

## Appendix G: Action Plan

Taking the Vision, Strategic Principles and the Objectives into account, we have devised a 12-month Action Plan for the Council. This plan seeks to build on each of these areas to help the Council move from a theoretical understanding to practical implementation. Our recommendations (both internal and external) are presented using a RAG system to indicate the timescales within which we recommend West Berkshire Council should implement the suggested improvements:

**Red** (Short-term) - To be completed within the next 3 months;

**Amber** (Medium-term) - To be completed within the next 6 months;

**Green** (Long-term) - to be completed within the next 12 months.

In developing this Action Plan, we have produced a set of recommendations that take into account the limited resources available in the Council. While we recommend that the Council pursues an ambitious approach to become community leaders for inclusion in the future, it is important that the actions set out in this 12 month plan focus on enabling the Council to meet the PSED.

The colour coding system is not used to indicate level of importance - all activities set out in this Action Plan should be considered priority areas of focus for the next year. The actions are colour coded to reflect the fact that some of the actions can be taken more quickly than others. There are a number of actions which TEG can support the Council to achieve, denoted by an asterisk (\*), and others that we believe the Council should lead.

We have left the 'Suggested Responsibility' column blank to provide the Council with the opportunity to agree the most appropriate department for each action to sit with. We strongly recommend that this forms part of the stakeholder testing and decision-making process as a key way of building accountability for the Action Plan's success.

Focus	Recommendation	Justification	Associated Objectives	Suggested Responsibility	Timeframe
External [1]	Identify (and build an approach to engage with) local underrepresented community groups / networks	<p>Several respondents indicated to us that the Council’s community engagement has been limited and narrow in approach thus far. There was a general sentiment that the Council has not made the most of the opportunity to build relationships with the wide variety of community networks in the local population.</p> <p>We recommend that the Council particularly considers how best to engage with the following groups:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• LGBT+ Communities</li> <li>• GRT communities</li> <li>• Disability networks</li> <li>• Young mums</li> <li>• Carers</li> <li>• Armed Forces and Veterans</li> </ul>	2, 3, 4	Equalities Officer BCT Team Public Health Early Years Adult social Care	<p><b>Identification of groups / networks within 3 months</b></p> <p><b>Engagement strategy built and commenced within 6 months</b></p>
External [2]	Establish an external EDI comms strategy	An EDI communications strategy aims to simplify the approach to sharing EDI updates and plans with stakeholders (in this case, residents and partners). This will help to ensure that the Council has a consistent and joined-up approach to its external messaging. Regular communications should aid the Council in: conveying the importance	1, 3	Comms Team Equalities Officer	<b>Within 12 months</b>

		<p>of EDI, raising awareness of future plans, and empowering local communities to drive positive change.</p> <p>The types of information the Council wishes to share is to be agreed internally, but it may be helpful to consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Events that the Council is celebrating;</li> <li>• Actions the Council has taken or plans to take to embed EDI in its wider strategy;</li> <li>• The positive work of ERGs within the Council;</li> <li>• EDI statements from the Executive Team;</li> <li>• Learnings from EDI training;</li> <li>• Updates to processes that will help to make West Berkshire a more inclusive place to live and work.</li> </ul> <p>It is imperative to ensure that an inclusive approach to external communications is at the heart of any agreed strategy (particularly ensuring that the method of communication does not create or exacerbate digital exclusion, and considers accessibility). Conducting a light-touch EqIA here may help the Council to mitigate against any equalities risks for particular groups.</p>			
External [3]	Seek to understand the barriers to standing for local election for underrepresented groups	The Council should seek to be representative of the local population it serves. Where particular groups appear to be standing in low numbers, we advise that the Council explores the barriers (and interventions required to overcome them) through continuous engagement. It can also help to consider if there is overrepresentation	3	Equalities Officer	<b>Within 12 months</b>

		<p>from particular demographics in order to consider a) do those groups have access to additional resources and what can be done to redress the balance; b) what is positive about their experience and whether this be retained / replicated; c) how can those from demographics that are well represented or overrepresented be engaged to mitigate this by representing others?</p> <p>This process should result in an increased awareness of the lived experiences of marginalised communities, and feeds into the 'Everyone is understood' Strategic Principle.</p>		Democratic Services	
External [4]	Review commissioned services (such as Educafe) to understand what worked and how to replicate the success/expand the service	<p>We recognise that the Council is facing budgetary constraints. This highlights the need to strategically evaluate the success of previously commissioned services (particularly of Educafe) to replicate success and ensure any future spending is driven by a sense of 'what works'.</p> <p>Following review, the Council should seek to identify how the approach can be replicated or expanded. There is a need to consider whether such services can also be made available outside of main hubs such as Newbury, so as to allow for further rural integration (perhaps through the use of mobile units).</p>	4	Procurement – all commissioned  Equalities Officer - Educafe	Ongoing
External [5]	Consider the feasibility of fortnightly 'community transport' days whereby those living rurally are provided with	According to the EDI Needs Assessment, 36% of residents live in rural areas and small settlements in West Berkshire. Inadequate and expensive transportation was repeatedly mentioned as a barrier for rural residents. Recognising that the Council can only do so much within one year, we suggest that fortnightly 'community transport'	2	Transport	Within 12 months

	free travel into the main social hubs	<p>days, especially where these are aligned with particular social/celebration events, are trialled.</p> <p>We recommend this is done for a period of 3 months initially to see whether the activity has achieved its desired aim of rural integration and community building. Failing this, the Council should seek to explore additional barriers.</p> <p>While ideally both Action 4 and 5 would be implemented, Action 5 is of increased importance in the absence of Action 4.</p>			
External / Internal [6]	Sign up to the <a href="#">Disability Confident Scheme</a>	Our engagement with staff, residents and partners revealed a general sentiment that disability is not treated as a priority for the Council. The Disability Confident Scheme's tiered approach allows for clear direction and progression metrics to create a more intentional approach to disability inclusion.	2, 3, 4	Already in place and managed by HR	<b>Within 3 months</b>
External / Internal [7]	Identify an <a href="#">EDI calendar</a> to roll out across the Council	An EDI Calendar sets out awareness days, months and events for the year. We recommend that the Council adopts the use of an existing calendar and shares this internally to raise awareness and promote education. Externally, we recommend that the Council shares community posts about the events contained in the Calendar to promote community inclusion.	4, 8	Equalities Officer for external work supported by Staff EF and Comms Team. HR could take responsibility for the internal objective but	<b>Within 6 months</b>

				have no dedicated resource to do this at present.	
External / Internal [8]	Review the Council's approach to EqIAs and identify areas for improvement*	<p>EqIA's help to ensure that all new policies and procedures are designed with inclusion at their core and that any potential adverse effects can be accounted for and mitigated. Whilst the Council is not legally obligated under the PSED to conduct EqIA's, they can help to demonstrate compliance. We strongly recommend that a consistent and holistic structure around conducting these is agreed within the Council, ensuring all stakeholders responsible for conducting them are informed of the why, the how and the when.</p> <p>Based on the findings of TEG's engagement process, the EDI Needs Assessment, and other recent legislative changes, the Council should consider adding in additional groups to the EqIA process.</p>	1, 5, 6	Legal Equalities Officer	<b>Within 6 months</b>
External / Internal [9]	<b>Build a guidance document for community officers to work more collaboratively when engaging in rural outreach activities</b>	We are aware that the Council (alongside Voluntary and Community Sector partners) have already made positive strides to engage with various rural communities, presenting a strong opportunity to build on the work that has been done to date. We recommend that a guidance document is produced and shared with those engaging in outreach to ensure a standardised approach to sign-posting and outreach methods. The guidance should also seek to encourage the regular sharing of information between outreach officers to ensure an informed approach on 'what works'.	7	Equalities Officer	<b>Within 6 months</b>

Internal [10]	Develop a specific 'Reasonable Adjustments' policy*	<p>Whilst the Council has a Reasonable Adjustments Flow Chart to provide guidance on access to funding, not all staff who could benefit from reasonable adjustments may be aware that they are entitled to them. Creating a policy will help to ensure that all staff who require adjustments due to a disability are informed about what the process is and what support they are entitled to.</p> <p>Furthermore, a policy will provide assurance to staff that, even if they do not want/need adjustments due to a disability at present, they will be able to access them in the future should this change over time. It is crucial that the Council is aware that insufficient understanding and/or application of this process could result in a type of disability discrimination under the Equality Act 2010. In an effort to increase awareness, the Council may wish to first engage in training to better understand reasonable adjustment processes.</p>	6, 8	Already in place and managed by HR	<b>Within 3 months</b>
Internal [11]	Develop a training programme to promote EDI awareness*	<p>Throughout our engagement process, we identified an acute need to improve understanding of particular characteristics, including but not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Neurodiversity (Neurodiversity can, in many circumstances, fall within the definition of disability under The Equality Act);</li> <li>• Disability; and,</li> <li>• GRT communities.</li> </ul>	7, 8	Some aspects are already in place and are led by HR using the Corporate Training budget. An offer to cover the neurodiversity training	<b>Senior Leadership and Directorate Leads within 3 months</b>

		<p>We recommend that this training is first conducted with senior leaders to ensure those directing and delivering on the key aspects of the Council Strategy are equipped with the knowledge, skills and encouragement to embody EDI in their day-to-day responsibilities.</p> <p>We also recommend that EDI training is followed up with a reflection session for attendees to discuss what they have learned, how it can positively impact the Council's priorities and also how the learnings can be further disseminated throughout the workforce.</p>	<p>required has been made by a company called Cognassist. Training is £10K and budget can be allocated from the Corporate Training budget. Any additional training could also be procured through use of the corporate training budget if budget currently put on hold is allowed to be used for this purpose. There is also a new LMS being implemented and at date of writing it is unknown what EDI training is available to</p>	<p><b>Expansion of the EDI Awareness training to managers within 6 months</b></p>
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				support this objective.	
Internal [12]	Establish an approach to engaging with Employee Resource Groups ( <b>ERG</b> )*	<p>ERGs bring lived experience and, when supported, can help to foster a sense of collective responsibility, as per Strategic Principle 3. We understand that there are a number of ERGs already set up at the Council, but that there is not a structured approach to engaging with them.</p> <p>We suggest that Executive Directors or other relevant senior leaders within the Council convene to agree an approach to this. The Council should seek to establish OKR's with each ERG, understand how frequently they gather (and whether this is in their lunch breaks or in paid time), and what level of engagement they would like with senior leaders.</p> <p>Once the above has been established, we recommend that an Executive Sponsor is agreed for each ERG, and that this individual will be responsible for attending meetings (frequency as per the group's desire) and taking suggestions/recommendations to other senior</p>	7, 8	<p>Already a Staff Equalities Forum in place which is managed by the Equalities Officer.</p> <p>Women's Network and Managers' Networks (about to start) are led by the Wellbeing Business Partner. This post is currently an FTC to the 31<sup>st</sup> March</p>	<b>Within 6 months</b>

leaders where budget can be discussed and agreed to support initiatives.

2024. In order to ensure this objective is met (and those lead by HR) it is suggested that a 0.5FTE K/J grade post is created as an Employee Engagement and Equalities post that would sit in HR and manage all of the employee EDI responsibilities. Without this resource these objectives cannot be delivered. It should be noted that as of the 1<sup>st</sup> April 2024 there will be 0.2FTE of the current K Grade Equalities Officer post

				that will be vacant and could contribute to the building of the new 0.5FTE post.	
Internal [13]	Establish an internal EDI Communications strategy*	<p>Much like an external EDI Communications strategy, an internal strategy is about building a sense of collective responsibility and ensuring clarity around EDI plans. For an internal strategy, greater focus should be placed on establishing accountability metrics, such as who will own the action and when progress is expected to be achieved.</p> <p>The Executive Team may find it helpful to use this Action Plan as a base to develop a communications strategy, agreeing who will share updates, how frequently updates will be shared and the supporting narrative that will sit alongside progress updates. We recommend that communications convey both the successes and also where improvements still need to be made - this is a key aspect of becoming more visible and transparent about the work the Council is doing.</p>	7	Equalities Officer or new Employee Engagement post.	<b>Within 6 months</b>
Internal [14]	Conduct a policy and procedure review*	EDI (and all other people-related policies and procedures) should ideally be reviewed every 1-2 years to ensure they are up to date, fit for purpose and in line with best practice. An EDI-focused review aims to address any words, phrases, tonality or format that could (indirectly or directly) discriminate against particular	5, 6	A review action plan for all people related policies is currently being	<b>Within 12 months</b>

individuals/groups. We would recommend that grievance and disciplinary policies and processes that underpin the Council's approach to discrimination, harassment and victimisation are subject to review with an EDI lens. As per Action 13, the Council should share any updates to policies and/or procedures with staff as part of any agreed communications strategy.

drawn up. However the HR team has other priorities with the implementation of a new HR and Payroll System so reviews will only be possible without additional resource when time allows. It is intended this will however be over the next 12 months.

## Appendix A: Associated policies/strategies

Policy/Strategy	Context	Comments
Gender Pay Gap Data	The Council is legally required to report on Gender Pay Gap data each year.	Completed by HR.
Maternity Procedure [HRMAT] V.2.3 Nov 2019	This procedure sets out the entitlements and responsibilities that apply to employees who are pregnant and give birth.	No change
Menopause Policy [HRMP] V.1 Sept 2020	The purpose of this policy is to raise awareness, encourage open conversation and support workers to continue to be effective in their jobs while experiencing menopause.	Also a Menopause Awareness group is in place and is led by the current Employee Wellbeing Business Partner.
Sickness Absence – Reporting and Management Policy, Procedure and Guidance [HRMSA1] V.1.9 Aug 2022	The purpose of this policy is to support the effective reporting, recording and management of sickness absence to reduce its impact on service delivery and provide appropriate support to employees.	Subject to review in 2023
Shared Parental Leave Policy [HRSPLP] V.1 March 2015	The purpose of this policy is to set out how the Council will handle the discretionary aspects of Shared Parental Leave and Pay.	No change
Transgender Policy [TRPV1] V.1 Sept 2018	The purpose of this policy is to set out the Council’s commitment to ensuring that transgender people are treated with dignity and are not unlawfully discriminated against or disadvantaged in the workplace.	No change at present
Draft Council Strategy 2023-2027 Forward Together [For Consultation Jan 2023]	A Council Strategy is a business planning document that sets out future priorities and planned outcomes. A new Strategy is produced every four years.	Currently subject to review in 2023.
Capability Procedure [WBCPCR] V.4 Dec 2022	This procedure is to be used to manage performance that falls below the required	Subject to review in 2023

	standard due to 'lack of aptitude, skill or ability'.	
Disciplinary Procedure [HR Disc] V.4 Dec 2022	The Disciplinary Procedure is designed to help and encourage employees to achieve and maintain standards of conduct.	Subject to review in 2023
Equality in Employment Policy [No ref given] V.3 March 2016	The purpose of this policy is to set out West Berkshire Council's approach to diversity and equality in employment.	Subject to review but will be based on resource availability
Equality Policy [No ref given] V.1 Jan 2018	The purpose of this Policy is to set out West Berkshire Council's vision and commitment to equality of opportunity and respect for diversity.	Subject to review but will be based on resource availability
Reasonable Adjustments for Staff with Disabilities Flow Chart [No ref given] V.3 May 2016	A Corporate Process for Accessing Funding in the application of reasonable adjustments for staff with disabilities.	New policy and procedure implemented in 2022.