

<b>Cabinet</b>  2 May 2017	 <b>TOWER HAMLETS</b>
<b>Report of:</b> Graham White, Acting Corporate Director Governance	<b>Classification:</b> Unrestricted
<b>Single Equality Framework 2017-18</b>	

<b>Lead Member</b>	John Biggs, Executive Mayor
<b>Originating Officer(s)</b>	Sharon Godman, Divisional Director Strategy, Policy and Partnership  Shanara Matin, Service Manager, Research 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 2017-18 for approval by the Mayor in Cabinet.

### **Recommendations:**

The Mayor in Cabinet is recommended to:

1. Approve the draft Single Equality Framework and its accompanying delivery plan.

## **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 £58 million by 2020.
- 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 for particular groups.

### 3.5. **THE SINGLE EQUALITY FRAMEWORK 2017/18**

- 3.6. 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.
- 3.7. 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
- 3.8. 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.
- 3.9. This year the BEA has undergone a full refresh because of the significant demographic growth and change in the borough and the length of time since the last detailed review in 2013/14. There are also policy changes such as Welfare Reform and cuts to local authority funding related impacts on service provision that are likely to affect groups in terms of equality and cohesion. The analysis for the BEA has been used to support the identification of activities that contribute to this year's Single Equality Framework Action Plan.
- 3.10. 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.

- 3.11. 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.
- 3.12. The Single Equality Framework Delivery Plan (Appendix 2) sets out the list of equality related outcomes, activities and key deliverable, at both a Strategic Plan and Directorate Plan level that form the Single Equality Framework Delivery Plan for 2017/18.

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

- 4.1. There are no specific financial implications arising from this report. In the event that individual projects or programmes of work are required to deliver against the framework, these will need to be prioritised within existing resources and the medium term financial strategy.

#### **5. LEGAL COMMENTS**

- 5.1 This report is seeking approval of the Single Equality Framework ('SEF') and which is the Council's corporate plan for understanding diversity, tackling inequality and promoting cohesion in the Borough.
- 5.2 There is no statutory requirement to have a SEF but it is an important document in enabling the Council to demonstrate compliance with both the Best Value Duty (see section 8.1 below for more detail) and the Public Sector Equality Duty (see section 7.1 below).

#### **6. ONE TOWER HAMLETS CONSIDERATIONS**

- 6.1. 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.

#### **7. BEST VALUE IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.1. 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.

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

- 8.1. The SEF is aligned to the council's Strategic Plan which includes a focus on action for a greener environment. The Strategic Plan includes a strategic objective relating to the creation of a better local environment, including a focus on recycling, parking and managing development pressure.

## **9. RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS**

- 9.1. 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.

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

- 10.1. The SEF as part of the Strategic Plan has a strong focus on community safety. Both the Strategic Plan and SEF include a strategic objective relating to reducing crime and anti-social behaviour.

## **11. SAFEGUARDING IMPLICATIONS**

- 11.1. 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 2017-18 (appendix 1)
- Draft Single Equality Framework 2017-18 Delivery Plan (appendix 2)

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

- NONE

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

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