

Title of Report	Equality Plan - Consultation Draft	
Key Decision No	CED S226	
For Consideration By	Cabinet	
Meeting Date	24th July 2023	
Cabinet Member	Cllr Carole Williams	
Classification	Open	
Ward(s) Affected	All	
Key Decision & Reason	Yes	Significant in terms of its effects on communities living or working in an area comprising two or more wards
Implementation Date if Not Called In	2nd August 2023	
Group Director	Ian Williams, Acting Chief Executive	

1. **Cabinet Member's introduction**

- 1.1. In 2022, Hackney Council adopted a new Strategic Plan. This presents the Council's ambitions for the next four years. It also describes the key challenges. The plan sets out how we will respond, working with residents and partners. The plan includes commitments for how the Council maximises its own resources - jobs, contracts, and making best use of our spaces and assets.
- 1.2. We are in one of the most difficult times in post war memory, with deep inequalities in society, and in our borough. The UK faces the most severe cost-of-living crisis in 40 years. Hackney residents are really struggling with this latest crisis. This comes after over a decade of austerity from national government cuts and it comes after the pandemic.
- 1.3. This means that demand for support is increasing. Council budgets cannot keep up with the level of demand. We expect this situation to become even worse and we expect government cuts over the next few years.
- 1.4. This is a very challenging context. An equality plan will help focus on achieving fair outcomes for Hackney residents. We will have to make very difficult decisions about budgets and services over the next few years. The

equality plan will help us understand the context for these decisions. It will help us to consider what we can do, if anything, to mitigate these actions.

- 1.5. This is an early draft of the plan. It is a summary version. It will now be developed further. We will consult and engage with residents, staff and partners between now and the end of October. The final version of the plan will be more detailed. It will be presented to Full Council for adoption in November 2023.
- 1.6. The final plan will update our understanding of needs and what is driving inequality. We will identify priority actions. We will focus on those who face unfair and unequal outcomes. We will set out how we tackle poverty and help people to thrive. We will describe the actions we take to celebrate, value and serve communities.
- 1.7. Discrimination can be deeply embedded into our processes and cultures. This means that we keep failing residents and we fail to tackle inequality. Not only is this unfair, it is a waste of resources and leads to wider problems as inequality is bad for everyone. This is why the plan is clear that we need to change as an institution to better meet residents' needs. The plan also commits to doing more to embed equality into everyday service design. This means that we need to change our leadership and management culture. We will also take action so that the Council workforce reflects the diversity of Hackney communities. This needs to be at all levels. We want this change to happen across the system that residents come into contact with. So this is not just about the Council. It is about statutory partners, the voluntary and community sector, local businesses and employers. It is about representative and participatory structures and boards and committees.
- 1.8. There is good practice in progress across the system. We will lead by example and bring partners together to support change.
- 1.9. Some residents feel that Council communication does not resonate with their experience of life in the borough. They feel we are too defensive when presented with new ideas or challenges. Although trust in the Council is high for the whole population, it is much lower for Black and Global majority residents and social housing tenants.
- 1.10. In response, we need to develop a culture that is comfortable with hearing uncomfortable truths. We need to be more open and confident about working with residents to be part of the solutions. We must pay attention to residents who we are least likely to hear. We have to remain agile and adaptive to meeting new needs that we identify through this dialogue.
- 1.11. In the last Equality Scheme, we committed to developing a new LGBTQIA plan. In response, we have developed the LGBTQIA strategic framework which is in these papers.

- 1.12. Over the last five years, Hackney has taken action to tackle racial inequality. We have started to identify and take action that impacts at an individual, community, system and societal level. In July 2020, the Council adopted a motion to work towards being an anti-racist organisation. This helped strengthen the focus and commitment to anti-racism. To have an impact, we need to make sure everyone in this system is starting from the same understanding of what racism is and what anti-racism is. This way, we can make sure that we are progressing the right actions. This is the best way to sustain the work in the long term. It avoids us repeating patterns of bias and discrimination that are deeply embedded in society.
- 1.13. This was brought home last March when a report was published into the strip-search of a Black teenage girl, by police officers. This happened in a Hackney secondary school. The report found that racism and 'adultification bias' were likely factors in how this happened. Adultification bias is when Black children are treated more harshly than their white peers. The Council had already started work to examine how racism in systems was leading to unfair treatment and outcomes. This unfortunately meant that we knew that this was an appalling, but not an isolated example. We also knew this type of treatment could happen in any organisation, not just the organisations where this took place. It has redoubled our commitment to continue to work across the system to tackle institutional racism. Earlier this year we received a progress update one year on from this review. The review found that progress had been made, but it is not yet resulting in an improved experience for residents. There are a further set of recommendations to consider.
- 1.14. To do justice to the child affected and the issues raised in the review, it is now time to ensure that the original review and the new recommendations are fully integrated into one anti-racism action. We have now developed the anti-racism action plan which is in these papers.
- 1.15. We are inviting comments and engagement on the LGBTQIA Strategic Framework and Anti-Racism Action Plan, as well as the Equality Plan.
- 1.16. Over the last few years, the Council has adopted motions that champion the needs and rights of groups. This Equality Plan considers how we can include these motions. The motions cover:
- supporting trans rights
 - considering the impact of perimenopause and menopause
 - understanding the needs of single parents
 - tackling islamophobia and anti-semitism
 - becoming age friendly and dementia friendly
 - being committed to the "right to food."
- 1.17. *How we meet our legal duties*

The Equality Plan will set out how we meet our legal duties under the Equality Act. The Equality Act identifies “protected characteristics.” These are below. It is illegal to discriminate against someone because of:

- age
- disability
- gender reassignment
- marriage and civil partnership status
- being pregnant or recently pregnant
- race
- religion or belief
- sex
- sexual orientation

- 1.18. Public bodies must take action to tackle discrimination and disadvantage when it relates to a protected characteristic. We have to think about how we foster good relations between all groups. This is called “Due Regard.” Marriage and civil partnership only counts as a protected characteristic when we are thinking about discrimination.
- 1.19. Public Bodies are also expected to publish draft objectives and consult on them. This Equality Plan presents a set of draft objectives for consultation. We must also publish data about communities and workforce. This is also being updated as part of the development of this Equality Plan. This will be published along with the final document.
- 1.20. *Other groups we want to consider as part of this Equality Plan*
As well as thinking about protected characteristics, there are other groups we are considering in this Plan.
- 1.21. The original draft of the Equality Act contained a "socio-economic duty." The Duty did not become law but Hackney adopted it on a voluntary basis. This means that the Council tries to tackle inequality that we know will lead to socio-economic disadvantage. We also try to consider how someone could be more disadvantaged because of their socio-economic status. We have considered this in our plans in 2013 and again in 2018.
- 1.22. Socio-economic disadvantage could be about education, occupation, income, locality, housing or social class. There is no singular way to measure “social class.” Hackney’s approach considers income inequality and poverty, housing, skills levels and occupation. As there is no national measurement, we have to draw on academic research and qualitative insight.
- 1.23. In this new plan, we want to focus in particular on:
- 20% of households living in poverty which rises to 36% of households after housing costs are taken into account
 - 48% of children who live in poverty
 - People on low incomes in the private rented sector

- 1.24. The new plan also proposes that we consider the needs of groups who are vulnerable because of life experiences or life stages including:
- Ex Armed Forces
 - Care experienced people and care leavers
 - Carers
 - People with complex needs and long term conditions (they should also be included in the disabled group)
 - Looked after children
 - People going through perimenopause or menopause
 - Single parents
 - Refugees and people who an immigration status that makes them vulnerable
- 1.25. The draft plan seeks to address all the needs and issues described through the proposed equality objectives:
- Tackle inequality at every life stage
 - Tackle poverty and support people to thrive
 - Celebrate, value and serve diverse communities
 - Take action to develop the leadership and management culture and ensure workforce diversity at all levels

2. **Group Director's introduction**

- 2.1. In November 2022 Hackney adopted a new Strategic Plan at Cabinet and Council, Working Together for a Better Hackney. The New Strategic Plan sets out the ambitions for the Council for the next four years, as well as the challenges we face.
- 2.2. An Equality Plan is now being drafted which will help us consider these ambitions through an equality prism.
- 2.3. The New Equality Plan will replace the existing Single Equality Scheme 2018-2022.
- 2.4. To develop the plan, we have reviewed progress against the last plan, considered new needs, drivers and insights and taken account of the direction of travel for wider plans and strategies and commitments in the strategic plan and manifesto commitments.
- 2.5. In the last Equality Scheme, we committed to developing a refreshed LGBTQIA plan. In July 2020, a motion was passed to work towards being an anti-racist organisation. This helped strengthen the focus on what we need to change within institutions.
- 2.6. Both the LGBTQIA Strategic Framework and Anti-Racism Action Plan are presented in these papers, along with the Equality Plan. They are discrete

documents. In doing so, we are not diluting these documents but situating these plans in a wider frame and justification.

- 2.7. The development of our approach to LGBTQIA equality and inclusion and to anti-racism have also fundamentally informed the Equality Plan objectives. They have helped us consider what is needed to tackle inequality and eliminate discrimination and engage differently with residents.
- 2.8. Rather than present a fully worked up equality plan and consult on this, the July Cabinet paper presents a set of documents that are still at an open and developmental stage. This allows residents, partners and staff to shape them further:
 - Appendix 1: an initial set of equality objectives at summary level, describing the objectives, why they are being proposed and an outline of key actions (a designed version will be used in consultation and engagement)
 - Appendix 2: the anti-racism action plan
 - Appendix 3: the LGBTQIA framework.
- 2.9. It is a statutory duty to consult on equality objectives and then to publish final objectives. Consultation and engagement is also a way of enriching our understanding of what is driving inequality and what actions we can take to address them. We aim to explore the many strengths of our diverse communities, and ensure we're not just meeting needs but enabling communities to thrive. Through the consultation and engagement we want to be more thoughtful about how we listen to residents. We want to learn what they think about us and where they live; and how we can use what we learn to make our services better and more accessible.
- 2.10. The aim is therefore to consult and engage residents on the Draft Equality Plan during August, September and October, and to take back a final plan for agreement by Council on 29th November.
- 2.11. During this consultation and engagement phase, there will be a call for partners to get involved in developing an outcomes framework that includes a more streamlined approach to tackling key inequalities.
- 2.12. We will be commissioning a full equality needs assessment to be informed by the insight from the consultation and engagement phase.

3. **Recommendations**

3.1. To approve:

- **Appendix 1: an initial set of equality objectives at summary level, describing the objectives, why they are being proposed and an outline of key actions (a designed version will be used in consultation and engagement)**
- **Appendix 2: the anti-racism action plan**
- **Appendix 3: the LGBTQIA framework.**

4. **Reason(s) for decision**

- 4.1. In November 2022 Hackney adopted a new Strategic Plan at Cabinet and Council. An equality plan is needed to support the ambitions of the strategic plan and political priorities and consider these ambitions through an equality prism. The new Equality Plan will replace the existing Single Equality Scheme 2018-2022 and so we are at a key point of change in policy which requires consultation and engagement. It is, furthermore, a statutory duty to publish equality objectives, and consult on them. The new Plan includes a set of new issues that have, to date, generated a lot of community interest. Further engagement will help ensure our responses meet community aspiration and need. Consultation and engagement on the Equality Plan is therefore in part a legal requirement but also responds to community interest and builds on past practice.
- 4.2. The aim is to consult and engage residents on the Draft Equality Plan during August, September and October and to take back a final plan for agreement by Council on 29th November.
- 4.3. Before this begins, the Draft Equality Plan, the anti-racism action plan and the LGBTQIA framework are being presented here for approval by Cabinet as a consultation and engagement draft.

5. **Details of alternative options considered and rejected**

- 5.1. Option 1 - only do what is statutorily required and develop draft objectives and consult on these without developing the more detailed plans that flow from these objectives. This has been rejected because tackling inequality is a complex process that needs to be underpinned by a broad cross cutting plan which has been developed by a range of stakeholders.
- 5.2. Option 2- develop a full equality plan and consult rather than undertaking a more detailed engagement exercise This has been rejected because:
 - We are unlikely to reach beyond those most likely to respond to consultation documents and to reach the residents most impacted by inequality, if we only consult
 - The Council is committed to putting residents first and co-designing solutions with residents because we want to develop the right responses; to tackle inequality effectively, we need to engage residents with lived experience who can share their insight into what is driving inequality and what needs to change.
 - As outlined in paragraph 1.4, trust and confidence in the Council is low for some groups including black and global majority residents and social housing tenants. These are groups who face greater inequality and can be poorly served by statutory services. We need to adopt an engaging approach that builds trust and confidence.

- Tackling inequality is an issue that attracts public interest and scrutiny from a wide range of stakeholders and we want to create the right engagement to respond to this interest and invite ideas

6. **Background**

- 6.1. In November 2022 Hackney adopted a new Strategic Plan at Cabinet and Council, Working Together for a Better Hackney. The New Strategic Plan sets out the ambitions for the Council for the next four years, as well as the challenges we face.
- 6.2. An Equality Plan is needed to help us consider these ambitions through an equality prism.
- 6.3. The new Equality Plan will replace the existing Single Equality Scheme 2018-2022 and so we are at a key point of change in policy which requires consultation and engagement. It is, furthermore, a statutory duty to publish equality objectives, and consult on them.
- 6.4. Rather than present a fully worked up equality plan and consult on this, the July Cabinet paper will share the appendices set out under 3.1
- 6.5. Through consultation and engagement we will build a richer understanding of:
 - Key inequalities in outcomes and what is driving this
 - The strengths and diversity in communities that we need collectively to value
 - The lived experience of residents - trends, insights and feelings about the borough and the Council

This work will help us further identify:

- Proactive actions needed to tackle inequality of outcomes, build prosperity and celebrate diversity
- What needs to be embedded into service design, delivery and practice models and the day to day business as usual work of the Council
- How the Council and key partners need to change as institutions - our culture, workforce, leadership
- The Equality Plan will help us understand impact as we have to make very difficult decisions around finances or services over the next few years.

- 6.6. Residents, stakeholders and staff will be invited to help shape the plans further during August, September and October.
- 6.7. The Equality Plan will set out how we meet our legal duties under the Equality Act. The Equality Act identifies “protected characteristics” which are listed below. It is illegal to discriminate against someone because of their
- age
 - disability
 - gender reassignment
 - marriage and civil partnership
 - pregnancy and maternity
 - race
 - religion or belief
 - sex
 - sexual orientation
- 6.8. Public bodies are required to work proactively to tackle discrimination and disadvantage that is related to a protected characteristic. We have to think about how we foster good relations between all groups. This is called “Due Regard.” Marriage and civil partnership is only a protected characteristic when we are thinking about discrimination.
- 6.9. Public Bodies are also expected to publish draft objectives and consult on them. This Equality Plan presents a set of draft objectives for consultation. We are also asked to publish data about communities and workforce, which is also being updated as part of the development of this Equality Plan.
- 6.10. As well as thinking about protected characteristics, there are other groups we are considering in this Plan.
- 6.11. The original draft of the Equality Act contained a "socio-economic duty." The Duty did not become law but Hackney adopted it on a voluntary basis. This means that the Council tries to tackle inequality that we know will lead to socio-economic disadvantage. We also try to consider how someone could be more disadvantaged because of their socio-economic status. We have considered this in our plans in 2013 and again in 2018.
- 6.12. Socio-economic disadvantage could be about education, occupation, income, locality, housing or social class. There is no singular way to measure “social class.” Hackney’s approach considers income inequality and poverty, housing, skills levels and occupation. As there is no national measurement, we have to draw on academic research and qualitative insight.
- 6.13. In this new plan, our focus is on the:
- 20% of households living in poverty which rises to 36% of households after housing costs are taken into account
 - 48% of children who live in poverty
 - People on low incomes in the private rented sector

6.14. The new plan also proposes that we consider the needs of groups who are vulnerable because of life experiences or life stages including:

- Ex Armed Forces
- Care experienced people and care leavers
- Carers
- People with complex needs and long term conditions (they should also be included in the disabled group)
- Looked after children
- People going through perimenopause and menopause
- Single parents
- Refugees and people who an immigration status that makes them vulnerable

Working with communities to:		
<u>1. Tackle inequality at every life stage</u>	<u>2. Tackle poverty and support people to thrive</u>	<u>3. Celebrate, value and serve diverse communities</u>
<p>More disadvantaged groups will face greater inequality. There is also proven bias in the system that may impact negatively on these same groups. As people get older, they can become more disadvantaged. We see inequality of outcome at every life stage: Pregnancy, School readiness, Key Stage 4 (GCSE), Leaving school, Employment, Parenthood, Caring and Old age</p> <p>When people face difficulty they can also experience inequality or unfair treatment. Examples include- Assessment of additional needs, Exclusions, Entering the criminal justice system, Unemployment, Eviction, Debt and Illness.</p> <p>We need to ensure that we identify children's needs as early as we can to improve life chances.</p> <p>We need to take preventative action at every life stage, working across the whole system. We need to be specific to needs and intersectional in the way we work.</p> <p>We need to make it easier for residents experiencing difficulties in life to get help early. This should be in community settings so we</p>	<p>Poverty and socio-economic disadvantage are the main causes of inequality.</p> <p>We are in a cost of living and housing crisis, wage levels have stagnated and there is greater job insecurity. For people who were already in poverty, it is getting worse. Other groups are falling into difficulty. Many more people are living in more insecure and precarious situations. This is leading to growing inequalities. This affects the whole community.</p> <p>We will: Take action in line with our Poverty Reduction Framework, 2022. This strikes a balance between the immediate needs of people in poverty today and thinking about what we need to do to prevent poverty in the future. Support people to thrive. Tackle education inequalities and support people into employment. Take action to make sure the local economy benefits local people. Take action to promote wellbeing and tackle health inequalities. A lot of what needs to change is outside of our control. This includes responding to the housing crisis. What we can do is very limited.</p>	<p>Hackney's diverse, dynamic and changing population is what makes Hackney feel unique. It gives different areas their unique sense of identity.</p> <p>There is, however, a risk that the very communities that helped create a sense of place are excluded and marginalised.</p> <p>Hackney is a cohesive borough but the community and community organisations are under strain.</p> <p>Although there is a high level of trust in the population overall, this is much lower for Black and Global majority residents and social housing tenants. We need to put residents and communities first, thinking about underserved communities.</p> <p>We will take action to:</p> <p>work with residents so they help shape our plans through effective engagement and collaboration.</p> <p>develop partnerships with communities and community organisations. They can help us support communities and build trust and confidence in the state.</p> <p>promote tolerance and stand up for groups who have</p>

<p>prevent crisis points and needs becoming more complex.</p>		<p>become scapegoats in current public discourse.</p> <p>Break down barriers that limit our reach, like language barriers.</p> <p>Develop a segmented, targeted and intersectional approach to community needs.</p>
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Equality Impact Assessment

- 6.15. We want to ensure that we reach residents who are more likely to be impacted by the Equality Plan so that they can provide comments and ideas on the plan overall, and engage with the shaping of new ideas and solutions. These are residents who are more likely to be discriminated against or disadvantaged because of a protected characteristic or because they are socio-economically disadvantaged or belong to one of the groups we have identified as being more likely to be vulnerable. This will include residents who the Council struggles to reach through universal or traditional methods including those who are digitally excluded, have been excluded underserved by Council services and excluded by existing systems and structures making it harder for their voices to be heard or for them to “take up the space.” These groups will inevitably have higher levels of distrust in the state.
- 6.16. Staff will also be a key group to test this with, working closely with HR/OD. Again, we will focus on staff who are more likely to be discriminated against or disadvantaged because of a protected characteristic or because they are socio-economically disadvantaged or belong to one of the groups we have identified as being more likely to be vulnerable. This will including staff who are non office based staff
- 6.17. We will adopt a range of methods to communicate the key messages in the equality plan and to reach residents and staff.
- 6.18. These are set out in greater detail in Appendix 4.

Sustainability and climate change

- 6.19. The Equality Plan sets out how we tackle inequality which is a key way we can achieve social sustainability.

Consultations

- 6.20. We are presenting an initial set of objectives and ideas, along with a profile of community diversity and inequality. Over the next few months, we invite residents, community partners and partners to engage with us to help us finalise the plan through open and targeted engagement about the objectives and thematic exploration of specific areas of work. We will be developing a much richer evidence base of need during this time and the insights will directly inform this work.
- 6.21. In the last Equality Scheme, we committed to developing a refreshed LGBTQIA plan. An LGBTQIA strategic framework has now been developed. In July 2020, a motion was passed to work towards being an anti-racist organisation. This helped strengthen the focus on what we need to change within institutions. We have now developed an anti-racism action plan. We are also sharing these plans and inviting comments.
- 6.22. Consultation and engagement will focus on **all staff, partners and residents**, as all are potentially affected.
- 6.23. We will however **focus more on residents who are more likely to be impacted by the plan because they are more likely to be discriminated against or disadvantaged because of a protected characteristic or because they are socio-economically disadvantaged or belong to one of the groups we have identified as being more likely to be vulnerable.**
- 6.24. There is an objective focused on how we change as an institution and **staff** will be a key group to test this with, working closely with HR/OD. Again, we will focus on **staff who are more likely to be discriminated against or disadvantaged because of a protected characteristic or because they are socio-economically disadvantaged or belong to one of the groups we have identified as being more likely to be vulnerable.**
- 6.25. Key stakeholders will be:
- Community partners, as deliverers of services
 - Community partners - who can support targeted resident / service user engagement
 - Senior managers and partners responsible for delivery
 - Thought leaders- think tanks, pressure groups, national equality groups
 - Other Councils and associations

Risk Assessment

- 6.26. The main risk of adopting an Equality Plan is that it will only become more difficult to meet the commitments in the plan because the operating context becomes even more challenging with a worsening economy and increased demand on services. The main way that this risk is being managed is to be upfront in this plan about these challenges and how we need to respond.

6.27. On balance, there are more strategic and reputational risks from not adopting an Equality Plan. As the operating context continues to be challenging, unpredictable and complex, we need to be very purposeful and planned and informed by the best understanding of key inequalities. This will help us avoid reactive responses to issues or concerns raised by residents or equality groups about equality impacts.

7. **Comments of the Group Director of Finance and Corporate Resources.**

7.1. There are no direct financial implications resulting from this report. The cost of consultation and engagement will be managed within existing budgets.

8. **Comments of the Director of Legal, Democratic and Electoral Services**

8.1. Part 2, Article 4.7(c) of the Constitution states that the Equalities Statement (now Equality Plan) is a discretionary part of the Policy Framework. Part 2, Article 4.6 ii) of the Constitution states that approving or adopting the policy framework is a function of Full Council.

8.2. However, in addition, Part 4 - paragraph 4.3 (Budget and Policy Framework Procedure Rules), paragraph 2.1 states that "before a plan / strategy or a budget needs to be adopted, the Cabinet will publish initial proposals for the budget and policy framework, having first canvassed the views of local stakeholders as appropriate and in a manner suitable to the matter under consideration." Therefore Cabinet is authorised to approve the approach proposed and the matters in this Report.

8.3. Part 4 - paragraph 4.4 (Cabinet Procedure Rules), paragraph 9 states that "all reports to the Elected Mayor and Cabinet on proposals relating to the budget and policy framework must contain details of the nature and extent of consultation with stakeholders, the Scrutiny Commissions and the outcome of that consultation." Details of such matters are set out in this Report.

Appendices

Appendix 1: an initial set of equality objectives at summary level, describing the objectives, why they are being proposed and an outline of key actions (a designed version will be used in consultation and engagement)

Appendix 2: the anti-racism action plan

Appendix 3: the LGBTQIA framework.

Appendix 4: Equality Impact Assessment

Background documents

The following documents have been referred to in order to develop the Cabinet Papers. These will be published as supporting documents on the Council Website.

Initial profile of community need - drawing on 2021 Census data and published data about inequalities.

A first draft of the full equality plan setting out what is already being delivered under each of the new draft objectives and new areas for development (a designed slide deck will be used in consultation and engagement)

A progress update on the scheme from 2018-2022

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