where we are tackling inequality and promoting equality which will enable our communities to hold us better to account.
  - Strengthens our equality governance to enable effective leadership and organisational wide sharing of good practice and consistency. This includes the establishment of a new equalities advisory group, an internal senior level officer-working group and a commitment to strengthening external networks.
  - Reaffirms our commitment to put communities at the heart of all our decision making ensuring that equality analysis is informing all of our work and that the voices of everyone including the most vulnerable and marginalised are heard.
  - Sets out a clear pathway to enable us to strengthen our data, evidence and research on inequalities and the needs of our communities so we are making the best decisions with the best information and delivering appropriate and relevant services able to meet the diverse needs of local communities.

- Develops a more robust process for equality impact and needs analysis, equality proofing procurement and commissioning to find out about and respond to the needs of diverse service users so our services work for our communities. This will include undertaking a full 360 equality audit which will be scrutinised by elected members, staff and community/voluntary sector stakeholders.
10. At the same meeting cabinet also agreed the annual report on Southwark Stands Together (SST). SST was set up in July 2020 in the midst of the first wave of the COVID-19 pandemic and in response to the murder of George Floyd in Minneapolis and the Black Lives Matter movement. SST is our local call to unity, support and action. It is about how we take positive action as a council to work with Southwark's communities and the council's staff to tackle racism, injustice and inequality.
  11. The annual report sets out progress and achievement of the SST over the last year, including good practice and learning from the programme and next steps planning.
  12. In noting the annual report cabinet considered this in tandem with the Southwark equality framework using it as an opportunity to assess progress against borough plan commitments and SST priority recommendations.
  13. The SST annual report set out the listening and learning that we have undertaken over the past year to inform how we remodel how we engage with communities and improve our approach in reporting back on progress on our work to tackle and address inequalities. Following agreement of this report, alongside the equality framework (elsewhere on the agenda), officers are taking forward next steps to develop a plan for regular reporting to the community on work to tackle inequalities. This includes building on good practice underway such as progress in collecting more lived experience examples across the council, for example through the health theme where we have reached out through our Community Health Ambassadors. Our 'Breaking the Glass Ceiling' project will also hear and learn more about the lived experience of our community in Peckham Square.

## **KEY ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION**

14. Set out below are the recommendations of the education and local economy scrutiny commission in respect of equalities issues together with a proposed response. As noted above the work of the Scrutiny Commission informed the development of the Southwark Equality Framework alongside input from other stakeholders. The commission will continue to play an active part as the Framework is delivered.

### **Recommendation 1 - Data**

15. The Commission supports the council's intention to consolidate all equalities data and recommends that it is ultimately provided to the public in an accessible fashion (i.e. as open data).

### **Proposed Response**

16. This recommendation is agreed and included in the Action Plan that commits the council to developing a communications plan to update our information on equality, diversity and inclusion including as an initial stage ensuring data on our population is accessible and shared on our website. Our Southwark Stands Together programme also commits us to sharing data with community and voluntary sector partners. The Action Plan commits to producing the communications plan by the end of September 2021.
17. The Framework and Action Plan also includes conducting a council wide mapping of equality data by December 2021.
18. We will work with our voluntary and community sector partners on developing our knowledge and understanding of areas where data is not readily available, tapping into their knowledge or particular protected characteristics or communities.
19. Southwark Stands Together commits us to collecting ethnicity data for all people using council services and we have set a target to achieve 70% completion (the minimum threshold for reporting and interpretation of self-declared diversity information advised by the Equalities and Human Rights Commission) by 2022-23. By capturing more ethnicity data, we can make sure that we are better able to identify problems and target services based on people's needs. Capturing more ethnicity data will also help us to do more to make sure that everyone in our community has equal access to services and will help to expose and tackle any inequalities that may exist in the quality of services received.

### **Recommendation 2 - Reporting**

20. The Commission supports the council's intention to conduct a benchmarking exercise comparing the council's proposed equalities framework model to that of other boroughs.

### **Proposed Response**

21. An initial benchmarking exercise was conducted as part of the production of the Framework and informed its development.
22. The Equality Audit will also use the Equality Framework for Local Government benchmark of good practice for local government as a self-assessment framework and tool to assess what currently LBS has in

place, areas of good practice and identify further gaps to address these.

### **Recommendation 3 - Reporting**

23. The Commission recommends the draft equalities framework is submitted to the Education and Local Economy Commission for comment once it is substantially drafted.

### **Proposed Response**

24. Comments were received and incorporated in the final version of the Framework.

### **Recommendation 4 - Reporting**

25. The Commission supports the council's intention to conduct an equalities audit once the equalities framework is complete and recommends that the Council develops a transparent mechanism for assessing progress annually for performance across the equalities framework, which incorporates clear metrics.

### **Proposed Response**

26. The Framework and action plan includes implementation of the equality audit. The audit will consist of an initial self-assessment completed in December 2021 with a 360 degree appraisal completed in June 2022 including external input.
27. The Framework strengthens our approach in four key ways:
- Embedding it into the council's performance management framework – setting out clear equality objectives against which progress can be measured
  - Establishing a member led equality advisory group that also includes external representation to oversee implementation
  - Strengthening officer governance through a senior level officer group to provide officer oversight
  - Strengthened external networks for scrutiny, consultation and engagement forming the core of a multiagency partnership that will meet annually to review an annual partnership equality report and input to the next year.
28. The equality framework commits us to annual reporting on progress to the community and we will deliver an annual conference with the community, where we will report back on delivery, showcase success and challenge ourselves and each other on where we need to go further together in delivering our commitments.

## **Recommendation 5 - Capacity-building and capacity-identifying**

29. Building on existing work as part of the Southwark Stands Together initiative, the Commission recommends the Council requires departments to look at data currently held on stakeholder groups and interested parties that are regularly consulted with – including but not limited to statutory consultees –as part of an “Equal Voices” audit. Where there are gaps in representation, across all the protected characteristics, this should be recorded and a plan developed to increase participation. Particular attention should be paid to Black, Asian and minority ethnic participation, along with disability status, sex and age

### **Proposed Response**

30. The Southwark Equality Framework and Action Plan includes conducting a council wide mapping of equality data by December 2021.
31. In terms of proactive work in this area Southwark Stands Together commits us to strengthening how we engage, working in partnership with a range of organisations including the Consultation Institute. We will be working on making better use of Equality Impact and Needs Analysis throughout engagement processes and developing a more consistent approach to data collection to ensure our consultation and engagement extends its reach. Through this work there has already been progress for example collecting data on over 1,000 businesses that identify as minority ethnic so we can involve and consult with them and in producing a toolkit with the community to broaden the reach of our engagement and the establishment of A Culture, Health and Wellbeing Partnership to capture diverse and seldom heard voices.

## **Recommendation 6 - Capacity-building and capacity-identifying**

32. The Commission recommends that the Cabinet member for Equalities establishes closer links with business improvement districts (BIDs) and business groups in Southwark to help strengthen engagement and connection between business and residential communities, and improve coordination and expertise sharing on equalities matters.

### **Proposed Response**

33. Agreed the Cabinet member has met representatives of the Business Improvement Districts. The Cabinet Member for Jobs, Business and Town Centres currently has regular meetings with all Southwark BIDs every two weeks. These meetings have led to enhanced dialogue with the council on a range of issues including economic renewal, town centres and high streets and other key areas of joint interest e.g. carbon reduction and equalities issues.
34. As noted above the local economy team are working with existing community and business networks to understand and tackle whatever

barriers to collecting ethnicity data that people in our community may have. We will also explore new networks highlighted in the Equinox review of grants and funding to help us understand people's views. For example, we will make sure that people understand that ethnicity information is confidential and non-attributable to individuals.

35. With the leadership of the Cabinet Member for Jobs, Business and Town Centres, town centre task forces are being established to develop action plans for our town centres and high streets in partnership with a wide range of local businesses and residents groups.
36. The Local Economy Team are currently engaging with a representative sample of our communities to help design our business support services. For example, 56% of businesses responding to a survey informing the design of the business resilience support service self-identified as a minority ethnic business. This gave us a better understanding of the demographics of our business communities, their needs and the challenges they face. These findings directly informed the development of the Southwark Pioneers Fund, a £2m programme of support for businesses and entrepreneurs.
37. The Local Economy Team are also collecting data to further increase the diversity of communities with which we engage. One example of this is Equalities monitoring information collected via the covid business grants application forms that has enabled data collection on the demographics of Minority Ethnic Businesses. The council is now able to contact over 1000 businesses which identify as Black, Asian or minority ethnic-led, which significantly increases our ability to engage with these groups.

### **Community impact statement**

38. The Southwark Equality Framework replaces the Council's Approach to Equality and explains how the Council is working towards a Southwark that is tolerant, diverse and fair for all. It sets out what the public can expect from the Council, what the legislation requires of us and what the Council is committed to doing. It explains our approach to advance and promote equality of opportunity in the borough by making equality part of our day-to-day business – including how the Council will use equality analysis to generate insight and understand the effects of its decisions on different groups.
39. The Framework is a visible commitment to equality in Southwark and sets out how we will consider the impact our services, policies and decisions have on the protected characteristics (race, sex, disability, age, religion or belief, sexual orientation, pregnancy & maternity, gender reassignment and marriage & civil partnership as well as socioeconomic status) into our processes.

## **Climate Change Implications**

40. There is significant evidence of the link between climate change and inequality. While everyone is affected by climate change, the extent of that impact is not equal. As set out in the Council's Climate Change Strategy, climate change has the biggest impact on those who are poorer or have underlying health conditions. Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic residents are disproportionately affected. Social justice is central to the strategy including maximising the co-benefits of action and ensuring that climate change policy reduces inequality and promotes fairness.
41. The equality framework is one element of the council's work in tackling social inequality and injustice. The response to combat climate and tackling inequality and injustice through initiatives like the Equality Framework go hand in hand.

## **Resource implications**

42. Recommendations supported in this paper will be taken into account as part of the ongoing implementation of the Southwark Equality Framework. There are therefore no further resource implications from this paper.

## **Legal implications**

43. There are no significant legal implications arising from the recommendations in this report.

## **Financial implications**

44. There are no financial implications arising directly as a result of this report.



## BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

| Background Papers                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | Held At                                   | Contact                          |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Report of the Education and Local Economy Scrutiny Commission: Review of Approach to Equality and Adoption of the Equality Framework                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | Constitutional Team,<br>Southwark Council | Everton Roberts<br>0207 525 7221 |
| <b>Link (please copy and paste into browser):</b><br><a href="https://moderngov.southwark.gov.uk/documents/s98983/Report%20Equality%20Framework%20-%20Recommendations%20of%20Ed%20and%20Loc%20SC.pdf">https://moderngov.southwark.gov.uk/documents/s98983/Report%20Equality%20Framework%20-%20Recommendations%20of%20Ed%20and%20Loc%20SC.pdf</a>                                                                                                                                                                             |                                           |                                  |
| The Southwark Equality Framework                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | Constitutional Team,<br>Southwark Council | Everton Roberts<br>0207 525 7221 |
| <b>Links (please copy and paste into browser):</b><br><a href="https://moderngov.southwark.gov.uk/documents/s99894/Report%20Southwark%20Equality%20Framework.pdf">https://moderngov.southwark.gov.uk/documents/s99894/Report%20Southwark%20Equality%20Framework.pdf</a><br><br><a href="https://moderngov.southwark.gov.uk/documents/s99895/Appendix%201%20Southwark%20Equality%20Framework%20Final.pdf">https://moderngov.southwark.gov.uk/documents/s99895/Appendix%201%20Southwark%20Equality%20Framework%20Final.pdf</a> |                                           |                                  |
| Southwark Stands Together Annual Report                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | Constitutional Team,<br>Southwark Council | Everton Roberts<br>0207 525 7221 |
| <b>Links (please copy and paste into browser):</b><br><a href="https://moderngov.southwark.gov.uk/documents/s99892/Southwark%20Stands%20Together%20Annual%20report.pdf">https://moderngov.southwark.gov.uk/documents/s99892/Southwark%20Stands%20Together%20Annual%20report.pdf</a><br><br><a href="https://moderngov.southwark.gov.uk/documents/s99893/Appendix%201%20Annual%20report.pdf">https://moderngov.southwark.gov.uk/documents/s99893/Appendix%201%20Annual%20report.pdf</a>                                       |                                           |                                  |

## AUDIT TRAIL

|                                                                         |                                                                                                          |                          |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| <b>Cabinet Member</b>                                                   | Councillor Alice Macdonald, Equalities, Neighbourhoods and Leisure                                       |                          |
| <b>Lead Officer</b>                                                     | Caroline Bruce, Strategic Director of Environment & Leisure<br>Stephen Douglass, Director of Communities |                          |
| <b>Report Author</b>                                                    | Stephen Douglass, Director of Communities                                                                |                          |
| <b>Version</b>                                                          | Final                                                                                                    |                          |
| <b>Dated</b>                                                            | 2 September 2021                                                                                         |                          |
| <b>Key Decision?</b>                                                    | No                                                                                                       |                          |
| <b>CONSULTATION WITH OTHER OFFICERS / DIRECTORATES / CABINET MEMBER</b> |                                                                                                          |                          |
| <b>Officer Title</b>                                                    | <b>Comments Sought</b>                                                                                   | <b>Comments Included</b> |
| Director of Law and Democracy                                           | No                                                                                                       | No                       |
| Strategic Director of Finance and Governance                            | No                                                                                                       | No                       |
| <b>Cabinet Member</b>                                                   | Yes                                                                                                      | Yes                      |
| <b>Date final report sent to Constitutional Team</b>                    |                                                                                                          | 2 September 2021         |