

# Birmingham City Council

## Report to Cabinet

6<sup>th</sup> September 2022



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**Subject** **EVERYONE'S BATTLE EVERYONE'S BUSINESS  
EQUALITY ACTION PLAN 2022 -23**

**Report of** **Richard Brooks  
Director for Strategy, Equality and Partnerships**

**Relevant Cabinet Member:** **Cllr John Cotton - Social Justice, Community Safety & Equalities**

**Relevant O &S Chair(s):** **Cllr Sir Albert Bore - Co-Ordinating Overview &Scrutiny Committee**

**Report author:** **Suwinder Hundal  
Head of Equalities & Cohesion  
Email: [Suwinder.Hundal@birmingham.gov.uk](mailto:Suwinder.Hundal@birmingham.gov.uk)**

Are specific wards affected?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No – All wards affected
If yes, name(s) of ward(s):		
Is this a key decision?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
If relevant, add Forward Plan Reference: 009600/2022		
Is the decision eligible for call-in?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
If relevant, state which appendix is exempt, and provide exempt information paragraph number or reason if confidential:		

### 1 Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report sets out progress against Everyone's Battle Everyone's Business Equality Action Plan 2021 - 2022 and a refreshed Equality Action plan 2022- 23, with a particular focus on race equity in relation to the Council's own workforce.
- 1.2 The main body of the report is in three appendices:

**Appendix 1** - Everyone's Battle Everyone's Business Equality Action Plan 2022-23

**Appendix 2** - The Workforce Race Equity Review 2021-22

**Appendix 3** - A review of Everyone's Battle Everyone's Business Equality Action Plan 2021-22

## **2 Recommendations**

2.1 It is recommended that Cabinet:

2.1.1 Note the progress update of the Everyone's Battle, Everyone's Business Action Plan 2021-22 (**Appendix 3**)

2.1.2 Endorse the refreshed Everyone's Battle Everyone's Business Equality Action Plan 2022-23, particularly in relation to the new positive action measures being proposed for the City Council's own workforce, which are contained under Objective 5 of Everyone's Battle Everyone's Business Equality Action Plan for 2022-23 (**Appendix 1**).

## **3. Background**

3.1 Birmingham is a welcoming city, proud of its rich diversity of cultures, people and communities – our greatest strength. Our city has a long history of social action, with communities coming together to tackle social injustices, build great institutions and businesses that changes lives for the better. This community spirit was evident during the COVID-19 pandemic, with communities, voluntary and faith organisations, businesses and active citizens coming together to provide vital support to those most at risk.

3.2 The pandemic and calls for racial justice reminded us that Birmingham remains a deeply unequal city, with stark inequalities in key outcomes such as incomes, employment rates, health and education, access to opportunities, the safety of communities and access to decent homes. These insecurities have marked the lives of a growing number of our citizens. Addressing these challenges is a long-term endeavour for the Council and its partners.

3.3 In response to addressing the deep-seated systemic social injustices and unequal life chances, Everyone's Business Equality Strategy and Action Plan 2021-22 (**Appendix 4**); and Workforce Race Equity Review (**Appendix 5**) were approved at Cabinet, May 2021

3.4 The Equality Strategy sets out the Council's approach to making long-term Council-wide improvements to embed equity in a wide range of policy and practice. The Strategy sets out five key principles to drive systemic change:

1. **A focus on equity** - We will focus our approach on equity.
2. **Actively listening to the voices of lived experience** - We will put those who are affected by inequalities at the heart of designing solutions.
3. **Understand the diverse range of views and perspectives of citizens and ensure solutions are based on the widest available evidence** - We will take an intersectional approach to understand how people experience inequality according to their social class, age, gender, ethnicity, disability and sexual orientation.
4. **Language counts** - We will aim to use plain language in our publications that is jargon-free and easily understood and will also develop a shared understanding of the terms used to describe inequalities.
5. **Place matters** - we will focus on place-based approaches that improve access to opportunities.

Tackling social and economic inequalities is complex and requires a deep understanding of the interconnected nature of the structures that create inequalities. Our five key principles will guide our work to become a council that puts equity at the heart of our policy making and services.

3.5 Our Statutory Duty: The Council's approach to equality in the workplace and service delivery is shaped by the Equality Act 2010 and Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) which requires public bodies, in carrying out their services and functions, to have due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited under the Equality Act 2010.
- 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 that do not.

3.6 As a Council we aspire to be a fair, inclusive and desirable employer, with a workforce that reflects the communities we serve. To properly understand the ethnic disparities within in our workforce, we undertook the first Workforce Race Equity Review (published in May 2020). This review revealed worrying patterns of low representation of Black Asian and minority ethnic staff across the Council, especially at senior levels. From the available workforce data, we identified an 8% ethnicity pay gap. We made a commitment to take action to improve matters.

3.7 Everyone's Battle Everyone's Business Equality Strategy and Action 2022-23 is the Council's framework that support our legal obligations to promote equity.

3.8 Over the last 12 months the newly established Equalities and Cohesion Team has been working with the Human Resources directorate, senior leadership team, external partners, voluntary and faith organisations and Council's Staff networks to monitor progress and refresh the equality action plan with new insights. These insights and engagement with our community and faith organisations, partners and staff have supported the revision of existing actions and include new actions.

#### 4. **Refreshed Everyone's Battle Everyone's Business Equality Action Plan 2022-23**

4.1 The Everyone's Battle Everyone's Business Equality Action Plan 2022-23 brings together a specific set of actions focused on the protected equalities characteristics, with a particular focus on the City Council's role as a major employer and leader of the wider City Partnership. Everyone's Battle Everyone's Business is a strategy for the whole Council: it can only be implemented by action across all teams and directorates.

4.2 Five objectives provide the framework for the Everyone's Battle Everyone's Business strategy. They are:

- **Understand our diverse communities** and embed that understanding in how we shape policy and practice across the Council
- **Demonstrate inclusive leadership**, partnership, and a clear organisational commitment to be a leader in equality, diversity, and inclusion in the city
- **Involve and enable our diverse communities** to play an active role in civic society and put the citizens' voice at the heart of decision-making
- **Deliver responsive services** and customer care that is accessible, inclusive to individual's needs and respects faith, beliefs, and cultural differences
- **Encourage and build a skilled and diverse workforce** to build a culture of equity and inclusion in everything we do

4.3 **Some key successes over the past year include:**

- Birmingham becoming an accredited Living Wage City;

- the establishment of a Citizen/Community Stakeholder Panel to deliver the 'Stronger Communities' Commonwealth Games (CWG) programme activity.
- the publication of deep-dive health profiles on Birmingham's Sikh and Bangladeshi communities.
- The publication of our Levelling Up Strategy in November 2021.
- We adopted the RACE Code, with actions to dismantle barriers to career progress at senior levels.
- Safe Space Listening Circles have been established to capture employee's lived experiences of working within the Council. These sessions will support improve policies and will be used to inform future actions within Everyone's Battle, Everyone's Business to promote equity, and to measure how the actions have influenced change across the organisation.
- An LGBTQ+ citywide Partnership has been set up to make Birmingham a safe and inclusive city for our LGBTQ+ citizens

4.4 The Council is under constant scrutiny from the public and from our workforce in relation to the ethnic diversity and representativeness of our workforce, particularly at senior levels. The Workforce Race Equity Review findings show progress since 2019 in the proportion of our staff who disclose their ethnicity. However, Black, Asian and minority ethnic staff are more likely to be employed at the more junior levels of the Council's structure, and their numbers fall sharply at the more senior roles of Grade 6, Grade 7 and JNC officers (Assistant Directors and Directors). Our ethnicity pay gap stood at 10% in May 2022 and issues of race equity and the representativeness of senior Council leadership are a major concern for many of our staff.

4.5 Recognising that we haven't gone far or fast enough to tackle persistent systemic inequality affecting our Black, Asian and minority ethnic staff, we have accelerated our pace to make meaningful progress to develop new proposals that improve race equity in the Council. A Race Task and Finish Group led by the Equalities and Cohesion Team and supported by Human Resources was set up in early 2022. The aim of the Group was to refresh the Everyone's Battle Everyone's Business actions under Equality Objective 5, to increase ethnic diversity and representativeness at all levels of the Council, with a focus on development, progression and recruitment to more senior roles where there are the greatest disparities.

4.6 The task and finish group has produced a set of evidence-led proposals, including positive action shaped by qualitative and quantitative data, plus engagement with staff, and these are reflected in Objective 5 (**Appendix 1**). These actions will

collectively drive both positive outcomes and cultural change. They will need strong support from across the whole leadership of the Council.

- 4.7 Staff Networks have made a particular contribution to the work of the Race Task and Finish Group, including the Corporate Black Workers' Support Group and the Asian and Allies Network. Our staff networks provide valuable insight and an opportunity for constructive engagement on issues that greatly matter to our staff. It is important that the whole of our Extended Corporate Leadership Team engages positively with the staff networks.
- 4.8 Everyone's Battle Everyone's Business Equality Strategy and Action Plan is an evolving living document, one that is based on continuous engagement and evaluation. We will refresh our actions throughout the year, reflecting new local/national data and insights from our Partners, community and faith organisations; and staff.

## **5 Governance**

- 5.1 Delivery and continuous review of the action plan is overseen by the Council's Equality and Cohesion Star Chamber. The Equalities Star Chamber is chaired by the Cabinet Member for Social Justice, Community Safety and Equalities and provides robust internal challenge and scrutiny of the Council's performance against the five Equality Objectives to drive sustained improvements to our internal equalities practice. All key Council decisions are to be supported by an equality assured Equality Impact Assessment by the Star Chamber. The Corporate Leadership Team provides strategic oversight supported by the Corporate Equalities and Cohesion team.

## **6 Matters for Cabinet to Note**

- 6.1 There have been two unsuccessful funding applications to deliver action 4.14 and Vanley Burke and partners have decided to put on hold the project for the time being. On this basis, action 4.14 has been removed from Everyone's Battle Everyone's Business Equality Action Plan 2022-2023

## **7 Consultation**

- 7.1 The Equalities and Cohesion Team undertook a series of Council wide staff engagement sessions, including:
- Staff Safe Spaces Listening Circles
  - Three workshop sessions with Corporate Black Workers group executive, Chair of the Asian Allies, trade unions, Organisational Development
  - On-line Teams sessions with the wider Asian Allies Network

- Presentation and workshop at the Corporate Black Workers Group annual general meeting 2022
- Engaged the LGBTQ+ Staff network

## 7.2 Further engagement:

- Stronger Communities Community Stakeholder Panel were asked to provide comments.
- The Council's Corporate Leadership Team has been consulted on the refresh of Everyone's Battle, Everyone's Business Action Plan 2022-2023 and involved in the preparation of this report.
- The Council's Executive Management Team has been consulted on the refresh of Everyone's Battle, Everyone's Business Action Plan 2022-23.

## 8 Risk Management

- 8.1 The Council has established an Equality and Cohesion Star Chamber, chaired by the Cabinet Member for Social Inclusion, Community Safety and Equalities to oversee the delivery of its Equality Objectives 2019-2023 to support compliance with the Public Sector Duty.

## 9 Compliance Issues:

### 9.1 How are the recommended decisions consistent with the City Council's priorities, plans and strategies?

- 9.1.1 Everyone's Battle Everyone's Business Equality Strategy and action plan 2022-23 supports the delivery of the Council's Levelling up Strategy and addressing the Council's five grand challenges.

### 9.2 Legal Implications

- 9.2.1 Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 enacts a single general public sector equality duty (PSED) which applies to public authorities exercising public functions. The duty on public authorities to have "due regard" to the PSED in *section 149(1)* of the Equality Act 2010 is more than simply a requirement to have general regard. Real thought must be given to the PSED and its requirements.
- 9.2.2 Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties) Regulations 2011 the Council must prepare and publish at least one equality objective once every four years.
- 9.2.3 Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties and Public Authorities) Regulations 2017 impose a duty on specified public authorities with at least 250



employees to publish gender pay gap information relating to employees, in order to demonstrate compliance with the public sector equality duty.

9.2.4 Health and Social Care Act (2012) the Council has a statutory duty to tackle health inequalities.

9.2.5 The Council will take positive action as permitted in section 158 and 159 of the Equality Act 2010) to alleviate disadvantage and under-representation experienced by those with a protected characteristic.

9.2.5 The actions in this report and adoption of the proposed objectives will ensure the above legal requirements are met.

### **9.3 Financial Implications**

9.3.1 The Cabinet approved additional funding in the 2020-2024 Financial Plan to support delivery of the Equality Objectives, with an investment of £0.646m in 2020/21 rising by £0.042m to £0.688m from 2023/24 onwards. Any additional programmes and activities will be funded through the existing budget allocation.

### **9.4 Procurement Implications (if required)**

9.4.1 These are highlighted in the action plan.

### **9.5 Human Resources Implications (if required)**

9.5.1 These are highlighted in the action plan, which has been developed with close involvement of HR colleagues.

### **9.6 Public Sector Equality Duty**

9.6.1 The Council has statutory duties under the Equality Act 2010. Collectively referred to as the general duty to promote equality. The Council also has a specific duty to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between different people.

- Decision-makers are required under Section 149 Equality Act 2010 to promote equality for persons with the following protected characteristics: age, disability gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation. Decisions need to show due regards to:
- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited under the Equality Act 2010.
- 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 that do not.

- 9.6.2 The proposed Everyone's Battle Everyone's Business Equality Action Plan 2022 - 23 in this report will ensure the above legal requirements are met.

## **10 Environmental and Sustainability Implications**

Proposals are unlikely to have any specific impact on the environment and sustainability.

## **11 Appendices**

**Appendix 1** - Everyone's Battle Everyone's Business Equality Action Plan 2022-23

**Appendix 2** - The Workforce Race Equity Review 2021-22

**Appendix 3** - A Review of Everyone's Battle Everyone's Business Equality Action Plan 2021-22

## **12. Background Documents**

- 12.1 [Everyone's Battle Everyone's Business Equality Strategy and Action Plan 2021-2023](#)