

Birmingham City Council

Report to Cabinet

18 May 2021



Subject: **EVERYONE'S BATTLE, EVERYONE'S BUSINESS:
TACKLING INEQUALITIES IN BIRMINGHAM**

Report of: **Jonathan Tew, Assistant Chief Executive**

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

Relevant O & S Chair(s): **Cllr Carl Rice,
Co-ordinating O&S Committee**

Report author: **Suwinder Bains,
Head of Equalities and Cohesion Division**

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: 008403 / 2021		
Is the decision eligible for call-in?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
If relevant, provide exempt information paragraph number or reason if confidential:		

1 Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report outlines the Council's refreshed approach to addressing equalities and cohesion and tackling the structural inequalities that discriminate against or limit opportunities for citizens because of their race, disability, age, religion, sex, sexual orientation or class – or a combination of these characteristics.
- 1.2 Our refreshed approach, as set out in our Everyone's Battle Everyone's Business Equality Strategy and Action Plan has been informed and shaped by the views of our staff, communities and a wide range of stakeholders, including grass root

community organisations, faith-based organisations, practitioners and public sector partners.

2 Recommendations

- 2.1 To note the findings of the consultation
- 2.2 To adopt the Council's Everyone's Battle Everyone's Business Equality Strategy and Action Plan, as set out in **Appendix 3**.

3 Background

- 3.1 Birmingham is diverse and culturally vibrant city with a proud history of civic action, with citizens from many different communities coming together to tackle social injustices, building great institutions and businesses and change lives for the better.
- 3.2 However, the COVID-19 pandemic has tested the resilience of our communities in many ways. Whilst the pandemic has affected every community and neighbourhood, it is clear that it has had the harshest impact upon those who have the least. Citizens from Black Asian and minority ethnic backgrounds, women, people with disabilities or on a low-income people have borne the hardest burden. The economic shock has placed significant strain upon individuals, families and communities living in Birmingham. The resources available to meet these challenges have become increasingly stretched, creating concerns over the opportunities to access services and ensure an equitable distribution of provision to communities.
- 3.3 In September 2020, the Council responded to these challenges by publishing Everyone's Battle Everyone's Business Statement of Intent (**Appendix 1**). An extensive 15-week consultation was undertaken to seek the views of our citizens, partner and employees on our proposals to address the causes of inequalities.
- 3.4 Due to COVID-19 restrictions on travel and social distancing measures, we were unable to consult through our usual means of face to face meetings in community settings. Despite these limitations, we held an extensive consultation exercise during two national lockdowns. These included a series of virtual engagement sessions, an online survey, community radio phone-ins for the digitally excluded, a special social media campaign targeted at young people and listening sessions with staff. We also received written feedback. The evidence came from citizens, community activists, a diverse range of voluntary and community sector organisations, Council employees, and the public and private sector. Over 4000 people shared their views during the consultation period. Responses to the consultation showed broad support for our proposals, and this Strategy builds on these findings, which are set out in **Appendix 2**.

4 **Everyone's Business Everyone's Battle – tackling inequalities: Equality Strategy and Action Plan**

4.1 Feedback from the consultation, written submissions and desktop research have all help shape our refreshed approach to addressing inequalities, as outlined in our Everyone's Business Everyone's Battle Equality Strategy and Action plan (**Appendix 3**).

4.2 Our strategy sets out how we intend to work with our citizens, communities and partners to address the long-term structural inequalities in our city. It is rooted in the lived experiences of our citizens and acknowledges that the change we need cannot be delivered by one agency, sector or community alone. We need a genuine, collective commitment and effort to remove the structural barriers that obstruct equal access to opportunities that limit the life chances of too many of our citizens.

4.3 The strategy builds upon the solid foundations laid by the work to deliver the Council's existing Community Cohesion strategy and our five Equality Objectives. It draws upon a rich array of diverse voices and perspectives: the impacts of the pandemic; the injustices raised by Black Lives Matter and other movements calling for class, gender and race equality.

4.4 **Our key principles for tackling inequalities:**

We have identified five key principles, informed by the feedback from our consultation and supported by research, to guide our work on tackling structural inequalities:

4.4.1 **A focus on equity** - We will focus our approach on equity. Evidence shows that offering the same opportunities to everyone will not always lead to equal outcomes, because where you are born, your gender, your ethnicity, your sexual orientation and your social class can limit choice and access to opportunities – creating unequal outcomes. Focussing on equity will turn the spotlight on the hidden barriers to accessing opportunities.

4.4.2 **Actively listening to the voices of lived experience** - We will put those who are affected by inequalities at the heart of designing solutions. Policy and practice must reflect and respond to the experiences of our diverse communities. This means actively listening to and engaging with citizens to understand their lived experiences of inequality and using their experience to deliver change.

4.4.3 **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. This means looking at the multiple disadvantages faced by different groups of people and using the latest data and research to underpin policy development and service design.

4.4.4 **Language counts** - Language can itself can be a barrier to meaningful engagement. The way we communicate plans, policies and strategies is often

seen as jargonistic. We will aim to use plain language in our publications that is jargon free and easily understood.

We also need to develop a shared understanding of the terms used to describe inequalities. We will work across the Council and with our partners in all sectors to achieve this.

4.4.5 **Place matters** - Where you are born and where you live shapes your life chances and your access to opportunities. Neighbourhoods are places where individuals build a sense of belonging and make social connections providing access education, employment and training opportunities. This is why we will focus on place-based approaches that improve access to opportunities.

5 From Strategy to Action

5.1 Achieving our ambition is underpinned by a set of refreshed actions and governance structures to track progress.

5.2 We will continue to deliver on our long-term aims to advance equality and inclusion in everything that we do - set out in our five Equality Objectives:

- 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 and 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.

5.3 Our Strategy and action plan will be a living document that is continually updated so that we respond to the changing needs of our diverse communities, and the latest developments in national and local policy.

6. Governance

6.1 The Council is committed to accelerating the pace on tackling the persistent inequalities which affect too many our citizens quality of life. This will require an organisational shift, as well as support from our partners, voluntary and community sector and communities across the city to deliver our collective ambitions.

6.2 To ensure strong oversight and delivery of our actions, the Council's Equality and Cohesion Star Chamber will oversee the implementation of the strategy and action plan. The Corporate Leadership Team will provide strategic sponsorship supported by the Corporate Equalities and Cohesion Team.

7 Consultation

- 7.1 An external consultation on the Everyone's Battle, Everyone's Business - statement of intent was open from 8th September to 14th December 2020. Further conversations with stakeholders and staff continued during the first part of 2021. It was important to engage widely to ensure our refreshed approach accurately reflects the different views and needs of the people of Birmingham. The consultation was available online on the Council's consultation hub ([BeHeard](#)). Over 4000 people participated in the consultation and the analysis of responses is contained in **Appendix 2**.
- 7.2 The Council's Executive Management Team has been consulted on the "Everyone's Battle, Everyone's Business" statement of intent and comments have been included.
- 7.3 The Council's Corporate Leadership Team has been consulted on the "Everyone's Battle, Everyone's Business" Equality Strategy and Action Plan and involved in the preparation of this report.

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. In addition, a corporate Equality and Cohesion officer working group, chaired by the Assistant Chief Executive, supports the work programme of the Equality and Cohesion Star Chamber.

9 Compliance Issues:

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

- 9.1.1 The renewed approach to addressing structural inequalities will be at the core of the Council's Delivery Plan for the next two years. It will ensure our ongoing commitment to reducing inequalities underpins everything we do and is embedded in our plans and strategies.

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 2011the 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 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 Financial Plan 2020-2024 approved by Cabinet provides additional funding of £0.646m for 2020/21, rising to £0.688m for 2023/24 ongoing with an additional one-off for 2020/21 of £0.050m to provide adequate resource to ensure strategic support to deliver the Council's deliver the Equality Objectives.

9.3.2 Furthermore, this funding will support aspects of the Equality strategy and action.

9.4 Human Resources Implications (if required)

9.4.1 As outlined above there is a proposed expansion of the resource and staff capacity to deliver the Council's strategic cohesion and equality function, currently 1.0 FTE. The Equality and Cohesion function is currently being recruited to provide an engine room in driving the Council's ambitions in both equality and community cohesion.

9.5 Public Sector Equality Duty

9.5.1 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.

9.5.2 The proposed actions in this report will ensure the above Public Sector Equality Duty is met.

10 Appendices

- 10.1 **Appendix 1** - Everyone's Battle, Everyone's Business - statement of intent
- 10.2 **Appendix 2** - Everyone's Battle Everyone's Business consultation analysis.
- 10.3 **Appendix 3** - Everyone's Battle Everyone's Business – Equality Strategy and Action Plan.

11 Background Documents

- 11.1 Community Cohesion Strategy