

	<h2>Cabinet</h2>
Title	Equalities Annual Report 2023
Date of meeting	12 December 2023
Report of	Councillor Zahra Beg, Cabinet Member for Equalities, Voluntary and Community Sector
Wards	All
Status	Public
Key	No
Urgent	No
Appendices	Appendix 1 – Equalities Annual Report 2023
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Summary	
<p>This report provides an overview of the structures the Council has in place and the actions and activities we have taken over the past 12 months to meet our statutory responsibilities under the Equality Act and Public Sector Equality Duty and to improve outcomes for our residents.</p>	

Recommendations

That Cabinet approves the Annual Equalities Report 2023 and its subsequent publication on the Council's website.

1. Reasons for the Recommendations

- 1.1 The Public Sector Equality Duty requires public bodies and others carrying out public functions to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunities and foster good relations. Public authorities also have specific duties under the Equality Act to help them comply with the public sector equality duty. Public authorities must:
- publish equality information at least once a year to show how they have complied with the equality duty
 - prepare and publish equality objectives at least every four years
- 1.2 The Annual Equalities Report 2023 in Appendix 1 has been prepared to comply with the first of these requirements and to update Cabinet on the work being undertaken to address inequalities in the borough. Our current strategic equality objective is included in the Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Policy approved by the Council in 2021. This policy is currently being reviewed to align with Our Plan for Barnet 2023-26 and to provide a greater focus on addressing external inequalities in the borough. The intention is to submit new equality objectives to the Cabinet in February 2024 and then to Council as part of a new policy.

2. Alternative Options Considered and Not Recommended

None

3. Post Decision Implementation

- 3.1 Subject to approval by Cabinet, the Annual Equalities Report 2023 (Appendix 1) will be published on the equalities pages of the Council's website.
- 3.2 As referred to in the annual report, we are intending to submit a refreshed EDI Policy to the meeting of Cabinet in February 2024.

4. Corporate Priorities, Performance and Other Considerations

Corporate Plan

- 4.1 Our Plan for Barnet 2023-2026 sets out our vision for fighting poverty and tackling inequalities. This report provides an overview of the structures we have in place and the actions and activities that we have taken over the past 12 months to address inequalities and improve outcomes for our residents.

Corporate Performance / Outcome Measures

- 4.2 We have prepared a State of the Borough Report to provide a baseline of known inequalities in Barnet to help inform the development of our new EDI Policy. We intend to build and expand on this in future years by developing an Equalities Index to monitor and track progress against a range of inequalities outcomes and metrics.

Sustainability

- 4.3 We need to consider environmental and sustainability issues from an equalities perspective to ensure that our journey to net zero takes place in a fair and inclusive way. This is an emerging theme for inclusion in our new EDI Policy.

Corporate Parenting

- 4.4 People with care experience face disadvantage, discrimination and barriers in life. We have a particularly strong responsibility for this group and will bring forward a proposal as part of the new EDI Policy that care experience is taken into account when staff are considering equality impacts. This will be further explored in the report about the policy.
- 4.5 The Children and Social Work Act 2017 also places a duty on the Council to consider corporate parenting principles in decision-making.

Risk Management

- 4.6 We monitor and report against our strategic equalities objectives and action plans to ensure that we meet our statutory obligations under the Equality Act 2010 and Public Sector Equality Duty.

Insight

- 4.7 An overview of the characteristics of our residents can be found in the Barnet Joint Strategic Needs Assessment. We have also prepared a State of the Borough Report which provides a profile of Barnet's population and gives a summary of known inequalities in the borough. The report is based on extensive research and draws on a wide range of resources and data.

Social Value

- 4.8 The updated social value policy outlines how we can extract benefits from our procured contracts and reinvest them into the community. The policy provides opportunities to further the equalities, diversity and inclusion agenda as well as reducing poverty.

5. Resource Implications (Finance and Value for Money, Procurement, Staffing, IT and Property)

- 5.1 There are no resource implications arising from this report.

6. Legal Implications and Constitution References

- 6.1 The Council has statutory obligations under the Equality Act 2010 and Public Sector Equality Duty as described in the Equalities Annual Report 2023 (Appendix 1). This report has been prepared as part of a requirement to publish equality information at least once a year to show how we have complied with the equality duty.
- 6.2 Under Section 1 of the Children and Social Work Act 2017:
- (1) A local authority in England must, in carrying out functions in relation to the children and young people mentioned in subsection (2), have regard to the need -
 - (a) to act in the best interests, and promote the physical and mental health and well-being, of those children and young people;
 - (b) to encourage those children and young people to express their views, wishes and feelings;

- (c) to take into account the views, wishes and feelings of those children and young people;
- (d) to help those children and young people gain access to, and make the best use of, services provided by the local authority and its relevant partners;
- (e) to promote high aspirations, and seek to secure the best outcomes, for those children and young people;
- (f) for those children and young people to be safe, and for stability in their home lives, relationships and education or work;
- (g) to prepare those children and young people for adulthood and independent living.

(2) The children and young people mentioned in this subsection are -

- (a) children who are looked after by a local authority, within the meaning given by section 22(1) of the Children Act 1989;
- (b) relevant children within the meaning given by section 23A(2) of that Act;
- (c) persons aged under 25 who are former relevant children within the meaning given by section 23C(1) of that Act.

6.3 According to the “Applying corporate parenting principles to looked-after children and care leavers statutory guidance for local authorities” the following functions are functions where consideration of corporate parenting principles should generally apply

Education, social Care, housing, libraries, leisure and recreation and local taxation collection.

6.4 Under the Council’s Constitution, Article 2D states that the Cabinet is responsible for the following functions:

- Development of proposals for the budget (including the capital and revenue budgets, the fixing of the Council Tax Base, and the level of Council Tax) and the financial strategy for the Council.
- Monitoring the implementation of the budget and financial strategy;
- Recommending major new policies (and amendments to existing policies) to the Council for approval as part of the Council’s Policy Framework and implementing those approved by Council.
- Approving policies that are not part of the policy framework.
- Management of the Council’s Capital Programme.

7. Consultation

7.1 Although no external consultation has taken place on this report, consultation and engagement are a key component of our EDI activity. We are also informed by the resident perception surveys that capture views on the borough and our services.

7.2 Significant resident engagement is taking place on our new EDI Policy and the results will be reported to the Cabinet in February 2024.

8. Equalities and Diversity

8.1 Equality and diversity issues are a mandatory consideration in the decision-making of the council. The annual report sets out the requirements and highlights the activities and initiatives undertaken by the Council over the past 12 months to further our EDI objectives.

9. Background Papers

9.1 This paper references the following programmes and strategies:

[Barnet Plan 2023/26](#)

[Barnet Joint Strategic Needs Assessment](#)

State of the Borough Report 2023