

Equality Framework for Local Government Action Plan



In May 2023 Somerset Council requested the Local Government Association to visit the Council and complete a Peer Challenge on the Councils compliance with the Equality Framework for Local Government. The Framework Covers 4 areas:

- Understanding and Working with your Communities
- Leadership partnership and organisation
- Responsive services and customer care
- Diverse and engaged workforce

The Council asked the Peers to focus on three areas:

- The level of ownership there is throughout the organisation by officers and Members of equality, diversity and inclusion.
- An understanding of the commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion by officers and Members across the organisation.
- How effectively 'Due Regard' is embedded within all stages of the decision-making process to inform the direction we take.

To support the Peer Challenge the Council completed a self-assessment that identified areas of good practice, areas for development and potential actions. As an outcome of the Peer Challenge the Peers have produced a Report that provides their feedback and proposed areas for development.

To address the key issues identified in the report in a managed way, a two-year Action Plan has been produced which can be found below. Those actions that are concerned with new developments will be looked at after 1st April 2024 once the Council's future structure and resources are known. These actions will not be lost but paused until we are able to effectively take them forward.

This action plan will work in tandem with the Councils Equality Objectives in order to provide the focus for equality work over the next two years. Any additional work will need to be considered against these two work plans.

Understanding and Working with your Communities		Whilst the Council's Equality function has a good working relationship with the equality voluntary sector in Somerset this is not embedded consistently throughout the whole council's work.			
	Action	Outcome	Organisation Lead	Equality Lead	Delivery Date
1.1	Map all data sets that the Council collects and identify where they are broken down by relevant Protected Characteristics	Improve data used to inform Equality Impact Assessment, service design and budget considerations	Malcolm Riches	Angela Farmer	December 2024
1.2	Continue to develop the Population Health database and understand how this can be used across the wider Council to make the most of the data collected.	Improve data used to inform Equality Impact Assessment, service design and budget considerations	Malcolm Riches	Angela Farmer	Ongoing
1.3	Embed equality within the Council's Data strategy	Make sure we are clear on how data support equality outcomes	Malcolm Riches	Angela Farmer	December 2024
1.4	Ensure development of the Business Intelligence Strategy includes clear links to the requirements around Equality data.	Make sure equality data is embedded in corporate strategy	Malcolm Riches	Angela Farmer	December 2024
1.5	Create an Equality Dashboard for the Council	Inform the councils direction around equality and Equality Impact Assessment	Malcolm Riches	Angela Farmer	June 2024

1.6	Identify ways Members can provide feedback on communities, resolve any gaps and share with Member Steering Group.	Improve the representation of the Equality Voice in what the council does	Kate Hellard/Scott Wooldridge	David Crisfield	June 2024
1.7	Create a Community Tension Monitoring Mechanism (connected to ASB mapping?)	Make sure the council can proactively impact community tensions	Lucy Macready	David Crisfield	June 2024
1.8	Look at ways to encourage greater participation by a wide variety of groups, often underrepresented, in the decision making of the Council.	Decisions are informed by those they will affect	Mike Bryant	Tom Rutland	June 2025
1.9	Develop monitoring information for Citizen Space together with guidance about when to use the monitoring categories and what to do with them.	Make sure consultations are representative and identify any impacts for specific groups	Victoria Hill	Tom Rutland	1 st February 2024

Leadership partnership and organisation		A reliance on the expertise of the Equality function can impact on the timeliness of services consideration of Due Regard. The council has also not fully grasped its role as a leader in the community on equality issues.			
	Action	Outcome	Organisation Lead	Equality Lead	Delivery Date
2.1	Create a plan for Equality days throughout the year that can be worked on with the VCFSE and Partners.	Visually display the Council's role as a Leader in Equality Diversity and Inclusion	Peter Elliot	Tom Rutland	February 2024
2.2	Create a consistent approach to how we engage in an ongoing conversation with the	Have a standard to what is expected of all involved	Sara Skirton	David Crisfield	March 2024

	equality VCFSE.				
2.3	Identify a forward plan to provide future opportunities for the Member Equality Steering Group on building a relationship with the VCSFE.	Steering Group are aware of community needs and issues.	Sara Skirton	David Crisfield	February 2024
2.4	Create an organisational equality network.	Provide a structure for equality work in the council and cross organisational voice on equality.		Tom Rutland/Michelle Anderson	June 2024
2.5	Work with services to improve the timeliness of 'Due Regard' considerations and Equality Impact Assessment completion.	Improve the timeliness, use and transparency of Due Regard		Tom Rutland/Michelle Anderson	Ongoing
2.6	Produce 8 area/process specific guidance on how Due Regard should inform how we do things	Make sure due regard is considered early and influences outcomes	Subject Matter Experts	Tom Rutland/Michelle Anderson	December 2024
2.7	Provide regular equality impact assessment drop-in sessions	Make sure due regard is considered early and influences outcomes		All	Ongoing
2.8	Work with performance leads to identify how Equality Impact Assessment mitigations can be effectively monitored.	Make sure actions are completed and due regard is seen as an ongoing commitment	Nicola Miles	Tom Rutland	June 2024
2.9	Identify a way to share monitoring of Equality Objectives more effectively.	We are more transparent in any progress	Nicola Miles	Tom Rutland	June 2024
2.10	Work with the Member Equality Steering	The group is effectively		Tom Rutland	June 2024

	Group to clarify its purpose and reach.	contributing to the councils work on equality, diversity and inclusion.			
2.11	Create an Equality Strategy to establish the golden thread for equality	Provide clarity on our commitment and direction	Paul Harding	Tom Rutland	June 2024
2.12	Include EIA requirements on the forward plan	Clarity on need	Mike Bryant	Tom Rutland	June 2024
2.13	Investigate the ability for EIA's to be published separately to decisions	Ease of scrutiny of EIA's completed	Mike Bryant	Tom Rutland	June 2024
2.14	Work with scrutiny chairs and boards to improve consideration of equality, diversity and inclusion within this process	Better and more effective scrutiny of EDI at an earlier stage	Jamie Jackson	Angela Farmer and Tom Rutland	June 2024

Responsive services and customer care		The councils buying power does not always used to support the Councils objectives around equality and diversity. This consideration is also not consistent in the councils direction setting			
	Action	Outcome	Organisation Lead	Equality Lead	Delivery Date
3.1	Work with Procurement to make sure a consistent approach to the use of data (including equality data) is included in the new contract management system.	Strengthen equality, diversity and inclusion within Contracts and Procurement practices for improved outcomes	Claire Griffiths	Tom Rutland	December 2024
3.2	Providing the necessary training to procurement and commissioning staff to make sure equality is clearly included within procurement processes	Strengthen equality, diversity and inclusion within Contracts and Procurement practices for improved outcomes	Claire Griffiths	Tom Rutland	December 2024

3.3	Tighten up commissioning processes to ensure equality considerations are explicit at the time of tendering and in the monitoring requirements of contracts.	Strengthen equality, diversity and inclusion within Contracts and Procurement practices for improved outcomes	Claire Griffiths	Tom Rutland	December 2024
3.4	Enact appropriate contract variations and clear improvement targets for contract providers which are subsequently monitored when the results of contract monitoring show the need for improvements in equalities outcomes.	Strengthen equality, diversity and inclusion within Contracts and Procurement practices for improved outcomes	Claire Griffiths	Tom Rutland	December 2024
3.5	Provide guidance on compliance with the requirement to have 'Due Regard' to the activity of sub-contractors as required under the new Procurement Bill.	Clarity on requirement and purpose	Claire Griffiths	Tom Rutland	December 2024
3.6	Ensure that full consideration of corporate equality objectives is a required part of the service outcome planning process.	Better corporate consideration and monitoring of equality, diversity and inclusion.	Nicola Miles/Paul Harding	Tom Rutland	June 2024
3.7	Ensure that full consideration is given to measuring how service outcomes impact on equality groups in the new Performance Management Framework and that the service user/resident experience of people from the protected characteristics of services is captured and reported in the new Performance Management Framework.	We are measuring the impact of equality work	Nicola Miles	Tom Rutland	June 2024
3.8	The development of all new service plans to	Equality is embedded	Nicola Miles	Tom Rutland	June 2025

	incorporate a requirement to have consulted with service users, and particularly those from Protected Characteristics.	through everything we do.			
3.9	Identify a mechanism to measure the engagement and participation of residents and groups/organisations from, or representing, Protected Characteristics in the new LCN's.	LCN's are representative of the communities they cover.	Kate Hellard	David Crisfield	June 2025

Diverse and engaged workforce		Consistency in the training and support offer for staff is needed. The Council also needs to support the development of its staff networks and how it promotes its policies.			
	Action	Outcome	Organisation Lead	Equality Lead	Delivery Date
4.1	Create an action plan informed by our current data and the outcome report of the independent Race Audit.	Progress the council's commitment to be an Anti-Racist organisation.		Michelle Anderson	March 2024
4.2	Create a fully resourced training programme incorporating mandatory and options online and face to face opportunities.	A structured training plan for the Staff and Elected Members that improves knowledge and makes practical changes to how the organisation functions around equality and diversity.		Michelle Anderson	June 2024
4.3	Work with our Staff Network to provide	Make sure the networks		Michelle	Ongoing

	support and develop their reach and influence.	are empowered to influence change, effectively challenge the organisation and support outcomes relevant to them.		Anderson	
4.4	Continue to review and improve Leadership and Management Programmes for staff including developing a reverse-mentoring and allyship scheme.	Provide opportunities for the organisations Leadership to understand the relationship between the decisions they make and our staffs experience of these. Specifically, the experiences of staff from Protected Characteristics.		Michelle Anderson	December 2024
4.5	Identify a more engaging strategy for sharing equality policy and practice throughout the organisation.	All staff understand the equality policies and guidance and can effectively implement them.		Michelle Anderson/Tom Rutland	December 2024