


Cabinet 18 December 2019	 TOWER HAMLETS
Report of: Will Tuckley, Chief Executive	Classification: Unrestricted
Tower Hamlets Council Equality Policy + Tower Hamlets Council Annual Equality Report 2018-19	

Lead Member	Councillor Asma Begum, Deputy Mayor and Cabinet Member for Community Safety and Equalities
Originating Officer(s)	Katy McGinity, Strategy & Policy Officer
Wards affected	All Wards
Key Decision?	No
Forward Plan Notice Published	29 October 2019
Reason for Key Decision	N/A
Strategic Plan Priority / Outcome	All themes

Executive Summary

This report includes a refreshed Tower Hamlets Equality Policy and the Tower Hamlets Annual Equality Report 2018-19. Both documents demonstrate the council's commitment to the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) as set out within the Equality Act 2010.

The equality policy sets out a clear commitment to ensure equality is at the heart of everything the council does, from the money we spend, the people we employ to the services we provide and applies to all functions of the council. The annual equality report provides a high level summary of the councils work in 2018-19 to address the inequalities in Tower Hamlets.

Recommendations:

The Mayor in Cabinet is recommended to:

1. Agree the Tower Hamlets Council Equality Policy at Appendix 1;
2. Note the Tower Hamlets Council Annual Equality Report 2018-19 at Appendix 2;
3. Note the Equalities Implications set out at paragraph 4.

1 REASONS FOR THE DECISIONS

- 1.1 The Tower Hamlets Equality Policy sets out a clear commitment to ensure equality is at the heart of everything the council does, from the money we spend, the people we employ to the services we provide. This is reflective of the broader equality objective set out in the Tower Hamlets Plan 2018-23 and rolling three year strategic plan. It demonstrates the council's commitment to the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) under the Equality Act 2010 and the obligations the council has under this including the collection of equality data and the annual publication of information.
- 1.2 The Tower Hamlets Equality Report 2018-19 provides the opportunity to highlight key pieces of work that have been undertaken to achieve the council's broader equality objective and reduce the inequalities that were identified through the Borough Equality Assessment 2017-18 (BEA). The BEA is the council's key tool in identifying inequality in the Tower Hamlets and is incorporated into service planning throughout the council which will feed into strategic plan monitoring and equip services with data to inform further decision making and ensure services are targeting residents who need it most.

2 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 2.1 The council could choose not to publish an equality policy and not to review progress against the equality issues identified in the BEA. Equality is already embedded throughout the council's plans, strategies and activities; however, it is considered that having all relevant information relating to equality set out in the equality policy and reporting on known equalities helps demonstrate the council's commitment to the public sector equality duty pursuant to the Equality Act 2010.

3 DETAILS OF THE REPORT

Tower Hamlets Equality Policy

- 3.1 The council's commitment to equality was previously set out in the Tower Hamlets Single Equality Framework and is now embedded throughout the Tower Hamlets Plan and rolling three year Strategic Plan which sets out the council's broad vision of tackling inequality by building a strong, inclusive and fair borough.
- 3.2 This policy has been developed through engagement with the Corporate Equality Board, Staff Networks, Trade Union Forum and Directorate Leadership Teams. It reflects the council's broader vision of equality and was developed through desktop research, review of best practice examples and is reflective of all current practice.

- 3.3 The council's equality policy applies to all functions including but not limited to the development of policy and strategy, the commissioning and purchasing of goods and services to consultation with local people.
- 3.4 It sets out the council's high level commitment to equality and the reasons why this is important. It recognises the need for the council to work with partners to advance equality, promote good community relations and tackle discrimination in order to provide accessible and responsible services that enable all residents to take part in the social, cultural and economic wealth of the borough.
- 3.5 The equality policy sets out how the council puts the policy into practice and outlines what the council does as a community leader, service provider and employer in order to embed equality throughout the council's plans, services and activities. It highlights some of the activities undertaken in each of these roles and ultimately illustrates that equality is a key driver for everything the council does.
- 3.6 The policy supports the council in meeting its public sector equality duty under the Equality Act 2010 which also requires the council to publish equality information about its employees and residents who share a protected characteristic. The policy acknowledges this commitment and sets out what the council does with this information to support and inform evidence based decision making that helps shape interventions to meet the needs of our service users.
- 3.7 All council officers have some degree of responsibility for ensuring that equality is considered in all decision making and the policy provides an outline of these roles and responsibilities.

Tower Hamlets Annual Equality Report 2018-19

- 3.8 The Annual Equality Report provides a summary with examples of best practice on the work that the council has undertaken to address inequality in the borough. The report has been developed in conjunction with council departments and involves both output and outcome data.

Priority 1 Outcome 1

People access a range of education training and employment opportunities

- 3.9 The BEA identified seven equality issues under this priority with the key concern being employment levels amongst different groups who share a protected characteristic alongside child and pensioner poverty. The report highlights the WorkPath Programme and Tackling Poverty Fund as examples of work undertaken to address these equality areas and includes key data that demonstrates success in these areas.
- 3.10 The WorkPath programme data showcases the success of the service in placing residents into sustainable jobs over the 2018/19 period. 519 BAME residents, 98 residents with disabilities and 81 residents aged 50+ were

placed into sustainable jobs over this period. Young WorkPath is also highlighted with it now working across 26 schools and 2 colleges in the borough.

- 3.11 The Tackling Poverty Fund was established to address the high level of poverty in the borough and data in the report demonstrates the direct impact the fund has had on residents including the provision of 8,500 meals through the holiday hunger programme and identification of 800 pensioners who were contacted and encouraged to apply for a benefit they were entitled to but not currently claiming.

Priority 1 Outcome 2

Children and young people are protected so they get the best start in life and can realise their potential

- 3.12 The BEA identified seven equality issues under this priority relating to attainment levels and the promotion of understanding of LGBTQ issues amongst five groups who share a protected characteristic. The report references Family Group Conferences and the Learning & Achievement Strategy for 14 – 15 year olds 2019-24 as examples of work undertaken to address these equality issues as well as highlighting key data that demonstrates success in the area.
- 3.13 The Family Group Conference case study provides an example of an initiative undertaken to address any potential equality issues relating to children in the early stages and highlights that this service is increasing in popularity with 436 referrals made in 2017-18, the highest referral rate in London.
- 3.14 The Learning & Achievement Strategy for 14 – 25 years olds 2019-24 demonstrates the council's commitment to addressing attainment inequalities amongst our young people, notably referencing White British and Black Caribbean pupils. The strategy includes actions to improve the councils understanding of equality issues and new approaches to addressing these.

Priority 1 Outcome 3

People access joined-up services when they need them and feel healthier and more independent

- 3.15 The BEA identified fourteen equality issues under this priority across eight of the nine protected characteristics. The report references the Adult Learning Disability Strategy 2017-20 and Adult Social Care and Public Health Initiatives as examples of work undertaken to address these equality issues as well as highlighting key data that demonstrates success in the area.
- 3.16 The Adult Learning Disability Strategy 2017-20 highlights the councils work alongside the NHS to address inequality faced by adults with a learning disability including life expectancy which is significantly lower than the general population at 59 years for men and 56 years for women. To help address this, adults with a learning disability are encouraged to see their GP once a year

with the proportion of people doing this rising from 74% in 2017-18 to 82% in 2018-19.

- 3.17 Adult social care and public health initiatives aim to reduce health inequalities and improve the health of the population. Initiatives include the promotion of good sexual health, support services for people who smoke and tackling loneliness and isolation. Highlighted in the report is the assistive technology initiative which has enabled residents to stay safe and active in their own home supporting approximately 2,802 residents each month through the use of this technology.

Priority 2 Outcome 6

People live in good quality affordable homes and well-designed neighbourhoods

- 3.18 The BEA identified seven equality issues under this priority relating to homelessness, overcrowding and accessibility across seven protected characteristics. The report references the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2018-23 and Project 120 as examples of work undertaken to address these inequalities and also highlights key data that demonstrates success in the area.
- 3.19 The Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2018-23 sets out how the council plans to prevent homelessness, a key inequality in the borough as well as help vulnerable residents at risk of becoming homeless. Project 120 works to address the specific needs of families with a wheelchair user in their household. This successful initiative has resulted in 146 wheelchair accessible units being delivered in 2017/18 representing 16% of total affordable housing reducing the likelihood of these service users being in inadequate housing or on a waiting list.

Priority 2 Outcome 7

People feel safe in their neighbourhoods and anti-social behaviour is tackled

- 3.20 The BEA identified five equality issues under this priority relating to violence against women and girls and hate crime across three protected characteristics. The report references the Tower Hamlets Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) Strategy 2019-24 as an example of work undertaken to address inequalities faced by the residents who share this protected characteristic and also highlights key data that demonstrates success in the area.
- 3.21 The VAWG strategy sets out the council's priorities for tackling all forms of gendered violence and the inequalities that derive from this. Initiatives to support this include the Domestic Violence One Stop Shop located at the Idea Store, Whitechapel which was accessed by 242 residents in 2018 as well as the Sanctuary Project which provided safety and security to 47 residents in 2018/19.

Priority 2 Outcome 8

People feel they are part of a cohesive and vibrant community

- 3.22 The BEA identified five equality issues under this priority relating to isolation and loneliness, hate crime and advocacy across three protected characteristics. The No Place for Hate Forum, ESOL classes and Community Cohesion Pilot Programme are referenced as examples of work undertaken to address these inequalities and also highlights key data that demonstrates success in the area.
- 3.23 The No Place for Hate Forum has undertaken a campaign to raise awareness of the challenges created by hate crime in the community and reflective of its success is the volume of organisations and individuals signing up to the no place for hate pledge which to date include 142 organisations and 2,864 individuals.
- 3.24 Both ESOL classes and the community cohesion pilot programme address a number of inequalities faced by residents including isolation and vulnerability faced by new residents and migrants. Key achievements include ESOL classes being offered in the borough 7 days a week, 11,480 residents of Chinese and Vietnamese descent aged 50+ taking part in lunch clubs and 190 book break secession being help to prevent loneliness and isolation.
- 3.25 The report also includes data on the need to give disabled residents a voice in decision making with the council commissioning the Local Voices Steering Group to provide this function with 8 meetings being held in 2018-19.

Priority 3 Outcome 11

People say we continuously seek innovation and strive for excellence to embed a culture of sustainable improvement

- 3.26 The BEA identified five equality issues under this priority relating to representation, diversity and inclusion across five protected characteristics.
- 3.27 The report references the Tower Hamlets Annual Equalities Monitoring report and gender pay gap reporting as an example of work undertaken by the council to address these inequalities with these informing an action plan to address these. A gender pay gap still exists in the council and in 2017-18 women earned £1.69 per hour less than men (mean) and £1.30 per hour less (median). The report also highlights the councils work to ensure representation of different groups with the staff forums being revived in 2019.

4 EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The council has a Public Sector Equality Duty under the Equality Act (2010) to have due regard to the need to:
- Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation and any other conduct under the Act;

- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share those protected characteristics and people who do not; and
- Foster good relations between people who share those characteristics and people who do not.

4.2 This Tower Hamlets Equality Policy and Tower Hamlets Annual Equality Report 2018-19 demonstrates the council's commitment to the public sector equality duty by setting out its commitment to equality and providing examples of how it ensures that equality is at the heart of everything the council does from the money it spends, the people it employs to the services it provides. It does not suggest any changes to current practice or derogate from any statutory duties and has been developed through engagement with a number of internal stakeholders.

4.3 It also supports the councils broader equality objective as set out in the Tower Hamlets Plan 2018-23 and rolling three year Strategic Plan of tackling inequality by building a strong, inclusive and fair borough.

5 OTHER STATUTORY IMPLICATIONS

5.1 This section of the report is used to highlight further specific statutory implications that are either not covered in the main body of the report or are required to be highlighted to ensure decision makers give them proper consideration. Examples of other implications may be:

- Best Value Implications,
- Consultations,
- Environmental (including air quality),
- Risk Management,
- Crime Reduction,
- Safeguarding.
- Data Protection / Privacy Impact Assessment.

5.2 There are no other statutory implications.

6 COMMENTS OF THE CHIEF FINANCE OFFICER

6.1 The Mayor in Cabinet is requested to agree the contents of the Tower Hamlets Council Equality Policy (Appendix 1), note the Tower Hamlets Council Annual Equality Report 2018-19 (Appendix 2) and note the Equalities Implications set out at paragraph 4. There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.

7 COMMENTS OF LEGAL SERVICES

7.1 The council's legal requirements in respect of the Public Sector Equality Duty are embedded in the body of the report.

- 7.2 An equality policy highlights the council's commitment to promoting equality and diversity for both service users and staff.
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Linked Reports, Appendices and Background Documents

Linked Report

- None

Appendices

- Appendix 1 - Tower Hamlets Council Equality Policy
- Appendix 2 – Tower Hamlets Council Annual Equality Report 2018-19

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

- None.

Officer contact details for documents:

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