

Responses to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion recommendations, from 21 January 2021
Select Committee meeting:

1. EDI training for Members should take place after May 2021 and be made part of induction process for all Members; similar consideration to be given to such training for officers

Response – Officers in Democratic Services are working on a refreshed, comprehensive training package for Members, which will be launched following the county council elections in May. We will ensure that opportunities for joint Member-officer training form a key part of this programme.

2. To help achieve the goal of a successful reassessment within the Local Government Association (LGA) Equality Framework in the first quarter of 2022, a survey of staff, residents and Members be carried out and results shared with this Select Committee

Response – We are examining the resource implications of preparing for the accreditation process for the LGA Equality Framework. To secure the ‘Developing’ level of the framework, the most basic achievement level possible, we will need to undertake a self-assessment, whereas attaining the ‘Achieving’ and ‘Excellent’ levels requires external validation from a peer review team appointed by the LGA. This self-assessment must be undertaken by the council, and if we are satisfied we meet either the ‘Achieving’ or ‘Excellent’ levels in full, we can apply for a peer challenge. A survey of staff, residents and Members will form part of the self-assessment process.

3. Relevant key performance indicators be developed (enhanced in line with the action plan if already in place) and reported to this Select Committee as part of its existing regular performance monitoring report

Response – Officers will prepare to start reporting on EDI indicators from first quarter 2021/22. Some indicators will take more time to develop, such as measures of resident views, but will be made available as soon as possible to the Committee.

4. An update report be presented to this Select Committee as outlined under ‘next steps’ of the report

Response – The Committee will be updated with a progress report in January 2022, which will include an annual report on progress. Further EDI updates may feature as part of other reports considered by the Committee, such as a scheduled HR report for September, in line with our ambition to embed EDI in everything the council does. Key indicators will also be reported as part of the quarterly performance reports the Committee regularly receives.

5. On page 51, Appendix B of the report, under ‘How we’ll meet our commitment’ – our commitment should be to ‘eradicate bias’, instead of merely minimising it

Response – The Policy Statement has been updated to substitute the word ‘minimise’ with ‘eradicate’. The statement is now available to read [on the council's website](#).

6. To explore and remove any barriers to taking part in the LGA Equality Framework as soon as possible

Response – The officer EDI group chaired by Katie Stewart, Executive Director for Environment, Transport and Infrastructure, will be reviewing the resources required to carry out a self-assessment under the LGA Equality Framework. The LGA’s Covid

response activity means that it has paused equality peer challenge work for a short period whilst resource focused on supporting this response, but we will seek to engage with the self-assessment process as early as possible in the new financial year.

7. There appear to be some anomalies in terms of the approach between officers and what the Minister for Women and Equalities is saying in her speech and these should be articulated and reconciled wherever possible

Response – The EDI Action Plan will respond positively where possible to the Government’s proposed direction of travel on EDI. For instance, whilst the Council’s EDI Action Plan continues to focus on the nine protected characteristics enshrined in law, we will expand our focus to look systematically at socio-economic and geographical inequality advocated by the Government through all our processes, including Equality Impact Assessments. In respect of the Government’s challenge to traditional training approaches to EDI, we are also seeking to tender a comprehensive training package that supports Members and officers to understand their own biases, and how this affects their work, and training on the experiences of specific groups, such as disability and race. As the Government’s policy on equality becomes clearer, we will ensure we adopt an agile approach in our own EDI agenda so we can ensure we reconcile this with the Government’s where possible.

8. All Members to be included in a Member level group to encourage collective leadership on EDI. All Members to train on EDI alongside officers and be invited to participate in engagement activities.

Response – We will seek opportunities for Members and officers to collectively engage on EDI activities – for example through seminars, network meetings and training where appropriate. These opportunities will support Members to show active leadership on EDI and build stronger relationships between Members and officers through greater empathy and understanding.

Action:

1. Executive Director of Environment, Transport and Infrastructure to look at the possibility of inviting Members to informally attend ERG groups.

Response - The ERGs themselves will be engaged to explore how best to introduce members to ERG networks, bearing in mind that many of the networks are in their early stages. This will be built into the proposed programme of engagement for members on EDI.