

<b>Cabinet</b>  26 July 2016	 <b>TOWER HAMLETS</b>
<b>Report of:</b> Melanie Clay, Corporate Director of Law, Probity and Governance	<b>Classification:</b> Unrestricted
<b>Single Equality Framework 2016-17</b>	

<b>Lead Member</b>	John Biggs, Executive Mayor
<b>Originating Officer(s)</b>	Shanara Matin, Leo Nicholas (Corporate Strategy and Equality)
<b>Wards affected</b>	All wards
<b>Key Decision?</b>	Yes
<b>Community Plan Theme</b>	All

### **Executive Summary**

This report presents the draft Single Equality Framework 2016-17 for approval by the Mayor in Cabinet.

### **Recommendations:**

The Mayor in Cabinet is recommended to:

1. Approve the draft Single Equality Framework

## **1. REASONS FOR THE DECISIONS**

- 1.1. It is important that the Council sets out its key priorities in relation to how it meets its duties under the Equality Act 2010 and specifically the Public Sector Equality Duty, which requires public bodies to publish their equality objectives. The Single Equality Framework (SEF) is the council's corporate plan for understanding diversity, tackling inequality and promoting cohesion in the borough. The Framework is aligned within the new Strategic Plan and provides further detail about the delivery of the council's strategic equality objectives.

## **2. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS**

- 2.1 The Mayor may choose not to have a corporate strategy for equality. This course of action is not recommended. The proposed framework is a part of the council's business planning arrangements and sets out the council's

priorities for tackling inequality and meeting the needs of local residents. The framework and accompanying action plan detail how the council will undertake its Public Sector Equality Duty.

### **3. BACKGROUND**

- 3.1. Tower Hamlets is one of the most diverse and vibrant boroughs in the country. The rich cultural heritage of people living and working in the borough is something that the council actively celebrates. While our diversity brings tremendous strength, there remain a number of challenges to addressing inequality locally.
- 3.2. The Partnership's vision, developed in the Community Plan, is to improve the quality of life for everyone who lives and works in the borough and build on our aspiration of One Tower Hamlets - a more equal and cohesive borough with strong community leadership. The Community Plan also identifies some long term and emerging challenges within the borough including:
- Persistent low employment levels, particularly for women and some ethnic minorities;
  - High levels of child poverty and the impact of welfare benefit cuts on an already deprived community;
  - Low levels of health and life expectancy;
  - A further wave of austerity and public sector cuts and a consequent Medium Term Financial Strategy savings target of £59 million over the next 3 years.
- 3.3. Against this backdrop, the Strategic Plan sets out the council's vision for the borough over the next three years, and details key activities that will be delivered over the next year. The Single Equality Framework is aligned within the Strategic Plan; it provides a mechanism for the identification, and monitoring, of a focused set of strategic level equality priorities across the council.
- 3.4. The Framework sets out:
- Key activities to deliver improved equality related outcomes for local residents;
  - Actions within the organisation to promote equality as an employer and through the goods and services that we purchase;
  - Measures the council will take to improve our equality practices.

### **4. THE SINGLE EQUALITY FRAMEWORK 2016/17**

- 4.1. The Framework sets out our approach to meeting the requirements of the Equality Act 2010 and the Public Sector Equality Duty. The Equality Act 2010 replaced nine separate pieces of legislation to simplify the law, help people understand it better and tackle discrimination more effectively.

- 4.2. The Act introduced the public sector Equality Duty (PSED) which came into force in April 2011 and aims to embed equality considerations into the day to day work of all public bodies. Based on an understanding of the 'protected characteristics' of age, disability, gender, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion/belief, sex and sexual orientation, public bodies should have 'due regard' to the general duty under Section 149(1) of the Act to:
- Eliminate discrimination and harassment
  - Advance equality of opportunity
  - Foster good relations between different groups

To demonstrate 'due regard' there are two specific duties which are designed to help public bodies meet the general duty, these are to:

- Publish information showing that they have complied with the general duty
  - Prepare and publish equality objectives
- 4.3. To help identify our local objectives, the council has developed a Borough Equality Assessment (BEA) which provides an account of inequality in the borough. The assessment is drawn from analysis of national policy and local trends – in addition to engagement with services, residents, community groups and partners – to bring together evidence on age, disability, gender, race, religion/belief, and sexual orientation inequality in the borough.
- 4.4. Priority areas identified include where there are significant differences in outcomes for groups with protected characteristics. This includes, for example, the employment rate compared between Tower Hamlets and London average for BAME women and disabled residents and the educational attainment levels of White British children. The BEA also provides the basis of identifying the wider activities that make up this year's Single Equality Framework Action Plan.
- 4.5. The Action Plan is accompanied by performance measures which will be disaggregated by relevant equality groups to enable us to track progress. The SEF also includes internal activities to continue to strengthen our equalities practice across the organisation and key actions to promote equality as an employer and through the goods and services that we purchase.

## **5. COMMENTS OF THE CHIEF FINANCE OFFICER**

- 5.1 This report presents the Council's draft Single Equality Framework (SEF) Action Plan for 2016/17.
- 5.2 Equalities issues should be embedded into service delivery, and they are taken into account when budgets are set. There are no additional financial implications arising from adopting the Single Equality Framework 2016/17. However, if additional costs arise from implementing the Plan, given constraints on future grant funding, they must be contained within revenue budget provisions in directorates.

## **6. LEGAL COMMENTS**

- 6.1 Section 149 of the Equalities Act 2010 ('the 2010 Act') imposes a Public Sector Equality Duty ('PSED'). The aim of PSED is to embed equality considerations into the day to day work of public bodies, so that they tackle discrimination and inequality and contribute to making society fairer. The duty is to have **due regard** [emphasis added] to the need to (a) eliminate unlawful discrimination; and (b) advance equality of opportunity, and (c) foster good relations, between people between people who share those protected characteristics and those who do not. The PSED applies to **all** [emphasis added] decisions made by public authorities, whether those decisions have individual or general effect.
- 6.2 The protected characteristics are: age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation.
- 6.3 The term 'due regard' means consciously thinking about the three (3) aims of the general duty as part of the decision-making process. This means that consideration of equality issues must influence the decisions reached by public bodies and which includes how they design, deliver and evaluate services.
- 6.4 The Single Equality Framework is a strategy document whose aim is to assist in setting out the Council's approach to meeting the requirements of the 2010 and the PSED. It is therefore an important tool in the Council meeting its duty.
- 6.5 As stated above, the Council must have due regard to the need to eliminate unlawful conduct under the Equality Act 2010, the need to advance equality of opportunity and the need to foster good relations between persons who share a protected characteristic and those who do not (the public sector equality duty). A proportionate level of equality analysis is required to discharge the duty and information relevant to this is contained in the One Tower Hamlets section of the report. An Equality Analysis Quality Assurance Checklist has also been completed.

## **7. ONE TOWER HAMLETS CONSIDERATIONS**

- 7.1. The Single Equality Framework is the council's corporate plan for understanding diversity, tackling inequality and promoting cohesion in the borough. The Framework is aligned within the Strategic Plan providing the strategic direction for the council's work on equality. It embraces the principles laid out in the Equality Act 2010 and the Public Sector Equality Duty; sets out our Strategic Equality Objectives and Priorities; and builds on our strong record of embedding diversity and equality in everything we do.

## **8. BEST VALUE IMPLICATIONS**

- 8.1. Section 3 of the Local Government Act 1999 requires the Council as a best value authority to "make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the way in which its functions are exercised, having regard to a combination

of economy, efficiency and effectiveness”. The activities and measures in the Strategic Plan and SEF will be monitored helping to fulfil this obligation.

## **9. SUSTAINABLE ACTION FOR A GREENER ENVIRONMENT**

- 9.1. The SEF is aligned to the council’s Strategic Plan which includes a focus on action for a greener environment. This includes specific actions to protect our environment, improve parks and open spaces and support local sustainable transport.

## **10. RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS**

- 10.1. The SEF as part of the Strategic Plan provides a strategic framework for other strategies and plans. Risks relating to the achievement of its objectives are therefore monitored through the council’s corporate risk register and directorate risk registers. Risks are assessed for likelihood and impact, and have responsible owners and programmes of mitigating actions.

## **11. CRIME AND DISORDER REDUCTION IMPLICATIONS**

- 11.1. The SEF as part of the Strategic Plan has a strong focus on community safety. The key priorities, activities, milestones and measures are set out within the relevant priorities.

## **12. SAFEGUARDING IMPLICATIONS**

- 12.1. The Strategic Plan and SEF include actions to safeguard the borough’s vulnerable residents. There are no specific safeguarding implications.
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## **Linked Reports, Appendices and Background Documents**

### **Linked Report**

- NONE

### **Appendices**

- Draft Single Equality Framework 2016-17 (appendix 1)

### **Background Documents – Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements)(Access to Information)(England) Regulations 2012**

- NONE

### **Officer contact details for documents:**

Shanara Matin, Service Manager, Research and Equality  
[shanara.matin@towerhamlets.gov.uk](mailto:shanara.matin@towerhamlets.gov.uk), 020 7364 4548