

## **EPSOM & EWELL BOROUGH COUNCIL'S DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION FRAMEWORK 2021-2024**

<b>Head of Service:</b>	Shona Mason, Head of HR & Organisational Development
<b>Wards affected:</b>	(All Wards);
<b>Urgent Decision?(yes/no)</b>	No
<b>If yes, reason urgent decision required:</b>	
<b>Appendices (attached):</b>	Appendix 1 Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Framework Consultation Results Appendix 2 Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Framework

### **Summary**

**This report provides details of the consultation undertaken on the Council's draft Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Framework and the final Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Framework 2021-2024 for approval.**

### **Recommendation (s)**

**The Committee is asked to:**

- (1) Review the findings of the consultation undertaken on the draft Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Framework 2020-2024.**
- (2) Approve the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Framework 2021-2024.**

### **1 Reason for Recommendation**

- 1.1 Now that the Council has a long-term Vision and Four Year Plan it is vital that the Council has a Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Framework to help achieve the aspirations of the Vision and commitments of the Four Year Plan.

### **2 Background**

- 2.1 The Council is subject to the Equalities Act and the Public Sector Duty which means that we have a duty to:

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

2.2 These are sometimes referred to as the three aims or arms of the general equality duty. The Act explains that having due regard for advancing equality involves:

- Removing or minimising disadvantages suffered by people due to their protected characteristics
- Taking steps to meet the needs of people from protected groups where these are different from the needs of other people
- Encouraging people from protected groups to participate in public life or in other activities where their participation is disproportionately low

2.3 With recent events such as COVID-19, Black Lives Matter and Reclaim the Streets there is a current spotlight on equality matters. This spotlight has also sparked an appetite for the Council to influence and achieve more in relation to Diversity, Equity and Inclusion.

2.4 At Council on 14 July 2020 a motion was passed which is detailed as follows:

2.4.1 This Council notes and values the contribution that Epsom and Ewell communities and social media groups are making in support of community cohesion, anti- racism and calls for equality and justice.

2.4.2 In support of these local initiatives, including the “We Stand Together” movement, the Borough Council will:

- Invite local schools to contribute to a Borough Council programme celebrating multiculturalism and the achievements of differing communities in the borough
- Use the EEBC Business Newsletter, Business Breakfasts and our conversations with the BID to raise issues of racism and prejudice in the workplace and, leading by example, encourage equality in recruitment practices, investment in unconscious bias training and other active ways to create equality.
- Use the Community Safety Partnership to encourage local people to use their voice and report hate crimes to the police, and to develop with our partners a system for monitoring the outcomes of such reporting.
- Continue our conversations with Community Leaders to better understand how the Borough Council can best manage its services to support those communities and best use its influence to make a positive difference.

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- Listen to our own staff about their experiences and create an environment where they can speak freely, and raise awareness among Officers and Members to ensure equal access to services
  - Commit to work with partners and lobby the government for immediate action to implement the recommendations on the recent PHE report on the disproportionate impact of Covid-19 on our Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic communities
- 2.5 The commitments the Council made as a result of the Council motions have been incorporated into the action plan for 2021/2022.
- 2.6 On 22 September 2020 the draft Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Framework 2020-2024 was presented to Strategy & Resources for approval. Approval was also sought to consult on the draft framework with a view to inform how the framework is shaped and developed before being presented back to Strategy & Resources for final approval.
- 2.7 The consultation was conducted online and promoted across our communications channels including internal and external. Residents, Members and staff were invited to contribute to the consultation. The results are attached in Appendix 1.
- 2.8 From the 146 responses that were received, the results of the consultation can be summarised as follows:
- Over 90% of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed with the three equality objectives that have been identified
  - Less than 7% of respondents either disagreed or strongly disagreed with the three equality objectives that have been identified
  - The majority of respondent thought that the equality objectives were appropriate, achievable and would make a difference to the people of Epsom & Ewell
  - A larger percentage (21%) either disagreed or strongly disagreed that the equality objectives would make a difference to the people of Epsom & Ewell
- 2.9 The following common themes can be identified from the written comments about the purpose of the framework:
- Greater promotion of equality matters and educating people
  - Promotion of inclusive activities across the borough
  - Consider the appropriateness of language
  - Celebratory events to bring people together i.e. World Food Event
  - Greater engagement across different communities
  - Ensuring accessible services for all
  - Ensuring the Council's workforce is treated fairly and is encouraged to talk openly about DEI matters
- 2.10 The DE&I Framework has been developed around three themes:

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- Developing Inclusive Communities and creating Community Cohesion
- Engagement and Accessible Services
- Workforce Inclusivity

These themes were supported by the consultation.

- 2.11 As part of the wider consultation and development of the framework Cllr Hannah Dalton, Rod Brown, Head of Housing & Environmental Services and Shona Mason, Head of HR & Organisational Development have also commenced community conversations. While this has been difficult to progress due the ongoing pandemic, from the initial two meetings that have taken place there is been a huge enthusiasm and buy in from those we have spoken with.
- 2.12 Two meetings took place in December 2020 with:
- Parasakthi Hindu Temple Trust
  - Epsom and Ewell We Stand Together
- 2.13 The objective of the community conversations was to:
- Better understand the lived experiences of communities with in Epsom & Ewell
  - Identify obstacles and opportunities to enhance lives and experiences of our communities
  - Gain feedback on the proposed themes for the DEI Framework
- 2.14 The following questions were asked and explored during the meetings which were held virtually due to the ongoing pandemic:
- What is your lived experience of living/working in Epsom & Ewell?
  - What opportunities do you think there are for the Council do things differently in relation to tackling racism?
  - What could the Council do differently to engage with your community?
  - What is your experience of Council communications?
- 2.15 Due to the impact of COVID19 it has been difficult to progress more community conversations however we are in the process of setting up additional meetings with other community leaders.
- 2.16 It is envisaged that this is the start of greater engagement with our community on equality matters and that we can build on this foundation which is also supported within the framework. We are seeking to host more community conversations with different groups across the Borough in the coming months.
- 2.17 The feedback that we receive as a result of these community conversations will be used to help inform future action plans and the Council's community leadership role in relation to DE&I matters.

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- 2.18 The DE&I Framework has now been updated and strengthened to incorporate the feedback received as a result of the consultation. The key changes have been highlighted in yellow for ease of reference for the Committee. Due to the impact of COVID-19 and the delay in implementation, the framework has been reduced from four years to three years, spanning 2021-2024. This is in line with the Council's Four Year Plan.
- 2.19 The action plan has also been amended to reflect a one-year action plan, 2021/2022, as opposed to two years. A further action plan will be developed for year two and year three and will be presented to committee for approval at the appropriate time.
- 2.20 The number of actions has been streamlined to take into consideration the number of priorities the Council has in terms of recovery, service delivery plans, other strategies and action plans as well as the continuing need to support the emergency response into 2021-2022. This is to ensure that the DE&I action plan is realistic and deliverable, and the Council can be flexible in its approach to developing the framework in the coming years.
- 2.21 An annual report will be presented to Strategy & Resources in March 2022 to provide an update against the 2021-2022 action plan as well as to agree the year two action plan.

## **3 Risk Assessment**

Legal or other duties

### 3.1 Impact Assessment

- 3.1.1 An initial Equality Impact Assessment has been completed. During the consultation process consideration has been given to the impact assessment of the future framework.

### 3.2 Crime & Disorder

- 3.2.1 There are no crime and disorder implications for this report.

### 3.3 Safeguarding

- 3.3.1 There are no safeguarding implications for this report.

### 3.4 Dependencies

- 3.4.1 There are a number of dependencies that have been identified for this report. As detailed within the DE&I framework developing diversity, equity and inclusion will require input from many different groups.

### 3.5 Other

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3.5.1 N/A

### 4 Financial Implications

- 4.1 There is no identified budget for the delivery of the D, E&I Framework and the action plan will be delivered from within existing budgets and resources.
- 4.2 **Section 151 Officer's comments:** None arising from the contents of this report.

### 5 Legal Implications

- 5.1 The equality duty applies to public authorities and must be considered as part discharging the Council's activities. It is therefore important for authorities to have in place strategy on how it they will meet that requirements of that duty in the discharge of their functions.
- 5.2 **Monitoring Officer's comments:** none arising from the contents of this report.

### 6 Policies, Plans & Partnerships

- 6.1 **Council's Key Priorities:** All of the Council's Key Priorities are engaged:
- 6.2 **Service Plans:** The matter is included within the current Service Delivery Plan.
- 6.3 **Climate & Environmental Impact of recommendations:** None
- 6.4 **Sustainability Policy & Community Safety Implications:** None
- 6.5 **Partnerships:** None

### 7 Background papers

- 7.1 The documents referred to in compiling this report are as follows:

**Previous reports:**

- Epsom & Ewell Borough Council's Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Framework, Strategy & Resources, 22 September 2020

**Other papers:**

- N/A