





Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Report for:	Finance and Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Title of report:	Equity, Diversity, Inclusion & Belonging Strategy for 2025 - 2030
Date:	4 th March 2025
Report on behalf of:	Councillor Caroline Smith-Wright, Portfolio Holder for People and Transformation
Part:	I
If Part II, reason:	N/A
Appendices:	Proposed EDIB 2025-2030 Strategy Equality Impact Assessment Pre-Screener
Background papers:	Current Equality, Diversity and Diversity Strategy (Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy) 2023/24 Annual Report & Action Plan (Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan)
Glossary of acronyms and any other abbreviations used in this report:	EDIB – Equity, Diversity, Inclusion & Belonging

Report Author / Responsible Officer	
Stacie Young – Organisational Development Manager/ Matt Rawdon – Assistance Director - People	
 	
Stacie.young@dacorum.gov.uk / 01442 228396 (ext. 2396)	
Matthew.Rawdon@dacorum.gov.uk / 01442 228200	
Aidan Wilkie – Strategic Director (People and Transformation)	

Corporate Priorities	Community engagement: Engage with residents and partners to have a real say on our services and the borough Service improvement and delivery:
-----------------------------	--

	Running the Council efficiently and putting residents at the heart of everything we do Proud and thriving borough: Realise our potential as a great place to live and work with a thriving business community
Wards affected	All
Purpose of the report:	1. To present and consult on our proposed EDI&B strategy for 2025 – 2030 prior to seeking Council approval.
Recommendation (s) to the decision maker (s):	2. To propose any suggestions to help improve the draft Strategy
Period for post policy/project review:	5 years post approval

1 Introduction/Background:

At Dacorum we have a vision aligned to our people strategy, forming part of the Future Dacorum Transformation Programme which is ‘The right staff, in the right place, at the right time, working in the right way’.

Our vision is to have a workforce that is high performing, highly motivated and with the skills and resources to deliver the best possible outcomes for our residents. In return we want people who feel supported, engaged and have real opportunities to develop and learn.

Research suggests that an organisation that has a strong Equity, Diversity, Inclusion & Belonging strategy keeps employees engaged and motivated more than those who do not adopt such strategies or hold them in high regard ([HR Magazine - Strong D&I strategy keeps employees engaged and motivated](#)). Additionally, a Gallup survey found that young millennials and Gen Z’s (1989-2001) want to work for organisations that are diverse and inclusive of all people ([4 Things Gen Z and Millennials Expect From Their Workplace](#)).

Furthermore, psychological safety is a basic human requirement and a prerequisite for individuals to be at their best in all parts of their lives, including work ([What is psychological safety?](#)). Furthermore a psychologically safe environment is intrinsically linked to strategies on Equity, Diversity, Inclusion & Belonging.

At Dacorum we want to ensure that we create a culture where everyone feels safe to bring their authentic selves to work. We do this by ensuring that Equity, Diversity Inclusion & Belonging is at the heart of what we do and this is linked to our value of ‘Nurturing’, as well as our commitment to the Equality Act 2010 and achieving the 3 aims of The Public Sector Equality Duty, which are:

- eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other unlawful conduct prohibited by the act
- advance equality of opportunity between people who share and people who do not share a relevant protected characteristic
- foster good relations between people who share and people who do not share a relevant protected characteristic

Additionally, focusing on Equity, Diversity, Inclusion & Belonging also increases customer satisfaction and research shows that creating a diverse workforce means you are more equipped to connect with customers and their needs

and have empathy towards them ([Why Diversity Matters to the Customer Experience](#)). Creating an environment where our resident's voice matters means we can develop the right services and environments for them to thrive which positively impacts upon the communities they live in.

Since our last strategy, which was developed in 2020, we have made consistent progress in the achievement of the EDI action plan which is linked to the delivery of the strategy (see attached links to the action plan for more details). In addition our focus on engaging our people in conversation on topics related to Equity, Diversity, Inclusion & Belonging with our EDI&B working group has led to the delivery of a number of events and initiatives which include, but is not limited to:

- Introduced a prayer and breastfeeding room
- Introduced the LGBTQ+ ally scheme
- Celebrated International Women's Day, Black History Month, Mental Health Awareness Week
- Held celebrations in the Borough for the Windrush 75 year celebrations
- Comissioned an outdoor South-Asian inspired cooking session within the community and purchased a Carron Board for Bennetts End Adventure Playground (a popular South Asian game)
- Ran 'Girls Empowerment sessions' at the Adventure Playgrounds
- Implemented core pillars of focus for our Equity, Diversity, Inclusion & Belonging Working Group – communications, learning, events and celebrations
- Made improvements to our Equality Impact Assessment and quality checking process
- Became a Disability Confident level 2 Employer and implemented a reasonable adjustments policy
- Established the Gender Equity Group who meet on a regular basis and raise key items and recommendations via the Equity, Diversity, Inclusion & Belonging Working Group
- Included an EDI objective as part of our annual performance development review process for all employees across Dacorum
- Simplified our employee equalities monitoring form to make it easier for employees to share their data with us to help inform our decisions and programmes
- Reviewed our recruitment practices and identified ways to increase our inclusivity, remove barriers and reach a more diverse candidate base, all of which will be delivered through our recruitment project which is underway
- Implemented a dedicated Humanitarian Response Team who provide advice, support and assistance to refugees being resettled
- Ran a cost of living pop up sessions across Dacorum to support anyone struggling with the cost of living crisis
- Updated our domestic abuse policies to support those experiencing domestic abuse and rolled out training to all people managers so that managers are better equipped to deal with domestic abuse incidents within their teams
- Signed the Menopause Workplace Pledge and launch our Menopause Policy, introducing regular Menopause Support Groups and celebrating World Menopause day with a workshop on Positive Intelligence.

We want to ensure that we continue the excellent progress that we have made so far and we have spent 2024 engaging with internal teams and exploring where we need to focus our efforts in relation Equity, Diversity, Inclusion & Belonging at Dacorum for our new, 2025-2030 Equity, Diversity, Inclusion & Belonging Strategy.

Our strategy was developed with teams who attended workshops from across the Council who came to share their views, perspectives and opinions on the work that we need to do in the future to achieve our aims aligned to The Public Sector Equality Duty, the Equality Act 2010 and to ensure we are upholding our 'Nurturing' value and can achieve our People Strategy Vision.

We also consulted with members of our Strategic Leadership Team and Corporate Leadership Teams, Cabinet Members, our Equity, Diversity, Inclusion & Belonging SLT sponsors, recognised Trade Unions and our Equity, Diversity, Inclusion & Belonging working group, which includes employees from across the Council.

2 Key Issues/proposals/main body of the report:

From the workshops and conversations that we held, we identified 4 key areas where we need to focus our efforts which have formed the basis of our new EDI&B Strategy. These 4 areas are as follows:

1. Increase the data we hold and use this data to inform our decisions
2. Connect and foster relationships with our communities and customers
3. Champion diversity, inclusivity and belonging as part of our culture and eliminate any unlawful treatment
4. Provide accessible services that allow us to reach all corners of the Borough

We are confident that our strategy outlines our approach to ensuring that we comply with legal and local frameworks and key legislation.

In addition to the strategy, each directorate will identify key objectives within their service plans that directly link to the strategy and support us in achieving our aims.

These objectives will also form part of the EDI&B Action plan, the detail of which is currently being finalised, however some of the key actions that will form part of the action include:

- Setting up an internal community engagement taskforce to identify and engage with particular communities or groups of people who share a protected characteristic. This group will be crucial in supporting us to understand what our communities need from us and help us to engage with them and reach all parts of the community more effectively. Data and insights captured from these relationships will help us further develop our action plan and inform key decisions (events we run and services needed, as an example).
- Identify the gaps in our customer data and capture information that is missing. We will then be able to use this data to guide our staff when dealing with customers to provide the best service, and it will help us to shape our services and make more informed decisions about what we offer.
- Analyse complaints data around matters relating to EDIB topics. This will help us to identify any patterns to complaints and take action to tackle the issue, identify training needs for our staff, or awareness needed within the community.
- Carry out an internal staff survey to understand how inclusive Dacorum is and identify key areas we need to focus on. This survey will allow us to capture the level of internal understanding on topics relating to EDIB and serve as an instrument to measure progress in the future as we would run this on a frequent basis (every other year, for example).
- Train our staff in customer services and key topics relating to EDIB for example how to effectively work across cultures and how to effectively engage with diverse groups of people.

3 Options and alternatives considered

As part of us developing our new EDI&B strategy we considered all options. One option would have been to not renew our strategy and to continue working from the previous strategy. Given our strategic priorities this was not considered the right approach, as whilst the previous strategy helped us to focus our work in this space, it didn't enable us to focus on the most important areas that will enable the Council to capture the right data and use this to inform our decisions.

It was also considered that the previous strategy, whilst it had many areas of focus, it did not support us to create momentum on areas that will truly make a difference for Dacorum (internally and externally) due to the broad nature of this strategy.

We identified that to support us in making real changes, and to positively impact upon those we serve and work at the Council, we needed to focus on some specific areas that we could do really well.

Additionally, as part of our consultations we did not enter into conversations with any pre-conceived ideas, more so, we wanted those at the heart of what we do to identify areas of focus and share their ideas and feedback with us so that this strategy was authentic and meaningful.

4 Consultation

Our strategy was created with stakeholders across the Council. We also consulted with the Corporate Leadership Team and our Strategic Leadership Team as well as having conversation with our EDI&B Working group (a group of Officers from across the Council who support in the delivery of our EDI&B initiatives) and our EDI&B Strategic Sponsors.

5 Financial and value for money implications:

As it stands there are no financial implications linked to the delivery of the Equity, Diversity, Inclusion & Belonging Strategy (2025-2030) however, depending on future events that we may agree to run as part of bringing diverse groups together, there may be financial implications associated with these. Any financial requirements will be managed internally within in each directorate/department and will be considered as and when it is appropriate.

6 Legal Implications

The EDI&B strategy must align to current and existing legislation (The Equality Act 2010) which ensures people are legally protected from discrimination in the workplace and wider society and The Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) which has 3 aims:

- eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other unlawful conduct prohibited by the act
- advance equality of opportunity between people who share and people who do not share a relevant protected characteristic
- foster good relations between people who share and people who do not share a relevant protected characteristic

7 Risk implications:

One of the key risks that we identified early on was the lack of community engagement opportunities around Equity, Diversity, Inclusion & Belonging. We identified that the Council does not have specific engagement groups where topics of these kind can be discussed and feedback sought from the communities we serve. In addition to this, we identified that we need to do more to capture relevant data to inform our decisions and direct our services and activities to support our compliance with The Public Sector Equality Duty.

It is therefore proposed that whilst we are confident this strategy covers the key areas we should focus on, further confirmed by its alignment to the Local Government Equality Framework, one of our priorities will be forming effective community groups and forums, creating opportunities for community engagement and discussions on topics relating to Equity, Diversity, Inclusion & Belonging and capturing the right data. This work has already started with internal teams as we set up our internal community engagement taskforce. This invaluable feedback will support future action plans aligned to this strategy.

A further risk is in relation to each service area/department and their accountability for the delivery of the strategy and their achievement of the objectives they set as part of their service planning. Given the resource within EDI&B (one full time, permanent Lead Officer) we need to ensure that each service area will be accountable for delivery of the strategy where it aligns to their services. We need to ensure that there is wider understanding about the responsibility of delivering the action plans associated with this strategy and we have been working with directorates to support them in creating their EDI&B actions plans as part of the service planning process and progress will be reviewed throughout the year.

8 Equalities, Community Impact and Human Rights:

Equality Impact Assessment reviewed/carried out and included in the appendix - On carrying out the Equality Impact Assessment we identified that the actions that arise from this proposed strategy will impact positively upon all protected groups. The aim of this strategy is to eliminate any unlawful treatment and discrimination and

to foster good relations between those who hold and those who do not hold protected characteristics and advance equality of opportunity. We believe that the 4 aims identified within the strategy will support us in achieving this, and keep us focused on the work we do in this field.

Human Rights – there are no Human Rights Implications arising from this report.

9 Sustainability implications (including climate change, health and wellbeing, community safety)

There are no identified implications in relation to sustainability. This strategy requires us to work collaboratively with teams across Dacorum ensuring that if there are any concerns or issues identified these are brought to our attention early on.

10 Council infrastructure (including Health and Safety, HR/OD, assets and other resources)

Given our resource within this area (1 full time member of staff), we have been working with officers across Dacorum to support us in delivering our strategy and we will continue with this approach in order for us to deliver successfully. As a result there are no impacts upon Council infrastructure.

11 Conclusions:

To enable Dacorum Borough Council to not only meet its legal requirements but its corporate priorities, the new EDI&B strategy is focused on 4 key areas which are:

1. Increase the data we hold and use this data to inform our decisions
2. Connect and foster relationships with our communities and customers
3. Champion diversity, inclusivity and belonging as part of our culture and eliminate any unlawful treatment
4. Provide accessible services that allow us to reach all corners of the Borough

This strategy will enable the Council to really understand the demographics of our residents and communities and ensure the services we provide are accessible and meet their needs.

It will enable us to foster meaningful relationships and ensure we have effective communication channels which deepen our understanding of those within the community and those who use our services. This will support us to respond effectively and inform the decisions we make about our services now, and in the future.

It will support us in putting the customer at the heart of what we do and will form the foundation of our Customer Promise.

Our strategy will also support us in creating a Council that people choose to work for. An environment where people feel safe and supported where we celebrate diverse views and experiences and become inspired by new ideas and ways of thinking.

This in turn will positively impact upon the services and experiences of our customers, residents and the community as a whole.