



DATE: 17 September 2024
MY REF: RW/CCouncil
PLEASE ASK FOR: Mrs. R. Whitelaw
DIRECT DIALLING: (0116) 305 6098
E-MAIL: rosemary.whitelaw@leics.gov.uk

Dear Sir/Madam

I summon you to the MEETING of the LEICESTERSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL to be held at COUNTY HALL, GLENFIELD on WEDNESDAY, 25 SEPTEMBER 2024 at 2.00 p.m. for the transaction of the business set out in the agenda below.

Yours faithfully

Chief Executive

AGENDA

1. Chairman's Announcements.
2. To confirm the minutes of the meeting of the Council held on 10 July 2024. (Pages 5 - 16)
3. To receive declarations by members of interests in respect of items on this agenda.
4. To answer questions asked under Standing Order 7(1)(2) and (5).
5. To receive position statements under Standing Order 8.

To consider reports of the Cabinet, Scrutiny Commission, Scrutiny Committees and other bodies:

6. Report of the Cabinet.
 - (a) Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy. (Pages 17 - 76)
7. Report of the Constitution Committee.



- (a) Appointment of Independent Persons. (Pages 77 - 82)
8. Report of the Corporate Governance Committee.
- (a) Changes to the Financial Procedure Rules. (Pages 83 - 92)
9. Appointments in accordance with item 11 of Standing Order 4:
- (a) To appoint such Cabinet Support Members as the Council considers appropriate.
10. To consider the following notice of motion:
- (a) Winter Fuel Payments - Mr M Mullaney CC
- (a) That this Council notes the recent announcement by the Labour Government to end universal winter fuel payments and restrict eligibility to only those in receipt of Pension Credits and other benefits.
- (b) That, though many agree that universal Winter Fuel Payments are not necessary, this Council is deeply concerned that many pensioners on lower and middle incomes will now not receive the payments, and that across England and Wales the number of people eligible for winter fuel payments will fall by 10 million (from 11.4 million to only 1.5 million).
- (c) That, in Leicestershire the number of pensioners affected by the change in eligibility criteria is 129,537, which means that 92.5% of pensioners currently eligible for winter fuel payments will no longer be able to claim the payment from this winter onwards.
- (d) That this Council believes that the Labour Government has set the threshold at which pensioners do not qualify for Winter Fuel Payments far too low. Only those receiving a pension of less than £218.15 a week (or £332.95 a week for couples) are eligible for pension credits. This is significantly lower than the living wage rate.
- (e) That this Council is also concerned by the low take up of pension credit with only 63% of those eligible nationwide receiving them – and over 880,000 pensioners not doing so. This Council recognises the role it has to play to increase awareness of benefits such as Pension Credit to ensure people are aware of the support they are entitled to.
- (f) That this Council further notes that the Energy Price Cap is due to rise by 10% in October, which combined by the removal of Winter Fuel Payments will push thousands of local pensioners into fuel poverty.

- (g) That this Council supports the criticism from Age UK, the Countryside Alliance and other charities, highlighting the social injustice and potential health risks posed by this abrupt policy change and believes that decision to means-test Winter Fuel Payments, especially with such short notice and without adequate compensatory measures, is deeply unfair and will disproportionately affect the health and well-being of our most vulnerable older residents.
- (h) That, given the expected impact the withdrawal of the Winter Fuel Payment will have on vulnerable older people, and the analysis carried out by charities that 71% of disabled people will lose their entitlement, despite their greater dependence on heating their homes, this Council is deeply concerned that the Government did not carry out an impact assessment before putting the matter to a vote.
- (i) That this Council is also concerned that the government is suggesting the use of the Household Support Grant to fill the gap, diverting much-needed funding away from children receiving Free School Meals.
- (j) That this Council therefore resolves to:
 - (i) Request that the Chief Executive of Leicestershire County Council writes to the Chancellor of the Exchequer, urging a review of the decision to means-test the Winter Fuel Payment and asking the government to ensure that vulnerable pensioners, particularly those who do not claim Pension Credit, are protected from fuel poverty.
 - (ii) Commit this Council to signing the 'Save the Winter Fuel Payment for Struggling Pensioners' petition being run by Age UK and write to all members offering them the opportunity to sign the petition themselves.
 - (iii) Encourage local efforts to promote Pension Credit uptake through council services and partnerships with local charities and community organisations to ensure that all eligible pensioners in Leicestershire are supported in claiming their entitlement.

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**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE LEICESTERSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL
HELD AT COUNTY HALL, GLENFIELD ON WEDNESDAY, 10 JULY 2024**

PRESENT

Mr. J. T. Orson CC (in the Chair)

Mr. R. G. Allen CC, Mr. R. Ashman CC, Mr. N. D. Bannister CC, Mr. T. Barkley CC, Mr. P. Bedford CC, Mr. G. A. Boulter CC, Mr. S. L. Bray CC, Mr. L. Breckon JP CC, Mr. N. Chapman CC, Mr. M. H. Charlesworth CC, Mr. J. G. Coxon CC, Dr. R. K. A. Feltham CC, Mr. M. Frisby CC, Mrs. H. J. Fryer CC, Mr. S. J. Galton CC, Mr. D. A. Gamble CC, Mr. K. Ghattoraya CC, Mr. T. Gillard CC, Mr. D. J. Grimley CC, Mr. L. Hadji-Nikolaou CC, Mr. B. Harrison-Rushton CC, Mr. D. Harrison CC, Mr. R. Hills CC, Mr. M. Hunt CC, Mrs. S. Jordan CC, Mr. P. King CC, Mr. B. Lovegrove CC, Mr. K. Merrie MBE CC, Mr. J. Miah CC, Mr. M. T. Mullaney CC, Ms. Betty Newton CC, Mr. O. O'Shea JP CC, Mrs. R. Page CC, Mr. B. L. Pain CC, Mr T. Parton CC, Mr. L. Phillimore CC, Mrs. P. Posnett MBE CC, Mrs. C. M. Radford CC, Mr. T. J. Richardson CC, Mrs H. L. Richardson CC, Mr. N. J. Rushton CC, Mrs B. Seaton CC, Mr. R. J. Shepherd CC, Mr. C. A. Smith CC, Mrs D. Taylor CC and Mrs. M. Wright CC

ORDER PAPER AND WEBCAST.

A webcast of the meeting can be viewed at [Committee meetings at Leicestershire County Council - YouTube](#)

17. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS.

Tom Purnell

The Chairman reported that Tom Purnell, Assistant Chief Executive, would be leaving at the end of August and taking a break. He had worked at the County Council for more than 25 years, with a total of 38 years in local government to his name. Tom had been Assistant Chief Executive since December 2013, a role he had undertaken calmly, thoroughly and with a great deal of tact and diplomacy. The Council had a great deal to be thankful to Tom for including his commitment to economic development and growth for the county and his excellent understanding of, and approach to the partnership landscape. His leadership of the local resilience function, particularly during the Covid-19 pandemic had been exemplary. Members joined the Chairman in placing on record their appreciation of Tom's contribution to the County Council over the years, and in wishing him all the best for the future.

Jane Moore (Paralegal)

The Chairman reported that Jane Moore in Legal Services would be retiring at the end of July after 50 years of service with the County Council. This was probably a record for the longest ever service which could not pass without Jane being thanked and congratulated on reaching this incredible milestone. Jane had been working as a paralegal in Legal Services, making Traffic Orders, dealing with Commons Registrations as well as other property work.

Her hard work, diligence and experience would be missed by colleagues. Members joined the Chairman in wishing Jane a long and happy retirement.

Armed Forces Week

Monday 24th June marked the start of Armed Forces week and veteran June Sisson, who served as a communications specialist in the Women's Royal Air Force (WRAF), raised the Armed Forces Day Flag at a ceremony at Stand Easy.

On Saturday 29^h June, together with the Lord-Lieutenant and Lord Mayor of Leicester, the Chairman attended the Armed Forces Day in Leicester City. There was a parade through the City Centre comprising horses and dogs from the Defence Animal Training Regiment, service personnel, veterans, the Seaforth Highlanders and cadets. Following the parade there was an outside 'Drumhead Service' in Jubilee Square. It was a very moving occasion.

County Service

The Chairman confirmed that he would be hosting his County Service at St. Mary's Church in Melton Mowbray on Sunday 6th October. The sermon would be given by The Rt. Reverend Martyn Snow, Bishop of Leicester. All Members would receive an invitation in due course.

Civic Life

Since the Council meeting in May when elected, the Chairman reported that he had attended a number of events representing Members and the Council and said it was a real pleasure to carry out this role. The Chairman said he was looking forward to continuing to represent Members and the Council in the coming year.

18. MINUTES

It was moved by the Chairman, seconded by the Vice-Chairman and carried:-

"That the minutes of the meeting of the Council held on 15 January 2024, copies of which have been circulated to members, be taken as read, confirmed and signed."

19. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The Chairman invited members who wished to do so to make declarations of interest in respect of items on the agenda for the meeting.

No declarations were made.

20. VARIATION TO THE ORDER OF BUSINESS.

The Chairman reported that he had agreed to vary the order of business as provided for in Standing Order 5(1) to enable Agenda Item 5 – To Receive

Position Statements under Standing Order 8, to be taken next.

21. TO RECEIVE POSITION STATEMENTS UNDER STANDING ORDER 8.

The Leader made a statement regarding his personal health circumstances and advised members that he had appointed Mrs D. Taylor CC (current Deputy Leader) as Acting Leader whilst he underwent medical treatment.

The Acting Leader, gave a position statement on the following matters:

- General Election
- 'East Midlands' County Combined Authority
- Leicester and Leicestershire Business Board
- Member Update

The Acting Leader, in her role as Cabinet Lead Member for Children, Families, Safer Communities and Regulatory Services gave a position statement on the Inspection of the Leicestershire Children's Services.

The Cabinet Lead Member for Community and Staff Relations gave a position statement on the 2024 Communities Annual Report

A copy of the Position Statements is filed with these minutes.

22. QUESTIONS ASKED UNDER STANDING ORDER 7(1)(2) AND (5).

(A) Mr Galton asked the following question of the Leader or his nominee:

- "1. Approximately how much does it cost the Council in energy charges per LED street light per annum having regard to the Council's policy on part time night lighting and dimming?
2. How much does it cost in energy charges to operate all street lights across the county per annum having regard to the Council's policy on part time night lighting and dimming?
3. How much money is currently being saved per annum from implementing the policy of dimming street lights across the county?"

Mr O'Shea replied as follows:

- "1. Average cost per street light is approximately £43.60.
2. £3,045,654 is the actual cost for 2023/24 financial year.
3. Anticipated full year savings is to be £380,000. Actual savings achieved for Q4 in 2023/24 financial year was £131,224."

23. REPORT OF THE CORPORATE GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE.

(a) **Annual Report of the Corporate Governance Committee 2023/24.**

It was moved by Mr Barkley, seconded by Mr Richardson and carried:

“That the information contained in the Corporate Governance Committee Annual Report 2023-24, attached as Appendix A to this report, be noted.”

(b) **Revised Members' Planning Code of Good Practice.**

It was moved by Mr Barkley, seconded by Mr Richardson and carried:

“That the revised Planning Code of Good Practice, attached as Appendix A to the report, be adopted.”

24. REPORT OF THE SCRUTINY COMMISSION.

(a) **Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report 2023/24.**

It was moved by Mr Mullaney, seconded by Mrs Page and carried:

“That the information contained in the Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report 2023/24, attached as Appendix A to this report, be noted.”

25. TO NOTE THE MEMBERS WHICH THE LEADER PROPOSES TO APPOINT TO THE CABINET.

It was moved by Mrs Rushton and seconded by Mrs Taylor:

“That it be noted that the Leader has appointed the following members named on List ‘1’ attached to the Order Paper as members of the Cabinet.”

2.00 pm – 2.50 pm
10 July 2024

CHAIRMAN

COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING – 10TH JULY 2024

POSITION STATEMENT FROM THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

General Election

I would like to congratulate Peter Bedford and Amanda Hack on their election as Leicestershire MPs, and at the same time commiserations to Craig Smith and Michael Mullaney who stood for election.

‘East Midlands’ County Combined Authority

At the last meeting in his position statement the Leader congratulated Claire Ward on her election. He subsequently wrote to the Mayor and they agreed to meet later this month. We want that meeting to go ahead and we will be in touch with her office after today.

Leicester and Leicestershire Business Board

The Board is being set up as an advisory body to the new Leicester and Leicestershire Business and Skills Partnership, the successor to the LLEP, which will be led by the City and County Councils.

Andy Reed, who was Chair of the LLEP prior to its abolition, has accepted a joint invitation from the Leader of County Council and the City Mayor to chair the Business Board, which they have welcomed. Arrangements are in hand to recruit to the Board. In addition to business representatives, membership will include higher education, further education, the district councils and the voluntary sector.

Member update

Following the Leader’s announcement, Council will be invited later in the meeting to note the changes that the Leader proposes to make to the Cabinet. There will also be some consequential changes to the Scrutiny Commission membership and Mr Bannister will be joining the Commission. The Chief Executive will implement this under his delegated authority. It will also be proposed at the next Council meeting that Mr Champion be appointed as a Cabinet Support Member to Mrs Richardson.

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COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING – 10th JULY 2024

POSITION STATEMENT FROM THE CABINET LEAD MEMBER FOR CHILDREN, FAMILIES, SAFER COMMUNITIES AND REGULATORY SERVICES

Inspection of the Leicestershire Children's Services

In April this year Ofsted undertook a full inspection of Children's Services in Leicestershire as part of the Inspection of Local Authorities Children's Services Framework.

The inspection looked at all areas of children's social care and targeted early help across the department over a three week period. The final report on the inspection, including the final judgement is being published on 12th July.

Whilst I can't share the final judgement ahead of the publication date, I can share that I am very pleased with the outcome of the inspection and look forward to sharing the full judgement and grades with you on Friday.

In the meantime, I would like to share feedback from inspectors.

Inspectors found that services for children and families in Leicestershire have much improved since the previous inspection in 2019, when the judgement for overall effectiveness was 'requires improvement to be good'.

The improvement that has taken place across the department has been underpinned by an ambitious and child focused approach that has created a culture whereby the experiences and progress of children are at the heart of social work practice.

In the feedback about services for children who need help and protection, our early help offer and range of preventative and targeted services were highlighted, alongside praise for the Family Hubs and early help assessments.

Inspectors praised the work undertaken to re-shape services for children and their families through the development of the new Family Help service that brings together targeted early help and work with children in need.

Our work at the front door to children's services was praised for responding quickly and according to the level of need and risk in the presenting information and for its strong assessments and decision making to ensure that children benefit from the right service at the right time.

Assessments across services were complimented for being timely, comprehensive and of good quality. Children's plans are said to be realistic, identify clear desired outcomes, and are child focused and written to the child which helps to capture the child's lived experience.

Inspectors saw that social workers know their children well and develop effective relationships with parents, enabling them to understand concerns and what needs to change.

Inspectors commented on our work to support young carers in Leicestershire and the bespoke individual and group support provided. One child who spoke to inspectors said, 'Being a young carer is hard work and demanding, but the help I've had has made a massive difference. I have been encouraged to share my views with council leaders and this has made a difference for me and other young carers. Going to the groups has also been good, it's been a friendly, welcoming, and safe place for me to go and share my experiences.'

Inspectors also looked at our services that support children in care and those services that work with care leavers. In relation to these services inspectors commented that children in care receive a service that results in their life experiences significantly improving. The department is aspirational for the children in their care and demonstrates a determination to improve children's experiences.

They saw a strong commitment by leaders, managers and social workers to support children to remain with their families where appropriate.

Ofsted commented that the relationships that social workers have with children are a notable strength that gives children much needed stability and helps them to feel cared for and cared about.

Fostering and adoption services were highly commended by Ofsted who commented that our foster carers are offered consistent and reliable support from social worker and they feel valued.

Our work to support care leavers was recognised as being strengthened and care leavers fed back to Ofsted positively about the support they receive. One care leaver said, 'The service I have received has changed my life. My PA is kind, and they care about me.' Another said, 'The service has been amazing and over time they have helped out as much as they can.'

Finally, Ofsted noted the fact that the Chief Executive, Director of Children's Services, Lead Member and senior leaders have worked tirelessly to transform the quality of help and protection for vulnerable children in Leicestershire and praised the progress and improvements made across the services.

An overwhelming majority of staff told inspectors that they like working in Leicestershire and value the investment and support that they have had from their managers and as a result of this they are making a positive difference to children's experiences and progress.

The inspectors saw the evidence of the culture created across service that enables social work practice to develop and thrive, which results in many families achieving positive change and improved outcomes for children.

I want to end by thanking staff across the department for their hard work, their focus and determination to improve services for children and their families in Leicestershire. This inspection outcome is a significant achievement for children's services and for children and their families across Leicestershire.

Mrs. D. Taylor
Lead Member for Children, Families, Safer
Communities and Regulatory Services

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COUNTY COUNCIL – 3rd JULY 2024**POSITION STATEMENT FROM THE LEAD MEMBER FOR
COMMUNITY AND STAFF RELATIONS**

I am very pleased to have this opportunity introduce the 2024 Communities Annual Report. The Report brings together and celebrates work within my portfolio that has been carried out with communities in the County over the past financial year. We have a lot to be proud of in Leicestershire, and the Annual Report brings to the forefront some of the very many ways in which the Council is collaborating with communities to bring forward some great initiatives, with a focus on people coming together to support each other, building on the strengths of people, places and local institutions.

The Council's Communities Strategy: Our Communities Approach continues to set the context for our engagement with communities centred on partnership and developing solutions based on the assets, priorities and aspirations of our different communities. This approach is well illustrated by our collaborative support for parish and town councils, neighbourhood planning groups and the Leicestershire Rural Partnership. We have also helped to support and strengthen communities over a wide range of themes, including working towards net zero, community resilience, health and wellbeing, neighbourhood planning, equality and diversity, employment and training and volunteering.

There are many inspiring examples of our work within the Report, and I would urge Members to continue to link with and support social action and collaborative grassroots initiatives in our role as Community Leaders and Champions.

The Annual Report was circulated you yesterday in the Members' Digest. It is also available on the Leicestershire Communities website and on the Members Hub.

Mrs Pam Posnett CC

Lead Member for Communities and Staff Relations

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REPORT OF THE CABINET

A. EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION STRATEGY 2024 – 2028

Introduction

1. This report seeks approval of the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2024 – 2028 and the associated Action Plan.

Background

2. The Council has a strong, enduring commitment to equality, diversity, and inclusion. This applies to its role as a provider of services to the public, as an employer of over 6000 staff and as an organisation of influence across the region. The Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) Strategy provides a framework to support all policy, plans and action to fulfil this commitment. The final Strategy and Action Plan are attached as Appendix B.
3. Under the Equality Act 2010 the Council must meet the Public Sector Equality Duty. This requires the Council to have due regard to the need to
 - (a) Eliminate discrimination
 - (b) Advance equality of opportunity
 - (c) Foster good relations between different people when carrying out its activities.

The Council has a specific duty to publish relevant, proportionate information showing compliance with the Equality Duty and set equality objectives.

4. The Council at its meeting on 21 February 2024 agreed, inter alia, that it would henceforth treat care experience as a protected characteristic and in delivering its Public Sector Equality Duty it would work towards including people with care experience in the publication and review of Equality Objectives.
5. The EDI strategy builds on the achievements of the past four years. It also recognises and reflects on the changes in society, in services and in the Council's workforce.
6. The Strategy is based around key pillars. These focus outwards, towards the role of the Council as a provider of services and community champion, and inwards toward a workforce which is diverse and free from discrimination and prejudice. Following the consultation findings, an Action Plan has been developed to guide the Council in integrating EDI principles throughout its operations. The Action Plan outlines the specific responsibilities of each department or team to ensure that key pillars outlined in the Strategy are

implemented effectively and to address any concerns raised during the consultations.

- (a) **Visible leadership and commitment.** Embodied in this Strategy and the leadership from Members and Senior Officers of the Council.
- (b) **Workforce and culture that values diversity.** A workforce that is representative of the community at all levels and culture and practice which welcomes diversity and roots out discrimination, bullying and harassment.
- (c) **Data and evidence driven.** Information on Leicestershire's communities, service users and staff is routinely collected, used to drive the implementation, and evidence the impact of this Strategy.
- (d) **Community engagement.** Building relationships with community-based organisations and celebrating the diverse culture of Leicestershire.
- (e) **Constructive commercial arrangements.** Using the Council's commercial and strategic influence to encourage the adoption of best practice on equality, diversity, and inclusion by partner organisations.
- (f) **Delivering accessible and fair services.** Issues of access and fairness remain at the heart of all services and are considered as part of any service change.
- (g) **Accreditation and recognition.** External validation and recognition of the Council's commitment, work, and progress.

Consultation

7. Consultation on the draft EDI Strategy took place from 9 February 2024 to 3 May 2024. The consultation programme consisted of four activity streams:
 - A 'Have Your Say' consultation survey.
 - Face-to-face meetings with relevant community organisations, staff networks and trade unions.
 - Virtual meetings with relevant community organisations and internal staff teams.
 - A report to the Council's Scrutiny Commission.
8. All comments, observations and suggestions have been recorded, analysed and used to refine and strengthen the Strategy. About 250 participants participated in the Face-to-Face and virtual meetings. A total of 201 responses were received for the 'Have Your Say' survey. Of those who participated:
 - 65% were female and 31% were male.
 - The highest proportion were aged 45-64 (61%).
 - 32% said they were parent or carer of a young person aged 17 or under and 17% said they were carer of a person aged 18 or over.

- Just under a third (31%) said they had a long-standing illness, disability or infirmity.
- The majority identified as white (87%) and over a 10th (13%) identified with a Black or Minority Ethnic Group.
- The largest population said they had no religion (49%), 38% said they followed Christian religion (all denominations), and 14 % said they followed another religion.
- 82% said they were heterosexual, 6% indicated that they had used another term to describe their sexual orientation, 6% identified as Gay or Lesbian and 5% identified as Bi.
- The overall results showed that 72% agreed with the Strategy, 13% disagreed, while 15% neither agreed nor disagreed.

9. A full report is included in Appendix A. Key changes include:

- Making the document more concise with a stronger focus on action.
- Inclusion of people with lived care experience as a protected characteristic.
- A greater emphasis on tackling harassment, bullying and discrimination in workplace and community settings.
- A stronger focus on accessible and fair services, community engagement and visible leadership from Members and senior officers.
- Less focus on influencing other organisations and seeking external accreditations or validation.
- Ensuring that the Strategy embraces equality, diversity and inclusion for everyone, and no-one feels excluded.

Comments of the Scrutiny Commission

10. The Scrutiny Commission considered a report at its meeting on 13 March 2024. Members were pleased to see that 93% of the staff had provided positive feedback to the survey and agreed that the Council was committed to equality, diversity, and inclusion. They emphasised that decisions must be made based on evidence and not perception. Staff were encouraged to report characteristics to better understand the Council's staff profile and to enable it to consider any potential trends around complaints, recruitment, and promotions. Members indicated that the Council's digital approach must not increase the barriers faced by residents accessing services or employment with the Council. Members also emphasised the need to capture hidden deprivation. The final Strategy and Action Plan have reflected the Scrutiny Commission's comments.

Resource Implications

11. The Equality Diversity and Inclusion Strategy will be implemented using existing resources. This includes budgets for staff training and development, community engagement and membership of equalities networks.
12. The Director of Corporate Resources and Director of Law and Governance have been consulted in the preparation of this report.

Equality Implications

13. A full Equality Impact Assessment has been undertaken on the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy (attached as Appendix C). The Strategy is intended to have a positive impact on equality for all protected characteristics. In line with the Council decision in February 2024, the Strategy also includes people with lived care experience as if they were a protected characteristic. During the consultation there was specific engagement with staff network groups and community groups representing ethnic minorities, disabled people and the LGBTQ+ community. The Strategy makes an explicit commitment to continue this engagement.

Human Rights Implications

14. There are no human rights implications arising from the recommendations in this report.

Consideration by the Cabinet

15. The Cabinet at its meeting on 13 September 2024 considered the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2024 - 2028 together with comments made by the Scrutiny Commission. The Cabinet noted the outcome of the consultation and recommended that the County Council approve the Strategy and associated Action Plan.

(Motion to be moved: -

That the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2024 – 2028 and associated Action Plan, set out in Appendix B to this report, be approved.)

13 September 2024

**Mrs. D. Taylor CC
Acting Leader of the Council**

Background Papers

Report to the Cabinet, 13 September 2024 – Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2024 – 2028

<https://democracy.leics.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=135&MId=7509&Ver=4>

Appendix

Appendix A - Consultation on the draft Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy

Appendix B - Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2024-2028

Appendix C - Equality Impact Assessment

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Consultation on the draft Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2024-28

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1. Introduction

This report outlines the activities conducted during the consultation for Leicestershire County Council's (LCC) draft Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) strategy 2024-28, and presents the outcomes of this engagement. Cabinet approved a 12-week consultation on the draft strategy on 9th February 2024. Consultation took place externally - with the public and community groups, and internally - with Scrutiny Commission, officer management teams, trade unions and staff. This inclusive approach was instrumental in ensuring that a diverse range of perspectives were heard. Both internal and external stakeholders played a crucial role in the consultation process by providing valuable insights and feedback. This collaborative effort facilitated a comprehensive understanding of the pertinent issues and enabled the integration of varied viewpoints into the final strategy. The consultation findings will be integrated into the final strategy document, which will include an annual action plan.

2. Method

The consultation programme consisted of four streams of activity:

- A 'Have Your Say' consultation survey.
- Face-to-Face meetings with relevant community organisations, staff networks and trade unions.
- Virtual meetings with relevant community organisations and internal staff teams
- Council's Scrutiny Commission.

The consultation aimed to achieve the following objectives:

- a) Inform residents and stakeholders about the council's strategy and commitment to promoting equality, diversity, and inclusion over the next four years.
- b) Provide an overview of the draft Strategy.
- c) Solicit feedback on the draft EDI Strategy to help define and shape existing and additional initiatives.
- d) Facilitate discussions on collaborative efforts to achieve the EDI objectives and foster productive relationships.
- e) Gather diverse perspectives on EDI and real-life experiences with interventions.

Given the broad scope of EDI and the importance of community-wide support in Leicestershire, the consultation targeted a wide audience, including:

- The general public
- Community and voluntary groups, social enterprises, and charities

- Public sector organisations
- Employees and Members of Leicestershire County Council
- Local organisations which represent specific protected characteristics.

To facilitate communication and engagement, an equalities-specific inbox (equality@leics.gov.uk) was available for individuals and groups to address any questions or concerns related to the Strategy or other equality issues. Additionally, various groups and networks were invited to participate in the consultation and share information with their respective networks through multiple platforms. These are as shown below:

Methods used



Overall, the consultation process aimed to foster inclusivity, collaboration, and transparency in shaping the EDI Strategy for the benefit of all stakeholders in Leicestershire.

2.1 ‘Have Your Say’ Survey

A “Have Your Say” questionnaire was available on the Council’s website. The survey was based around the seven pillars of the draft strategy. It asked respondents “to what extent they agreed or disagreed with each pillar” and contained a box for open comments. Paper copies were available upon request. Respondents had access to the draft EDI

Strategy, as well as a consultation summary document. The Council electronically processed and analysed the responses.

2.2 Consultation activities

During the 12-week consultation period, LCC conducted a series of meetings and webinars to gather feedback on the EDI draft strategy. Face-to-face meetings were arranged with local organisations representing protected characteristics, as well as employees of the authority. In addition to consulting on the strategy document, these meetings covered a wide range of EDI issues, and helped establish constructive relationships with these groups.

In instances where physical meetings were not feasible, virtual meetings were conducted. At each location, Council officers were present to engage with stakeholders, promote the consultation, and address any questions. Additionally, two webinars were hosted by the Council to delve deeper into the Strategy.

These consultations led to the establishment of new strategic relationships that can be leveraged for future community engagements. While efforts were made to engage with a wider range of groups, the organisations and groups listed below were the ones accessible for engagement at the time. The tables provided below outline the internal and external groups involved in the consultation process.

Internal Consultations

Internal Consultations	Date	Time	Format
DWG Network	26 Feb	13:00	Virtual
CNCC Trade Unions	27 Feb	11:00	Virtual
A&C DEG	11 Mar	11:00	Virtual
BAME Network	19 Mar	14:00	Virtual
Race Group Catch-Up	20 Mar	14:00	Virtual
CFS DEG	21 Mar	14:00	Virtual
LGBTQ+ Network	22 Mar	09:30	Virtual
E&T	28 Mar	13:00	Virtual
Diversity Champions	9 Apr	11:00	Virtual
Public Health	8 Apr	14:30	Virtual
Chief Exec	29 Apr	12:00	Virtual
Corporate Resources	12 Jan	14:15	Virtual

External Consultations

EXTERNAL CONSULTATIONS	DATE	TIME	FORMAT
Vista (Blind or partially sighted)	26 Feb	10:30	Face to face
GATE	25 Apr	10:30	Face to face
Leicester Deaf Forum	25 Apr	16:00	Face to face
Leicester LGBT Centre	16 Apr	12:00	Virtual
The Race Equality Centre	15 Feb	11:00	Virtual
A&C Communities Briefing	23 Apr	14:00	Virtual
Cycle Youth Group	09 Apr	18:30	Virtual
	23 Apr	10:00	
Webinars	24 Apr	19:00	Virtual

3. Findings – ‘Have Your Say’ Survey

A total of 201 responses were received for the 'Have Your Say' survey. No hard copy paper versions were submitted. The survey results include both closed (tick box) questions and open comments, presented in the order they appear in the survey. The completed questionnaires have been electronically processed by LCC. For the purposes of reporting, responses 'strongly agree' and 'tend to agree' are combined and shown as in agreement with the proposal or topic. Similarly, responses stating, 'strongly disagree' and 'tend to disagree' are also combined to represent respondents in disagreement with the proposal or topic.

Respondents who had indicated their role as a 'Leicestershire County Council staff member' or 'Member of the public' were asked a series of demographic questions. Of those who answered these questions:

- 65% were female and 31% were male.
- The highest proportion were aged 45-64 (61%)
- 32% said they were a parent/carer of a young person aged 17 or under and 17% said they were a carer of a person 18 or over.

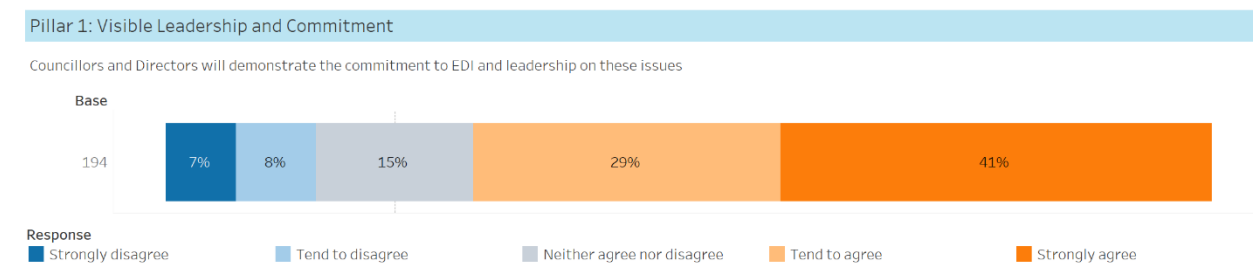
- Just under a third (31%) said they had a long-standing illness, disability, or infirmity.
- The majority identified as white (87%) and over a tenth (13%) identified with a Black and Minority Ethnic group.
- The largest proportion of respondents said they had no religion (49%), 38% said they followed a Christian religion (all denominations) and 14% indicated that they followed another religion.
- 82% said they were Straight/ Heterosexual, 6% indicated that they used another term to describe their sexual orientation, 6% identified as Gay or Lesbian and 5% identified as Bi.

3.1 Analysis by Pillar

The following analysis outlines the percentages of each pillar.

3.1.1 Visible Leadership and Commitment

The results showed that 70% of respondents agreed with the pillar, 15% disagreed, while 15% neither agreed nor disagreed.



Key themes and comments:

“Imperative to have clear visible leadership on these matters. This should come from Councillors and Senior Officers.”

“There should be more leadership from the top to help with the culture of the Council. Leaders need to be more visible on these issues.”

“Culture change is about leaders living and breathing principles and leading by example.”

“It is really important for Directors and Elected Members to be role models for good practice.”

“There is a distinct lack of diversity in leadership and councillor positions across the County Council.”

Agreement:

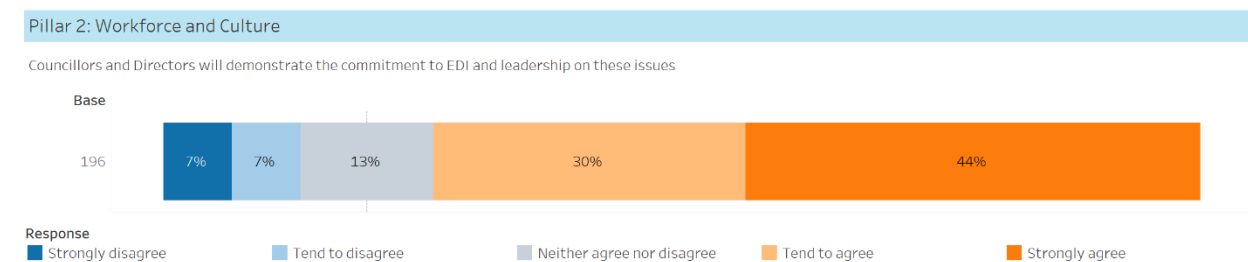
- **Recognition of Importance:** Respondents emphasised the significance of visible leadership at all levels within the authority, highlighting the need for commitment from Members and senior officers.
- **Culture Setting:** Leadership is crucial for shaping the culture of the Council, with leaders urged to be more proactive on equality, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) issues.
- **Call for Action:** There is a consensus on the importance of translating commitments into tangible actions, with a focus on practical measures rather than symbolic gestures.
- **Need for Robust Approach:** Respondents emphasised the need for robust strategies that address both internal staff concerns and the needs of the communities served by the council.

Disagreement/Concerns:

- **Issues of Discrimination:** Concerns raised about instances of racism, sexism, and other forms of discrimination, and how these were managed, highlighting the need for genuine commitment to action to tackle discrimination, harassment, and bullying.
- **Resource Allocation:** Some express reservations about the allocation of resources to EDI initiatives, particularly when other essential services are underfunded.
- **Clarity of Objectives:** There are calls for clearer, more specific objectives with measurable outcomes, rather than vague commitments.

3.1.2 Workforce and Culture

The results showed that 74% agreed with the pillar, 14% disagreed, while 13% neither agreed nor disagreed.



Key themes and comments:

“LCC covers a population which is diverse and a workforce which reflects this helps members of the public feel the Council is understanding of needs, views and wants.”

“Should welcome and accept everyone. There is no place for bullying and harassment.”

“This is certainly what should be aimed for. Hearing from colleagues in other departments, this varies across the council. Some have faced racism to the extent they have left their job, or not had temporary contracts renewed. You should also consider the experience of agency workers.”

“Everything that is done feels tokenism.”

“Whilst LCC is becoming more representative.... there is still a long way to go to in terms of understanding, support and protecting staff from discrimination.”

Agreement:

- **Inclusive Environment:** Respondents emphasised the need for a clear, inclusive environment that welcomes individuals from all backgrounds and actively addresses issues of bullying, harassment, discrimination, and unconscious bias.
- **Diversity in Workforce:** There is broad agreement on the importance of a diverse workforce that reflects the community it serves, enabling better understanding and responsiveness to the needs of diverse communities.
- **Training and Development:** Respondents stress the importance of training and development opportunities for all staff, not just managers, to foster understanding, empathy, and support for colleagues and the communities served.

Disagreement/Concerns:

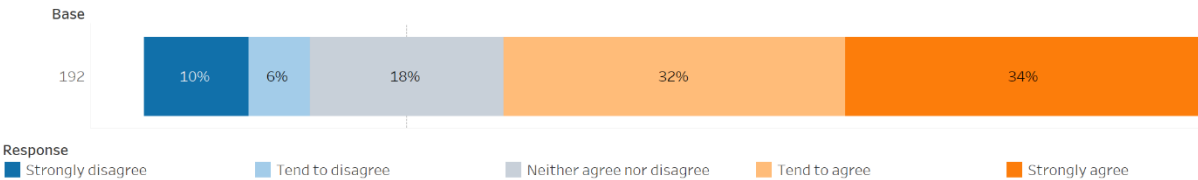
- **Issues of Discrimination:** Concerns raised about instances of discrimination, bias, and unfair treatment, particularly in hiring, training, and promotion practices. There are reports of BAME staff leaving the organisation due to perceived biases and lack of opportunities.
- **Need for Improvement:** While there is general agreement on the importance of the pillar, there are doubts about its effectiveness in practice, with some suggesting that more concrete actions are needed to address discrimination and ensure fair treatment for all staff.
- **Fear of Speaking Up:** Some express concerns about a culture of fear and uncertainty, where staff are afraid to speak up about discrimination or harassment due to fear of reprisal or lack of support from HR and senior management.
- **The Strategy can highlight the role of staff networks and trade unions in supporting staff and effectively challenging discrimination.**

3.1.3 Evidence and Data Based

The results showed that 65% agreed with the pillar, 16% disagreed, while 18% neither agreed nor disagreed.

Pillar 3: Evidence and Data Based

Information on Leicestershire's communities, service users and staff is routinely collected, used to drive the implementation, and evidence the impact of this strategy



Key themes and comments:

“This pillar is great. Love the evidence-based approach.”

“Staff need training on asking for this information as the public can be wary of offering such personal information.”

“Collecting this data can be intrusive, people shouldn't have to disclose their sexuality, religion, gender identity etc during routine activities, choosing 'no answer' options often makes people feel they deviate from the 'norm'.”

Agreement:

- Understanding Communities and Employees: Respondents agree on the importance of understanding communities and employees to identify benefits and address concerns or weaknesses effectively.
- Need for Transparency: There is a consensus that information and reports should be available to the public to hold LCC accountable for its actions and decisions.
- Evidence-Based Approach: Respondents express support for an evidence-based approach, emphasising the importance of using data to inform strategy and decision-making.

Disagreement/Concerns:

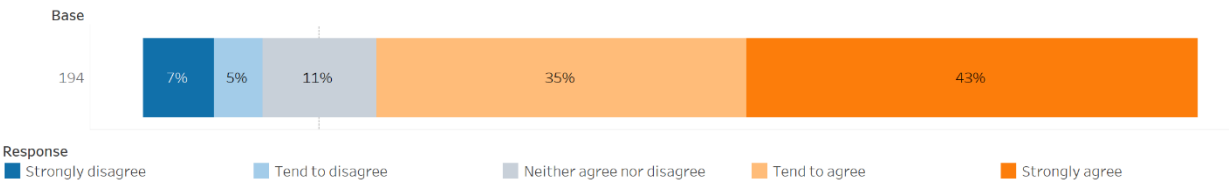
- Privacy Concerns: Concerns about the intrusiveness of collecting certain types of personal data, such as sexual orientation or religion. Suggestion that individuals should not be required to disclose such information.
- Need for LGBTQ+ Data: Concerns about the lack of LGBTQ+ data, highlighting the importance of collecting comprehensive data on all protected characteristics.
- Purposeful Data Collection: There are calls for ensuring that data collection serves a specific purpose and is not just done for the sake of it.
- Implementation Challenges: Concerns about the lack of transparency in data usage, the perceived ineffectiveness of data-driven strategies, and the need for more action-oriented approaches rather than mere box-ticking exercises.

3.1.4 Strong Community Engagement

The results showed that 78% agreed with the pillar, 12% disagreed, while 11% neither agreed nor disagreed.

Pillar 4: Strong Community Engagement

Honest, transparent relationships with community-based organisations and celebration of the diverse culture of Leicestershire



Key themes and comments:

“You cannot do this alone, and collaboration benefits in tackling possible weaknesses and exploiting benefits.”

“The council serves communities thus having a relationship with the people helps the council understand people’s experiences.”

“The public seem to be absent in this pillar - they are not seen. Stakeholder groups, such as these community-based groups have more influence than the public. Does this pillar facilitate lobby/groups, skewing the Council’s perceptions of what is happening in the County?”

Agreement:

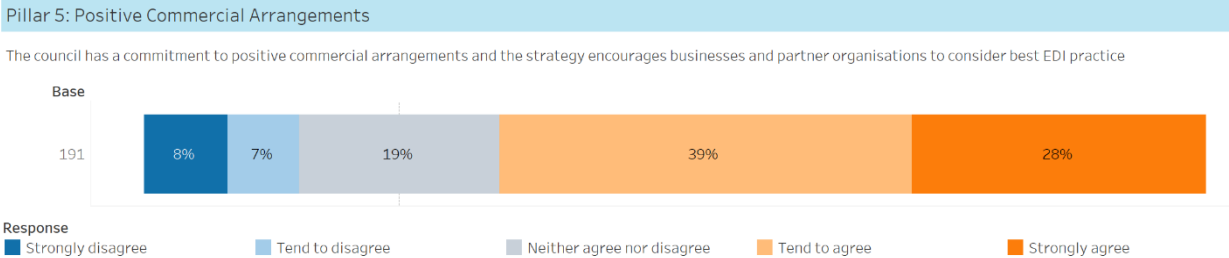
- Importance of Collaboration: Respondents agree on the significance of collaboration with communities, emphasising the benefits of working together to address weaknesses and leverage advantages.
- Listening to Communities: There is consensus that the County Council should improve its efforts to communicate with and listen to communities to better understand their experiences and needs.
- Community-Council Relationship: Respondents acknowledge the importance of building and maintaining a positive relationship between the council and the communities it serves.

Disagreement/Concerns:

- Narrow Scope of Engagement: The scope of community engagement is too narrow and should encompass a broader range of communities, not focusing solely on specific faiths or nationalities.
- Lack of Support for Certain Groups: Concerns about the lack of support for specific groups, such as those with disabilities (SEND), indicating a need for more inclusive engagement practices.
- Practice vs. Theory: While community engagement is encouraged, there are instances where it is not effectively practiced, indicating a gap between intention and implementation.

3.1.5 Positive Commercial Arrangements

The results showed that 67% agreed with the pillar, 15% disagreed, while 19% neither agreed nor disagreed.



Key themes and comments:

“Totally agree with the pillar - but how are we ensuring this? Should contract managers be considering this routinely as part of commissioning arrangements? Most managers are not clear on this if so. If it could be incorporated into the Commissioning forms that would be great and prompt managers to consider the issues.”

“I don’t think it’s your place to tell other organisations what they should or shouldn’t be. What you need to know is that they comply with all legislation in appropriate areas of interest. In my view assessing other organisations becomes a subjective and money wasting exercise.”

Agreement:

- **Long-Term Approach Needed:** Respondents agree that commercial businesses often prioritise short-term gains over permanent approaches, and they see an opportunity for the Council to influence positive change in this regard.
- **Influence Through Contracts:** There is agreement that the Council should use its commercial relationships to influence equality, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) practices throughout the county.
- **Encouragement of Best Practices:** There is agreement that the Council should encourage and support businesses in adopting best practices related to EDI, even if it requires some level of handholding, especially for smaller businesses.

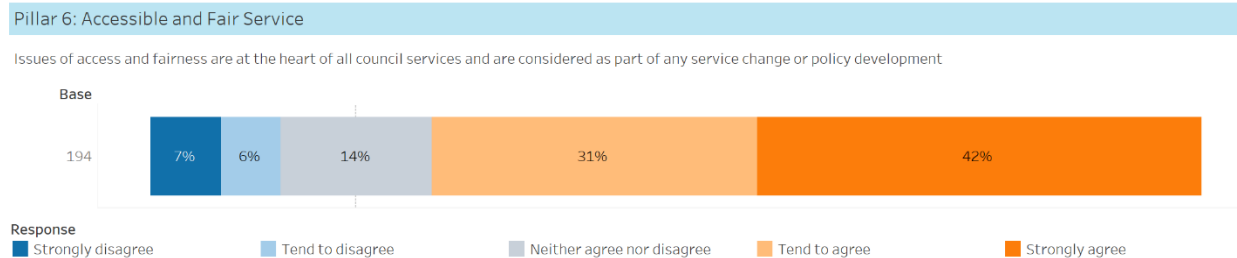
Disagreement/Concerns:

- **Potential for Overreach:** Concerns that overly prescriptive policies or interventions from the Council could be perceived as intrusive or detrimental to businesses, suggesting a need for caution in how the Council engages with private enterprises.
- **Effectiveness of Metrics:** There are doubts about the effectiveness of using tick boxes to assess a company's commitment to EDI, with some suggesting that such measures may not accurately reflect the actual treatment of employees.
- **Challenges in Implementation:** There is scepticism about the practical implementation of the pillar, with concerns raised about the extent to which

businesses and partner organisations will comply, especially considering financial pressures and potential discrimination in certain employment practices.

3.1.6 Accessible and Fair Services

The results showed that 73% agreed with the pillar, 13% disagreed, while 14% neither agreed nor disagreed.



Key themes and comments:

“This is essential, some groups find accessing services harder than others and should be supported to do so.”

“Although this is no 6, I feel this is one of the most important pillars. Unfortunately needs of disabled people within EDI seems to be overlooked, in society in general & their need for inclusivity inclusion in the workplace (not LCC, I think you're rather good in this area) so accessibility & fairness for all including those with additional needs is paramount.”

“In an ideal world this would be paramount, but it is unrealistic to balance current substantial financial pressures with accessible and fair services in a geographical area as large as Leicestershire. This pillar needs to focus on proportionality.”

Agreement:

- **Universal Accessibility:** Respondents unanimously agree on the necessity for services that cater to everyone, emphasising the fundamental principle of non-exclusion based on disabilities.
- **Awareness of EIA (Equality Impact Assessment) Process:** Respondents recognise the importance of raising awareness about the Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) process, suggesting support mechanisms to ensure its effective use by managers.
- **Combatting Discrimination:** There is a consensus on the critical need to address discrimination, to ensure equitable access to services for all demographics.
- **Enhanced Collaboration and Evaluation:** Respondents emphasise the need for improved collaboration and robust monitoring and evaluation frameworks to guarantee the efficacy and inclusivity of services.
- **Importance of Digital Accessibility:** There's agreement on the importance of considering digital accessibility, especially when it comes to serving individuals with disabilities.

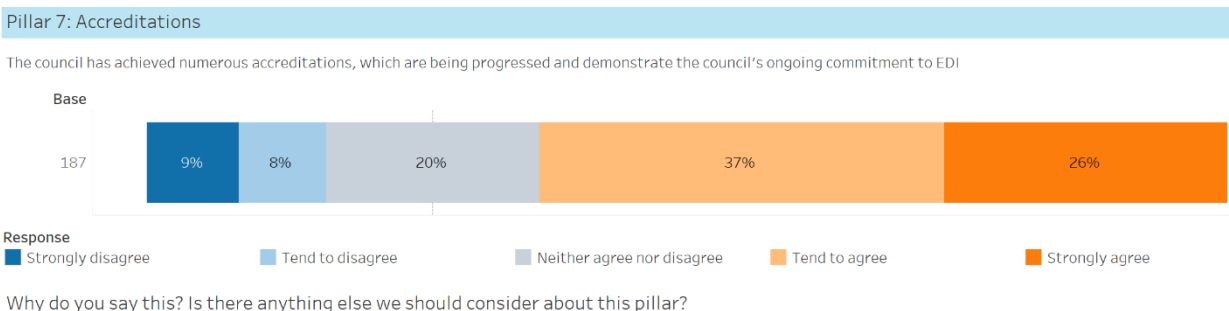
- Strategy can reference the recent decision to make people with lived care experience a “protected characteristic.”

Disagreement/Concerns:

- Implementation Challenges: Some express uncertainties about effectively translating the pillar's intentions into practice, citing instances where accessibility and fairness are inconsistently upheld.
- Preferential Treatment: Concerns arise regarding instances of preferential treatment based on faith or nationality, underscoring the importance of impartial treatment for all individuals.
- Neglect of Disabled Needs: Respondents highlight the neglect of disabled individuals' needs in societal structures, advocating for heightened inclusivity, particularly in professional environments.
- Financial Constraints: Concerns about financial constraints hindering the council's ability to fully realise the goals of this pillar, especially in times of significant budget pressures.
- Learning Difficulties and Disabilities: Issues concerning individuals with learning difficulties or disabilities accessing services are underscored, indicating a need for targeted interventions.

3.1.7 Accreditations

The results showed that 63% agreed with the pillar, 17% disagreed, while 20% neither agreed nor disagreed.



Key themes and comments:

“The recognition is great. We need to continue to keep up the momentum.”

“It is positive to see the commitment to the external standards as it shows commitment to inclusion.”

“Not important to go for ‘badges’ just get the work done.”

“What is the point. Virtue signalling.”

Agreement:

- Importance of Practical Implementation: Respondents agree that while accreditations may be pursued, practical implementation and day-to-day practices are what truly impact residents' experiences with the Council.
- Value of Recognition: There's acknowledgment of the value of accreditations in demonstrating the Council's commitment to Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI), as well as signalling what type of organisation the council is to the public.
- Continued Momentum: Many respondents express support for maintaining momentum in achieving and sustaining accreditations, highlighting the importance of ongoing commitment to meet the requirements.

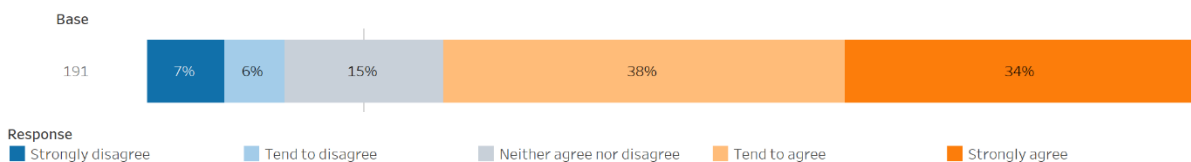
Disagreement/Concerns:

- Cost and Effectiveness: Concerns about the cost-effectiveness of some accreditations, especially if they involve fees. There's also scepticism about the effectiveness of certain accreditations and whether they truly reflect meaningful progress in EDI.
- Vanity Badges: Some respondents view accreditations as mere "vanity badges" or "tick box exercises" that do not necessarily translate to meaningful improvements in service delivery or resident experiences.
- Practical Implementation vs. Perception: There is a concern that while the Council may have obtained accreditations, the practical implementation and day-to-day practices may not always align with the standards set by these accreditations, leading to a perception-versus-reality gap.

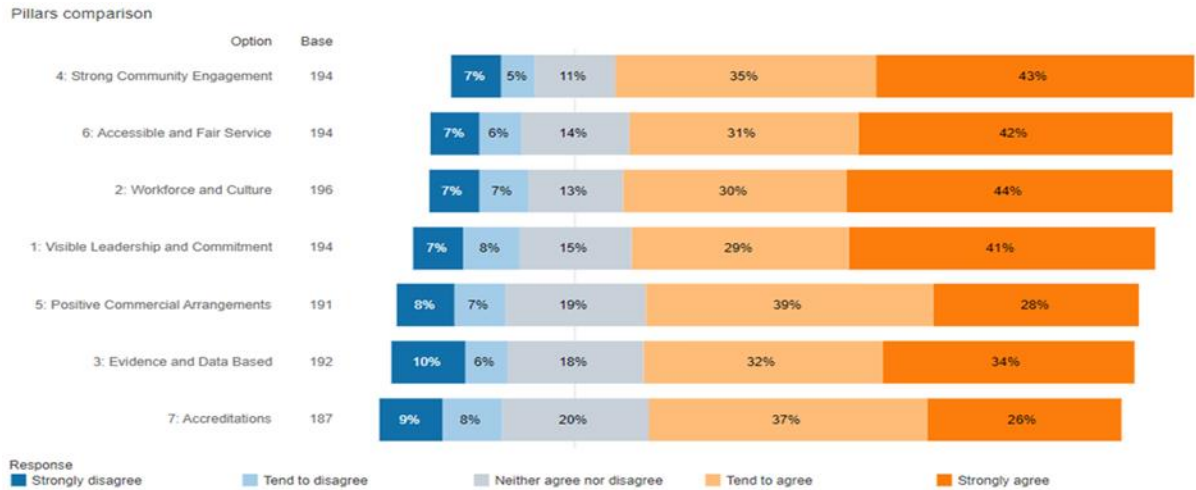
3.2 Strategy Overall

The overall results showed that 72% agreed with the draft strategy, 13% disagreed, while 15% neither agreed nor disagreed.

Overall, to what extent do you agree or disagree with our draft EDI Strategy 2024-28?



Below is the pillars comparison:



4. Findings - Consultation Meetings

Consultation meetings (face to face and virtual) provided an opportunity to discuss the themes of the draft strategy and consider wider issues relating to the Council's approach to equality, diversity, and inclusion. About 250 were able to contribute to the development of the strategy by participating and contributing to these meetings.

4.1 Meeting Findings

Through analysing the feedback from the range of meetings attended during the consultation, the following themes emerged:

Table 2: Summary of key findings from the meetings

Themes	Description of Key points
Safe Work Environment	<p>Stakeholders expressed concern over fostering a safe environment for Leicestershire's diverse community. They highlighted increasing racial discrimination, particularly affecting mixed-race children experiencing race-related remarks in schools. Moreover, recent hate crimes and the summer riots are generating feelings of vulnerability among employees.</p> <p>Stakeholders noted that certain disabled individuals may feel apprehensive about sharing their experiences. It is recommended to develop educational programmes and awareness campaigns to address stereotypes and prejudices.</p>

	<p>Also, it was recommended to collaborate with local organisations and community leaders to promote understanding and acceptance within society.</p>
Case Studies & Pictures	<p>Include case studies, pictures, and examples to help the public understand how the strategy affects them.</p>
Data Collection	<p>Produce regular reports on the Authority's staff profile to consider any potential trends around complaints, recruitment, and promotions. Explain and clarify how the Council uses this data to encourage declaration.</p> <p>In the section on data-workforce profile, gender identity is notably absent. Include this information and indicate if there is currently no data available.</p>
Accessible and Fair Services	<p>Stakeholders commented that it would be important to ensure that the Council's increased digital approach did not inadvertently increase the barriers faced by residents accessing either employment with the Authority or its services. As an example, it was suggested that the Council's recruitment portal was not easily accessible for those with a learning disability or who might have English as a second language.</p> <p>Accessing Information: Thick forms, small print, and reliance on electronic gadgets pose barriers. Requests for large font or braille forms are often delayed.</p> <p>Stakeholders expressed a desire for access to specialist officers who could address or champion specific concerns with departments. They could also collaborate with organisations like Vista to address accessibility issues and provide support.</p> <p>Stakeholders recommended for face-to-face interactions with council staff over automated systems like robots and AI (Artificial Intelligence).</p> <p>Raised challenges in reaching Council staff through phone calls, with calls frequently going unanswered or resulting in referrals to other departments without resolution.</p>
Budget for EDI	<p>Considering spending controls, it is crucial to ensure that the EDI strategy is not merely a superficial effort. Collaborating with staff and managers can help optimise resources. Use Network groups and managers to drive EDI initiatives forward.</p>

Establishing Nexus between Departments	While there is progress across all departments, there could be more cohesion. The strategy must facilitate better communication and collaboration among all departments.
Positive Commercial Arrangements	Emphasis was placed on leveraging the Council's influence to promote EDI among stakeholders, suggesting that commitments to EDI should be prerequisites for collaborating with the Council. Stakeholders should sign agreements demonstrating their commitment to EDI before engaging in partnerships or collaborations with the Council.
Reference to existing systems	The draft strategy does not mention of employee networks. Include references to recent initiatives such as the Zero Discrimination Big Conversation and other events and efforts organised by these networks.
Alignment with Other Council Strategies	The strategy should be aligned and connected with other Council strategies, particularly those from People Services, to ensure coherence and synergy.
Facilitate Community Engagements	Involve communities in decision-making processes and consultative groups to ensure their voices are heard and respected. Provide clear and accessible information about opportunities to participate in equality groups and other community initiatives.

5. Council's Scrutiny Commission

The Commission considered a report of the Chief Executive, the purpose of which was to seek its views on the draft EDI Strategy as part of an ongoing public consultation on the Strategy.

Arising from discussion, the following points were made:

- Members welcomed the proposal to adopt those with lived care experience as a 'protected characteristic.'
- Members were pleased to see that 93% of staff had provided positive feedback to the staff survey held in 2023 and agreed that the Council was committed to equality, diversity, and inclusion. This demonstrated that staff were treating others with decency and respect and suggested that the culture of the Authority as an organisation was good. For individual instances where this was not the case, it

was important to ensure managers were equipped to respond and address such behaviour quickly.

- Members were assured that the information collected through staff surveys was broken down to head of service level which ensured anonymity of staff.
- The Council sought to ensure decisions were based on evidence and not perception. A data driven approach would therefore be adopted and this would include both quantitative and qualitative data. It was suggested that the Council needed to be clearer about the data it used and provide context where appropriate. For example, a Member suggested that the Stonewall workforce equalities index did not include all councils. Whilst therefore the Council ranked as the highest performing local authority, which was to be welcomed, it should be made clearer out of how many councils it was being measured against.
- Staff were encouraged to report characteristics to better understand the Authority's staff profile and to enable it to consider any potential trends around complaints, recruitment, and promotions.
- A Member commented that it would be important to ensure that the Council's increased digital approach did not inadvertently increase the barriers faced by some residents accessing either employment with the Authority or its services. As an example, it was suggested that the Council's recruitment portal was not easily accessible for those with a learning disability or who might have English as a second language.
- It was suggested that digitisation had both advantages and disadvantages. A Member commented that as the County's aging population increased there was a risk of people being left behind and so this needed to be approached with care and with EDI at the heart of the process.
- Members suggested that whilst deprivation was recognised within the draft Strategy, more emphasis was needed to capture hidden deprivation too. Reference to Gypsies and Travellers should also include reference to Showmen and Boatmen. A Member further suggested that the strategy was too text heavy, and the inclusion of case studies would help make the document more accessible and relatable. It was also suggested that reference to Members should be included within the strategy to reflect their role as community representatives.

6. Changes to the Strategy

The findings from the consultation and engagement events have significantly changed and strengthened the draft strategy. Key changes are:

- Less "wordy" with a stronger focus on action
- Including the recent Council decision to recognise people with lived care experience as a protected characteristic.

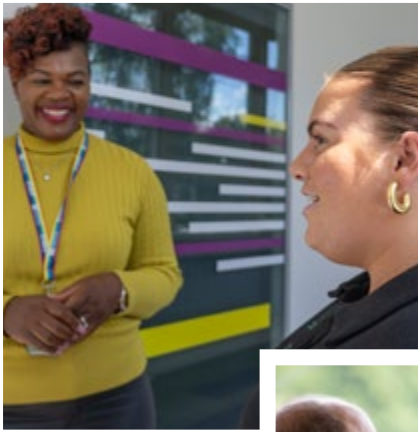
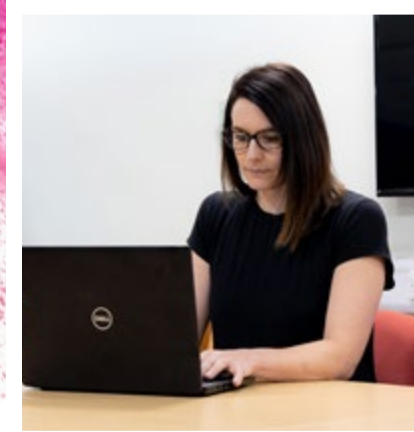
- A greater emphasis on tackling harassment, bullying and discrimination in workplace and community settings.
- A stronger focus on accessible and fair services, community engagement and visible leadership from Members and senior officers.
- Less focus on influencing other organisations or on seeking external accreditations or validation.
- Ensure that the strategy embraces equality, diversity and inclusion for everyone, and no-one feels excluded.

7. Conclusion

In conclusion, the consultation was essential in gathering the varied perspectives of Leicestershire residents and Council employees, including those who may not agree with the proposed strategy or related policies. All comments, opinions, and viewpoints shared during the consultation have been carefully considered and have shaped the final strategy. This consultation marks the beginning of a collaborative journey where everyone's values and actions are crucial. These diverse perspectives are instrumental in shaping a county and work environment that is inclusive, equal, and diverse. We extend our gratitude to all who participated in the online surveys, face-to-face consultations, and virtual meetings. Your voices are integral to our decision-making process. Leicestershire County Council reaffirms its commitment to promoting Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) within Leicestershire and the workplace environment.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2024-2028





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Foreword

I am pleased to present the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2024-28 for Leicestershire County Council.

Leicestershire County Council has a proud record of work in this area. The last Residents' Survey in Autumn 2023 found that 93% of people agree that Leicestershire is a place where people of diverse backgrounds get on well. 82% agree that the Council treats all types of people fairly. In the latest workforce survey, 92.5% agreed that the Council is committed to equality, diversity and inclusion.

The Council has made a commitment to become an anti-racist organisation, it has become a Menopause Friendly employer, and was rated as a top 100 employer for LGBTQ+ employment equality. We are Disability Confident – Level 2 and have signed the British Sign Language Charter.

The strategy for 2024-28 builds on these successes, and provides a structure based on seven pillars:

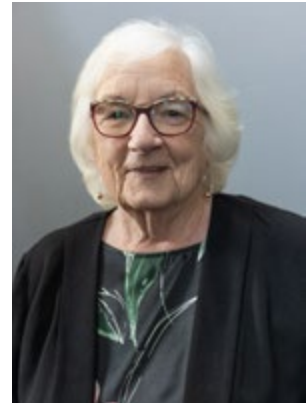
- Visible leadership and commitment
- Workforce and culture
- Evidence and data
- Community engagement
- Positive commercial arrangements
- Accessible and fair services
- Accreditations

We recognise that this is a continuous journey. The strategy will be delivered through an action plan, with regular reporting and review.

The past four years have demonstrated how national and sometimes international events can impact on community cohesion. The Council remains committed to the vision of Leicestershire as a safe and welcoming place for all communities, that our services will be fair and accessible, and that all staff will be treated with dignity and respect.

Thank you for taking the time to read this strategy. I look forward to working with communities, Members of the Council and staff to make this a reality.

Pam Posnett



Cllr Pam Posnett

Cabinet lead member
for Community and
Staff Relations

Executive summary

Leicestershire County Council has a strong and positive commitment to equality, diversity, and inclusion. This applies to its role as a provider of services to the public, as an employer of over 6000 staff, and as an organisation of influence across the region. This Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) Strategy 2024-28 provides a framework to support all policy, plans and action to fulfil this commitment over the next four years.

The primary purpose of this strategy is to reaffirm and strengthen the Council's commitment to creating an environment where every individual, regardless of their background, experiences fairness, dignity, respect, and equality of opportunity. Promoting EDI is a fundamental principle that enhances the well-being of communities and aims to develop a more vibrant, innovative, and harmonious Leicestershire.

The strategy outlines clear and actionable objectives, aligning with legal obligations under the Equality Act 2010 and addressing the specific needs of Leicestershire communities and employees of the Council. The EDI strategy is a key policy for the Council and as such it provides a guiding framework for all policies, plans and services. This strategy will shape the Council's approach and priorities and will be implemented across all levels and departments.

The EDI strategy is a key enabler supporting the Council's core values of positivity, trust and respect, openness, transparency, and flexibility. The strategy is also integral to the Council's overall vision as set out in the Strategic Plan 2024-28 and Outcomes Framework.

The strategy sets out the national, local, and legal context, describes the key aims and objectives, and sets out provisional action plans.

Aims of the strategy

The aims of this strategy are:

- **Reaffirming commitment to EDI:** Strengthen and underscore the Council's commitment to EDI and to foster an organisational culture that is inclusive and equitable.
- **Legal compliance and obligations:** Guarantee compliance with relevant legislation and fulfil obligations outlined in the Act governing EDI practices.
- **Recognising and celebrating achievements:** Proactively identify, acknowledge, and celebrate advancements in promoting EDI within the Council, recognising both significant milestones and incremental progress.
- **Setting strategic priorities:** Define clear goals and focus areas to guide Council initiatives and actions from 2024 to 2028, ensuring a comprehensive and structured approach towards fostering equality and inclusivity.

Strengths and achievements

The Council embarks on its four-year strategy to 2028 from a position of strength and confidence. This stems from past achievements. Some of those recent achievements are set out below.

What have we done?



Meeting national standards and accreditations

We have consistently been a top 100 organisation in the Stonewall Workforce Equalities Index. There are new policies and guidance on Trans and non-binary equality and an active staff network which supports staff and challenges the authority to do better. People are now choosing to work for Leicestershire because of our visible and tangible progress. The Council also adheres to the commitments within the Race at Work Charter, Disability Confident, Menopause Friendly and British Sign Language Charter.

- “The policies at the County Council are very clear and supportive. Since I started, I’ve felt safe to be open about my sexual orientation”.

Cultural shift and collaboration

We enjoy a genuine commitment from members and senior officers, engagement with staff support networks, ownership across the organisations and initiatives such as “The Big Conversation” to foster discussion and engagement.

- “Amazing. As a new worker, it has inspired me to be brave and achieve my dreams and progress in my profession.”
- “It was very hard to hear, and I haven’t even experienced such awful treatment. Thank you for creating a safe space to discuss personal/ community issues.”

Learning and development

We have an annual EDI training plan consisting of mandatory core training, specialist courses, and positive action development for men, women, carers, disabled, LGBTQ+, and ethnic minority staff. These powerful programmes often have a lasting impact.

- “Loved the Springboard Course. It was a fantastic opportunity to be surrounded by knowledgeable and supportive women. Each has their own story to tell. Thank you - you have changed my life.”

Addressing hate crime

Established systems encourage the reporting of hate crimes and incidents against staff and ensuring that appropriate action is taken. We have a “zero-tolerance” approach to bullying and harassment in the workplace.

- “Five years ago, when I experienced verbal abuse from a service user, my manager told me to ignore it. But when I had a similar experience last month, my manager asked how I felt about it, and supported me in challenging the user and building a relationship based on respect. I feel so much more valued for who I am.”

Community engagement and heritage projects

We have collaborative initiatives with specific community groups to celebrate cultural heritage. Heritage projects are tailored to minority communities and new arrivals to acknowledge and preserve diverse histories.

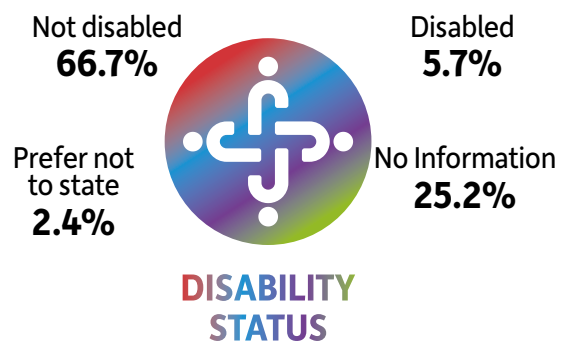
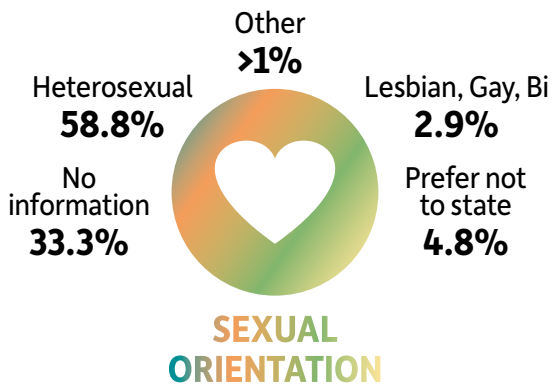
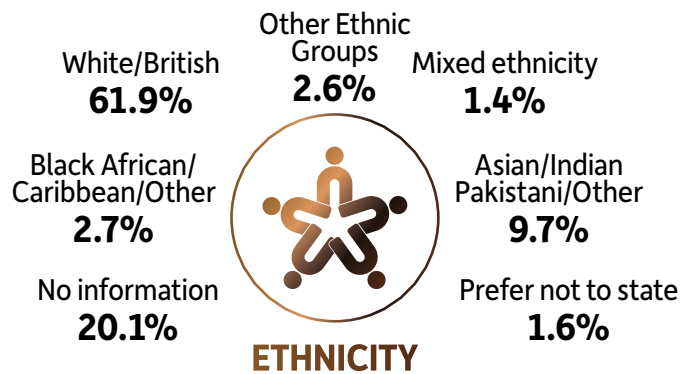
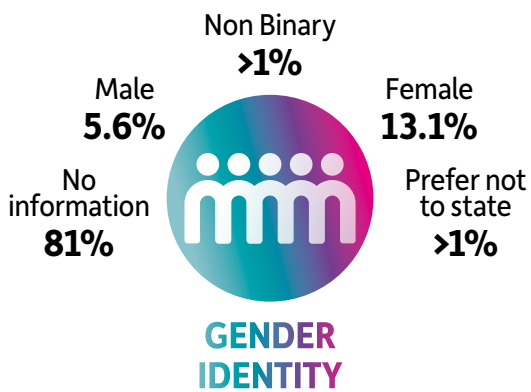
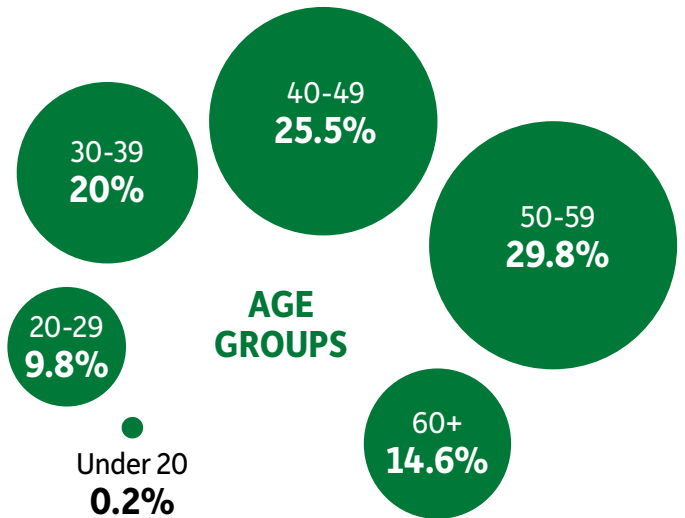
Positive employee perception

We are a values led organisation. We take pride in fostering and building a safe environment where colleagues come to work to have belonging and purpose.



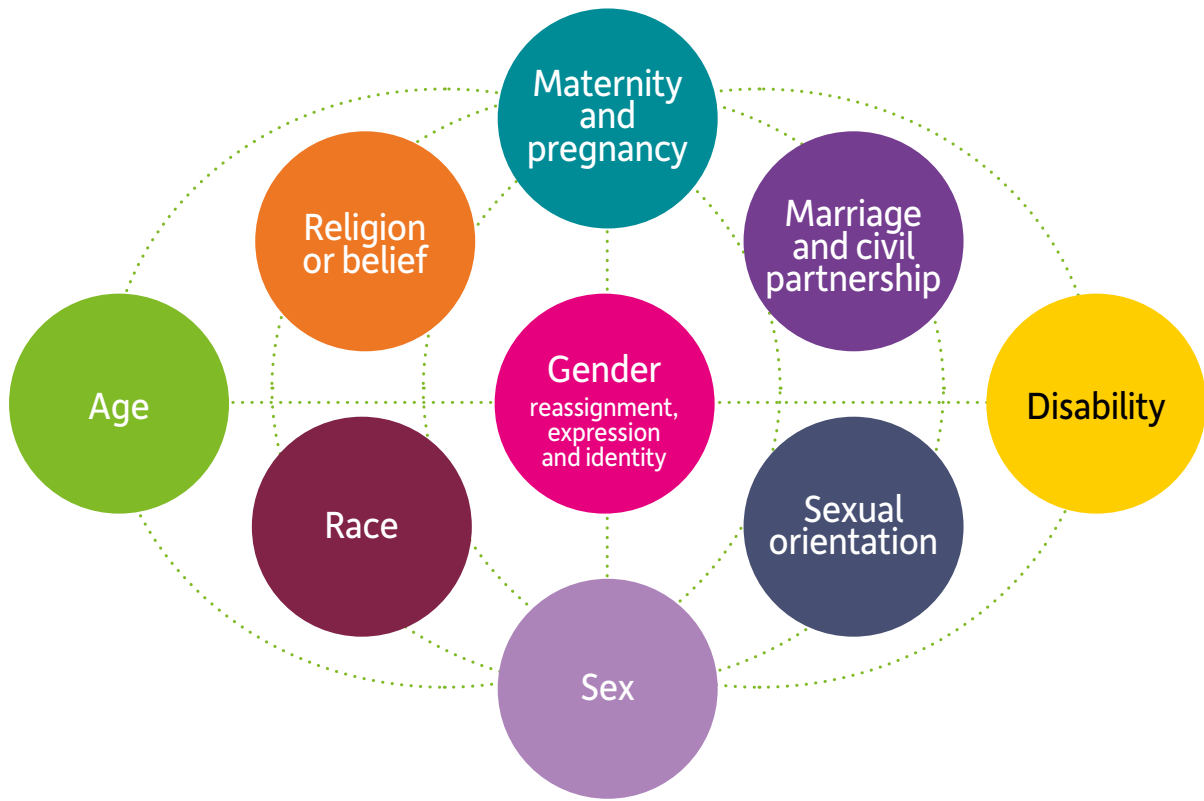
Workforce profile (July 2023)

The Council has a broadly representative workforce profile. Declaration rates for all protected characteristics have decreased due to a new workforce management system but are expected to improve in the next year.



Protected characteristics under the Equality Act

The image below shows the protected characteristics in terms of the Equality Act.



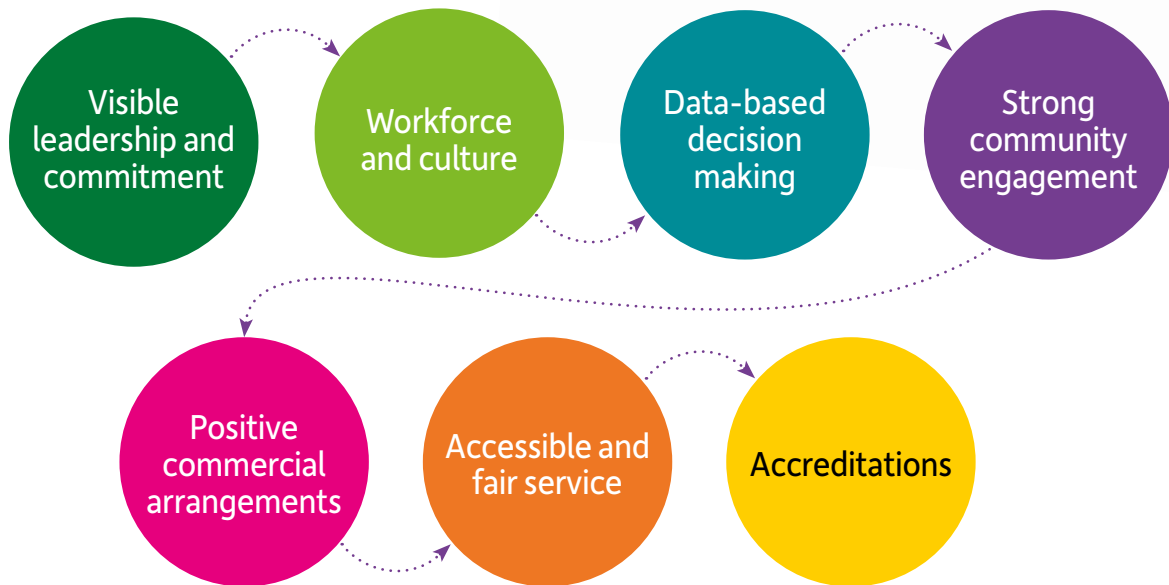
The Council has also decided to treat people with lived care experience as though they had a protected characteristic. This is in recognition of the disadvantage and discrimination young care leavers can face when seeking to gain employment or access services. The Council will now consider the impact of any policy or service changes on those with lived care experience.

The Council is also aware of other groups and communities which may experience discrimination or disadvantages in receiving services or work for the authority. These include:

- carers
- gypsy and traveller communities
- ex-armed forces
- asylum seekers
- refugees and migrants
- deprived communities.

Pillars and key initiatives

The Strategy is formed of seven key pillars which are the foundation and framework for specific activity.



Visible leadership and commitment

This action ensures that Members of the Council and senior officers demonstrate visible and robust leadership and decision making on equality, diversity and inclusion matters.

- **Clear EDI Vision & Strategy:** an articulated vision and strategy for EDI provide the guiding principles that align with Council's overall organisational goals.
- **Lead Member:** The Council has a Lead Member for communities and equality who champions EDI issues.
- **Directors Leadership and Commitment:** directors lead on specific EDI issues or task groups
- **Member development and leadership:** All Members of the Council commit to personal development and leadership on EDI.
- **Departmental Targets:** setting up specific and measurable targets within each department creates a roadmap for progress and accountability.
- **Governance Framework:** The Council maintains a robust governance framework for EDI, including Corporate Equalities Board, Departmental Equalities Group and specific task forces.
- **Equality Impact Assessments:** all key decisions of the Council are informed by clear equality impact assessments.
- **EDI Annual Reports:** the Council to produce an annual report of its work on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion.
- **EDI Budget:** the Council maintains a small budget for specific EDI work and initiatives.

Workforce and culture

This action underscores the importance of a workforce that reflects the diversity of Leicestershire's communities, requiring intentional efforts in recruitment, development, and retention. It is also about creating a workforce culture which embraces and values diversity and seeks to eliminate bullying, harassment, and discrimination.

- **Inclusive HR Policies & Practices:** policies and practices must evolve to keep pace with societal changes, embodying inclusivity, and fairness.
- **Developmental programmes:** approaches such as mentoring, coaching and reverse mentoring will be used to encourage and enable professional development and breaking of "glass ceilings."
- **Learning & Development Plan:** a robust plan ensures that employees have access to continuous learning opportunities that promote EDI awareness and skills.
- **Big Conversations:** creating spaces for open dialogues that promote understanding, addresses concerns, and cultivates an inclusive culture.
- **Hate Incidents:** policies and procedures to respond robustly and fairly to allegations of discrimination, bullying and harassment in the workplace.
- **Network Groups:** fostering and supporting network groups within the organisation creates a secure space for employees to freely express their thoughts and opinions without the fear of criticism. These groups also serve as valuable platforms for sharing innovative ideas and discovering new career opportunities.





Evidence and data based

This initiative will enhance data capture mechanisms, ensuring accurate and comprehensive information on the demographics of the Council's workforce, service users, and communities.

- **Ethnicity & Gender Pay Gap Reporting:** regular reporting on pay gaps provides transparency and accountability in addressing disparities.
- **Equal Pay Audit:** conducting tri-annual audits ensures fairness in compensation and identifies and rectifies any unjust discrepancies.
- **Workforce Profile:** continuously monitor and analyse the workforce composition to identify under-representation.
- **Data Collection and Analysis:** ensure a proportionate approach to the collection and analysis of personal and sensitive data is reflected in the Council's policy and practice.
- **Mandatory EDI Training Completion Rates:** making EDI training mandatory reinforces the importance of continuous education and awareness.
- **Staff Survey Feedback:** regular feedback through surveys helps gauge employee experiences, identify concerns, and measure the effectiveness of EDI initiatives.
- **Recruitment Data:** scrutinising recruitment data helps assess the success of diversity initiatives and informs adjustments, as necessary.
- **Service Data:** equality monitoring of take up of services.
- **Consultation Data:** equality monitoring of participation in public consultations.

Community engagement

A commitment to external community engagement serves as a cornerstone in building relationships and fostering inclusivity.

- **Build Honest Relationships with Groups of and for People with Protected Characteristics:** nurturing robust ties with diverse community groups ensures that the Council's strategy is informed by the unique needs and perspectives of various communities.
- **Leicestershire Equalities Challenge Group:** active support for and from this group enables a constructive critical community voice to be heard to challenge the Council on its policies and activities from an EDI perspective.
- **Promote & Celebrate Contribution of Diverse Groups to Leicestershire:** recognising and celebrating the diverse contributions of various groups enhances community cohesion and fosters a sense of belonging.
- **Participation in Community Events:** active involvement in community events demonstrates the Council's commitment to understanding, respecting, and celebrating the cultural richness of Leicestershire.
- **Building New Relationships with Seldom Heard Communities:** initiating connections with seldom heard communities expands the Council's reach and ensures that their voices are included in decision-making processes.
- **Establishing a Collaborated and Linked Community Engagement Process across departments:** creating a coordinated and linked community engagement process promotes cohesion, planning, and ensures that engagement efforts across departments align with overarching goals and strategies.

Positive commercial arrangements

The Council's commitment to positive commercial arrangements extends the influence of the EDI Strategy into the business sector.

- **Ensure Suppliers Have EDI Commitments:** requiring EDI commitments from suppliers promotes a broader culture of inclusion throughout the supply chain.
- **Encourage Local Businesses to Adopt EDI Good Practice:** the EDI strategy seeks to influence local businesses, encouraging them to adopt EDI best practices and contribute to a more inclusive local economy.
- **Public Sector Partnerships:** collaborating with other public sector partners extends the Council's collective impact, fostering a united front in advancing EDI initiatives.

Accessible and fair service

The Council prioritises accessible and fair services as a fundamental element of the EDI strategy.

- **Accessibility Assessments:** conducting regular assessments of public facilities, websites, and communication channels to identify and eliminate barriers, ensuring universal access for all residents.
- **Inclusive Communication Practices:** developing and adhering to inclusive communication practices, including the use of multiple languages, accessible formats, and communication aids, to ensure information reaches and serves diverse community members.
- **Flexible Service Delivery Models:** exploring and implementing flexible service delivery models, such as online services, mobile outreach, and extended service hours, to cater to varying schedules and preferences and enhance accessibility for everyone.
- **Interpretation & Translation Services:** ensuring access and fair service for those where there is a communication barrier. This includes people who use British Sign Language as well as other languages.

Accreditations

Accreditations signify the Council's commitment to external standards and benchmarks, guiding continuous improvement. Rather than mere checkboxes, they serve as yardsticks against national and international standards, challenging the Council to continually enhance its performance. As accreditations prompt validation and analysis, they spur ongoing improvement efforts, ensuring that the Council remains accountable and responsive to evolving standards and expectations. It is important that accreditation and external validation is not seen as an end itself. The Council will continue to review the value and benefits of external accreditation.

- **Disability Confident:** the Council's journey involves progressing to higher levels of Disability Confident status, demonstrating commitment to creating a disability-friendly workplace.
- **Race at Work Charter:** the Council's participation in the Race at Work Charter signifies the Council's commitment to race equality in the workplace.
- **British Sign Language Charter:** the Council's adherence to the British Sign Language Charter demonstrates commitment to accessibility for the Deaf community.
- **Stonewall Workplace Equality Index:** recognising the importance of LGBTQ+ inclusion, the Council demonstrates its commitment through participation in the Stonewall Workplace Equality Index. The Council aims to maintain its position as a top 100 employer, reflecting its ongoing commitment to LGBTQ+ rights.
- **Menopause Friendly Accreditation:** acknowledging the importance of being a Menopause Friendly employer, the Council's commitment is shown through its intent to seek accreditation in 2024 and beyond.

National and international context

National and international developments have shaped and influenced the work of the Council and its strategic approach to EDI. The Black Lives Matter movement, founded in the USA in the aftermath of the murder by police officers of George Floyd, created momentum to re-examine issues of institutional racism within all public bodies. The Council embraced this opportunity to re-examine its own approach and made an explicit commitment to work to becoming an anti-racist organisation – going beyond the need to meet statutory requirements. Other incidents of hate crime, including the murder of trans girl Brianna Ghey and the recent riots of August 2024, demonstrate the need to continually work to promote community cohesion.

The Covid pandemic affected everyone with older people and disabled people, especially those residing in care homes particularly affected. There is also evidence that minority ethnic communities were more adversely impacted. There has been a lasting change in ways of working, also influenced by the availability of modern technology for remote working. The move towards digitalisation of communications and contact has potential to improve access through 24/7 availability, speed, and ease of use. However, there is also the risk of leaving behind those who do not have the access to the appropriate technology or lack the skills to use it.

The Commission for Race and Ethnic Disparity report (2021) argued that issues of participation, family life, trust between institutions and communities, were as important as overt racism in overcoming barriers to genuine inclusivity and fairness. The national agenda was also shaped by the Baroness Casey review into the standards of behaviour and internal culture of the Metropolitan Police in 2023. This report, commissioned following the murder of Sarah Everard, found systematic evidence of homophobia, misogyny, and racism. It was a lesson for all public bodies to remain vigilant on these issues.

There have also been Government announcements and high-profile legal cases relating to gender identity, women's rights and freedom of expression. This is a complex and evolving area where different rights and values may come into conflict. The Council remains committed to recognising the right to express one's own gender identity, whilst protecting the safety of women and the right to freedom of expression.

Finally, the Council has responded to international conflicts, such as the ongoing situation in Ukraine, and the Council has been pleased to support over 1000 Ukrainians to settle in the County through the Homes for Ukraine scheme.



Local context

The Council operates in a dynamic and diverse context, situated in the heart of England. The county embraces a rich mix of cultures and ethnicities, with a notable representation from Asian, Black and various other communities. The demographic landscape reflects a mixture of traditions and experiences, contributing to the cultural vibrancy of the region.

Demographic insights

- Population Trends: steady growth influenced by migration, birth rates and an aging population, emphasising the need for age-inclusive services.
- Socioeconomic Factors: economic prosperity with pockets of deprivation, especially in areas like Loughborough and Coalville, requiring targeted interventions.
- Education and Employment: diverse educational landscape and a varied economic scenario with strengths in manufacturing, services and emerging sectors.
- Healthcare and Well-being: emphasis on healthcare services to address disparities and enhance overall well-being.
- Housing and Infrastructure: focus on quality, sustainable homes and infrastructure development to support the growing population.

Census 2021

Key facts from the Leicestershire Census 2021 highlight the county's demographic composition, including age, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation and disability.

Key facts	Numbers	Leicestershire %	England %
Age 65 and over	148,080	20.8	18.4
Non-white	88,937	12.5	19.0
Minority ethnicity*	116,570	16.4	25.5
Religion other than Christianity	60,005	8.4	11.0
Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual or other	14,293	2.4	3.2
Gender identity different from sex registered at birth	1,864	0.3	0.5
Disabled under the Equality Act definition	118,062	16.6	17.3
Resident in the UK less than 5 years	13,229	1.9	4.2

*the 'minority ethnicity' definition includes Gypsy or Traveller, Roma and other White non-British ethnic groups

Community perception

According to the Leicestershire Community Insight Survey (July to September 2023), 92.9% of residents agree that Leicestershire is a place where people of diverse backgrounds get along well, with 81.8% agreeing that the Council treats all types of people fairly.

Legal framework

The Council works within a robust legal framework designed to safeguard and champion EDI. Central to this framework are the Equality Act (the Act) 2010, and the Human Rights Act 1998, which collectively set out the rights and protections afforded to individuals and groups.



Human Rights Act 1998: The Human Rights Act 1998 sets up a framework for fundamental rights and freedoms applicable to all individuals. These rights protect individuals from the power of the state and thus are of key significance to local government. In the context of the Council, this applies in areas such as social care, child protection and education, but is considered by all functions.

Public Sector Equality Duty: As a public body, the Act imposes a Public Sector Equality Duty on the Council, mandating “due regard” to the imperative of ending discrimination, harassment, victimisation and other prohibited conduct. It further obliges the Council to have due regard to advance equality of opportunity and cultivate positive relations among individuals with and without protected characteristics.

Equality Impact Assessments: The Council uses a robust Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) approach to assess the potential impact of any changes in policy or practice on those with protected characteristics. Each EIA is done by the responsible service manager and includes an action plan to mitigate against any potential negative impact.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the EDI Strategy for the Council is a commitment to fostering a diverse, inclusive and equitable community. Grounded in proactive communication, engagement initiatives and a commitment to continuous improvement, the strategy aims to provide an environment where every individual in Leicestershire thrives.

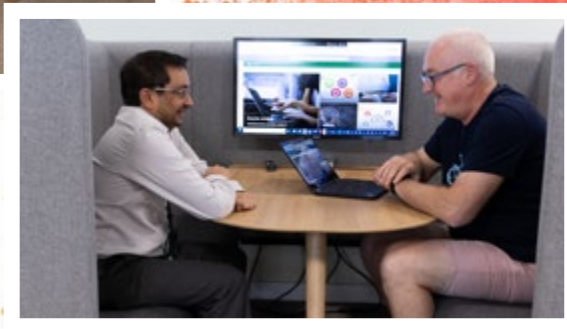
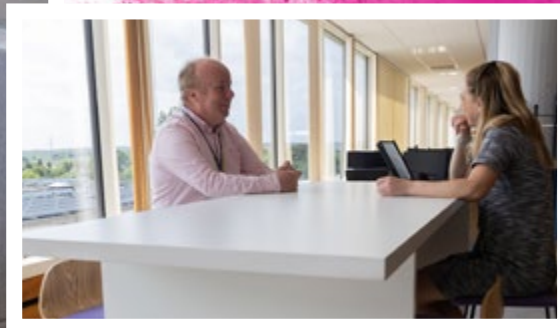
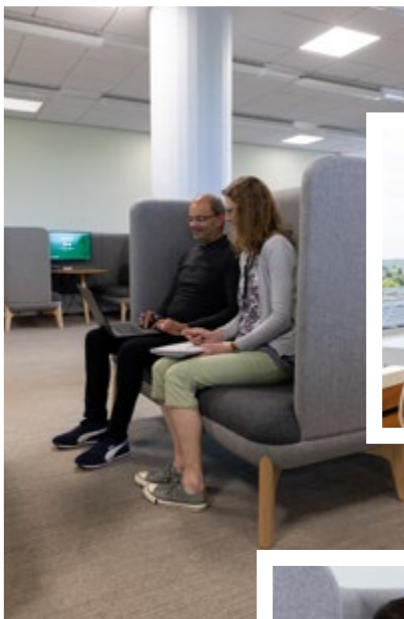
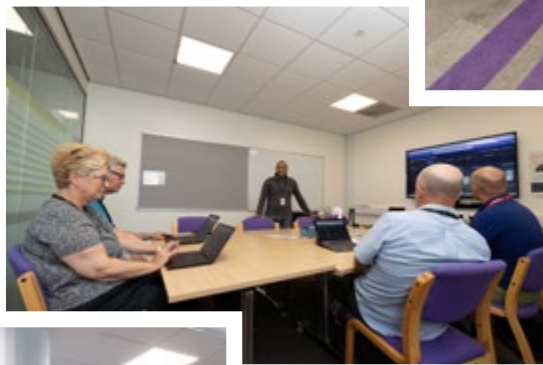
Action plan

Pillar	Action	Department/ Person Responsible	Timelines	Actions to be done	Anticipated Output
Visible Leadership and Commitment	Clear EDI Vision & Strategy	Policy Team	Q1 2024 - Q2 2024	Develop and publish the EDI vision and strategy	Clear direction and alignment with Council's objectives and values
	Directors & Managers Leadership and Commitment	Directors & Managers of Each Department	Ongoing	Embed EDI principles in the day to day management activities and foster an environment that promotes equity, fairness and transparency.	Enhanced departmental focus on EDI issues.
	Departmental Targets	DEGs	Q3 2024 - Q4 2024	Develop specific, measurable targets for each department.	Roadmap for progress and accountability.
	Member development and leadership	Member Services	Ongoing	Provide developmental and learning opportunities for Members.	Enhanced Member understanding and leadership
	Equality Impact Assessments	Managers for specific projects Policy Team	Ongoing	Conduct impact assessments for all key Council decisions.	Informed decision-making that considers EDI implications.
	EDI Annual Reports	Policy Team DEGs Group Networks	Q4 2024 – Q4 2025	Compile and publish an annual report on EDI activities.	Transparency and accountability in EDI efforts.
Workforce and Culture	Inclusive HR Policies & Practices	People Services	Ongoing	Review and update HR Policies as part of the Policy Review Program	Policies that reflect inclusivity and fairness.
	Developmental Programmes	People Services	Q2 2024 - Q1 2025	Implement mentoring, coaching and reverse mentoring programs.	Professional development and breaking of "glass ceilings."
	Learning & Development Plan	L&D	Q1 2024 - Q2 2024	Develop and update a comprehensive EDI learning and development plan.	Continuous learning opportunities for EDI awareness and skills.
	Big Conversations	Policy Team	Ongoing	Facilitate open dialogue sessions across the organisation.	Enhanced understanding and inclusive culture.
	Network Groups	Policy Team People Services DEGs Chairs Directors	Q1 2024 - Q4 2025	Support and foster employee network groups.	Secure spaces for employee expression and innovation.

Pillar	Action	Department/ Person Responsible	Timelines	Actions to be done	Anticipated Output
Evidence and Data Based	Ethnicity & Gender Pay Gap Reporting	People Services	Annually	Conduct and publish ethnicity and gender pay gap reports.	Transparency and accountability in addressing pay disparities.
	Equal Pay Audit	People Services	Tri-annually	Perform an equal pay audit and address discrepancies.	Fair compensation practices.
	Data Collection and Analysis	BI Team	Q1 2024 - Q4 2025	Enhance mechanisms for data collection and analysis.	Accurate, relevant and comprehensive workforce and service user demographics.
	Staff Survey Feedback	BI Team People Services	Q1 2024 - Q4 2025	Conduct regular employee surveys to gather feedback.	Insights into employee experiences and EDI initiative effectiveness.
	Staff Training	L&D	Ongoing	Conduct trainings for staff collecting and analysing data	Ensure only relevant and accurate data is collected, analysed, stored and used for the intended purpose.
Honest Community Engagement	Build Honest Relationships with Groups of and for People with Protected Characteristics	Community engagement teams Consultation and engagement team Policy Team All Departments	Ongoing	Foster relationships with diverse community groups.	Informed and inclusive EDI strategy, policies and decisions.
	Participation in Community Events	All Departments	Q1 2024 - Q4 2025	Actively participate in community events.	Demonstrated commitment to community engagement and cultural understanding.
	Leicestershire Equalities Challenge Group	Chief Executive's Department	Ongoing	Enable the Group to provide expert and community insight into the Council's plans and policies	
	Building New Relationships with Seldom Heard Communities	All departments	Ongoing	Initiate connections with seldom heard communities.	Inclusion of diverse voices in decision-making processes.

Pillar	Action	Department/ Person Responsible	Timelines	Actions to be done	Anticipated Output
Positive Commercial Arrangements	Ensure Suppliers Have EDI Commitments	Procurement & Commissioning Teams	Q2 2024 - Q4 2024	Develop a set of EDI criteria and commitments that stakeholders must meet as prerequisites for working with the Council, ensuring alignment with organisational EDI goals.	Broader culture of inclusion in the supply chain.
	Standardised agreements/ contracts	Legal Team	Q4 2024	Develop standardised agreements/contracts outlining stakeholder's commitments to EDI principles and practices, to be signed before engaging in partnerships or collaborations.	To ensure uniform and consistent approach.
	Encourage Local Businesses to Adopt EDI Good Practice	Business Support and Development Team	Q3 2024 - Q2 2025	Promote EDI best practices among local businesses.	More inclusive local economy.
	Support and guidance to SMEs	Business Support and Development Team	Ongoing	Provide support and guidance for SMEs to help them understand and implement EDI best practices effectively.	More inclusive local economy.
Accessible and Fair Service	Accessibility Assessments	IT People Services Reasonable Adjustments Team Health and Safety Customer Services Team	Ongoing	Conduct regular accessibility assessments including Council's digital platforms, recruitment portal and buildings.	Address barriers faced by residents and staff with disabilities or language barriers.
	Inclusive Communication Practices	Communications Department	Q2 2024 - Q4 2024	Develop and implement inclusive communication practices	Address barriers faced by residents and staff
	Flexible Service Delivery Models	Customer Services Team	Q3 2024 - Q2 2025	Implement flexible service delivery models, increase opportunities for face to face interactions and reduce call waiting times	Enhanced accessibility for all residents.
	Interpretation & Translation Services		Q1 2024 - Q4 2025	Ensure availability of interpretation and translation services.	Fair access to services for non-English speakers and BSL users.

Pillar	Action	Department/ Person Responsible	Timelines	Actions to be done	Anticipated Output
Accreditations	Stonewall Workplace Equality Index	People Services Policy Team	Q1 2024 - Q4 2025	Maintain participation, strive for a top 100 ranking and conduct continuous review and cost-benefit analysis.	Recognition of commitment to LGBTQ+ rights, ensuring value for money and exploring suitable alternatives if necessary.
	Attain Level 3 Disability Confident	Policy Team People Services	Q3 2024	Implement steps to achieve Level 3 Disability Confident status.	Demonstrated commitment to a disability-friendly workplace.
	Race at Work Charter	Policy Team People Services	Q1 2024 - Q4 2025	Ensure compliance with Race at Work Charter commitments.	Recognition of commitment to race equality in the workplace.
	Menopause Friendly Accreditation	People Services	Q1 2024 - Q4 2025	Maintain Menopause Friendly Accreditation.	Supportive work environment for menopausal employees.
Lived Care Experience	Adopt as a protected characteristic	Policy Team People Services	Ongoing	Consider the impact of policies on individuals with lived care experience, edit the Equality Impact Assessment online form and EIA guidance document to include care leavers.	Equitable policies that address the needs of care leavers.





Equality Impact Assessment Form

Before completing this form, please refer to [the supporting guidance document](#)

The purpose of this form is to aid the Council in meeting the requirements of the Public Sector Equality Duty contained in the Equality Act 2010. This requires the Council to have “due regard” of the impact of its actions on the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not.

The assessment is used to identify and record any concerns and potential risks. The following actions can then be taken to address these issues.

- Remove risks: abandon the proposed policy or practice
- Mitigate risks – amend the proposed policy or practice so that risks are reduced
- Justify policy or practice in terms of other objectives

Once the EIA has been approved by the Senior Responsible Officer, please ensure that a copy is placed on the SharePoint folder: “Equalities Board, EIAs”

1- Policy details	
Name of policy	Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2024-28
Department and service	Chief Executives
Who has been involved in completing the Equality Impact Assessment?	Joshua Mawere, Leon Charikar
Contact numbers	+441163051336 +441163059283
Date of completion	21/08/2024

2- Objectives and background of policy or practice change

Use this section to describe the policy or practice change

What is the purpose, expected outcomes and rationale?

Include the background information and context

What is the proposal?

Leicestershire County Council operates within a legal framework, including the Equality Act 2010 and the Human Rights Act 1998, which mandate the council to uphold and champion equality, diversity and inclusion. The council recognises the diverse composition of its communities, including individuals with various protected characteristics and aims to address the unique needs and challenges they may face. The purpose of the EDI Strategy 2024-2028 is to provide a comprehensive framework that guides LCC in promoting equality, challenging discrimination and fostering inclusivity. The strategy aims to create a positive impact on the well-being of communities by ensuring fairness, dignity and equal opportunities for every individual, regardless of their background.

What change and impact is intended by the proposal?

Expected Outcomes:

Inclusive Workforce Culture: The strategy aims to cultivate a resilient and adaptable work environment that values diversity at every level, contributing to a workforce that reflects the diversity of the communities served.

Visible Leadership Commitment: By setting specific targets and integrating EDI principles into leadership development programs, the strategy aims to ensure that EDI is a shared commitment across all levels of the organisation.

	<p>Equity in Service Delivery: Through the implementation of policies and practices that ensure equity in service delivery, the strategy seeks to cut disparities and foster inclusivity in supplying services to all residents.</p> <p>Robust Data-Driven Decision Making: The strategy promotes a culture of evidence and data-driven decision-making, using comprehensive data sets to inform strategies, measure progress and identify areas for improvement in promoting equality.</p> <p>Positive Community Engagement: By aligning community engagement efforts with data on diverse characteristics, the strategy aims to strengthen ties with diverse community groups, ensuring that LCC's initiatives are informed by the unique needs and perspectives of various communities.</p> <p>Positive Commercial Arrangements: LCC's commitment to positive commercial arrangements seeks to influence local businesses by requiring EDI commitments from suppliers, encouraging them to adopt EDI best practices.</p> <p>Accreditations and Recognitions: Pursuing accreditations such as Stonewall Workplace Equality Index, Disability Confident, Race at Work Charter and others demonstrates LCC's commitment to external standards and benchmarks, guiding continuous improvement.</p>
<p>What is the rationale for this proposal?</p>	<p>The rationale behind this policy and practice change is rooted in the principles of fairness, equality and the recognition of diversity as a strength. LCC acknowledges its legal obligations, the national context of disparities and the local challenges faced by various communities. The EDI Strategy serves as a proactive approach to address these challenges, fostering a culture of inclusivity within the organisation and positively</p>

impacting the broader community. The outlined objectives and actions are designed to create tangible outcomes and promote continuous improvement in the pursuit of a fairer and more inclusive Leicestershire.

3- Evidence gathered on equality implications - Data and engagement

What evidence about potential equality impacts is already available?

This could come from research, service analysis, questionnaires, and engagement with protected characteristics groups

What equalities information or data has been gathered so far?

Census Data for 2021, Results of residence survey for 2023, Regular Staff Survey from 2021-2023, Consultations with local organisations, Have Your Say Survey.

What does it show?

Census shows change in population, increasing numbers of elderly people and ethnic minorities in Leicestershire. It also records information on sexual orientation and disabilities. Residence survey showed that 92.9% of the local people agreed that people from different backgrounds get on well in Leicestershire. 81.8% of people agreed that LCC treats all types of people fairly. A total of 201 responses were received for the 'Have Your Say' survey. The surveys also showed that Leicestershire is a diverse county and majority of participants were in support of the Councils EDI initiatives.

What engagement has been undertaken so far?

Prior to the launch of the strategy, engagement was carried out with internal groups, People Services and learning development. A workshop was held to discuss the strategy and a presentation on the strategy was delivered to the Leicestershire Equality Challenges Group. During the consultation specific engagement took place with local organisations representing protected characteristics. Online webinars and Big Conversations on equalities have also been conducted.

<p>What does it show?</p>	<p>It shows support for strategy based on internal and external pillars and the need to engage and consult with wider range of communities using variety of methods.</p>

4- Benefits, concerns and mitigating action

Please specify if any individuals or community groups who identify with any of the '[protected characteristics](#)' may *potentially* be affected by the policy and describe any benefits and concerns including any barriers. Use this section to demonstrate how risks would be mitigated for each affected group. If a group will not be affected by the proposal please state so.

<p>Group</p>	<p>What are the benefits of the proposal for those from the following groups?</p>	<p>What are the concerns identified and how will these affect those from the following groups?</p>	<p>How will the known concerns be mitigated?</p>
<p>Age</p>	<p>The strategy promotes an inclusive environment for individuals of all ages. Visible leadership commitment ensures representation and consideration for all age groups.</p>	<p>Concern that specific age groups such as young adults or elders may be marginalised</p>	<p>Establish engagement with organisations representing these age groups.</p>
<p>Disability</p>	<p>The strategy recognises the range of physical, sensory, neurological, long-term conditions and hidden disabilities people might face and promotes an</p>	<p>Ensure there is genuine engagement to listen, understand and respond to the concerns of disabled staff and service users. Ensure that schemes</p>	<p>Regular engagement with disabled workers group and with community groups of people with disabilities.</p>

	inclusive approach. It promotes disclosure and sharing of experiences, data collection and analysis to remove barriers.	such as “Disability Confident” are not just a tick-box exercise but lead to improvements.	Robust approach to learning through accreditation and external validation processes.
Race	The strategy recognises the growing ethnic diversity of the population in Leicestershire, including significant representation from various ethnic backgrounds. Accreditations and recognitions, such as the Race at Work Charter, demonstrate a commitment to race equality	Promoting an inclusive workforce and service culture where issues of racism are responded to clearly and swiftly. Concern that the voices of different ethnic minority communities and staff are heard.	Ensuring that a “zero-tolerance” approach is clearly communicated and enacted. Engagement with the staff network and community groups.
Sex	The strategy emphasises equality and inclusion for both sexes. Inclusive People Services policies contribute to gender equality in the workforce	Significant differences in gender balances across departmental workforces	Ensure that departments set their own objectives and targets relating to workforce gender profile
Gender Reassignment	The strategy supports individuals undergoing or considering a change in gender identity. The Council has produced specific policies around supporting trans and non-binary service users and staff.	Concern that there is politicised national debate on these issues and that the Council maintains a inclusive approach within the confines of the law.	Ensure that policies related to trans and non-binary issues are kept up-to-date to reflect legal judgements and best practice.
Marriage and Civil Partnership	Protection against discrimination based on marital status is highlighted as a protected characteristic within the strategy.	No specific concerns	

Sexual Orientation	The strategy recognises Leicestershire as home to a diverse range of sexual orientations. It encourages greater disclosure, sharing of personal experience and data analysis to identify trends in workforce and service delivery.	Concern that association with external campaigning organisations may impact on the reputation of the Council or distract from core work to promote inclusivity and tackle prejudice	Engage with the staff network and with local organisations that promote LGBTQ+ inclusivity. Ensure that involvement in external membership schemes is kept under review.
Pregnancy and Maternity	Protection against any form of discrimination is emphasised. The strategy acknowledges the importance of a supportive environment that is fair and accessible to all people.	No specific concerns	
Religion or Belief	Protection against discrimination based on religious beliefs is acknowledged. The strategy recognises Leicestershire's diverse and changing religious landscape.	Concern that national or international events may impact on community relations between faith groups	Establish channels for engagement with faith representatives and with staff groups. Encourage a culture of learning and acceptance of different faith perspectives.
Armed Forces (including veterans)	The strategy acknowledges this specific group and recognises their unique challenges. The Council has signed the Armed Forces Covenant.	No specific concerns	
People with lived care experience	The strategy acknowledges this specific group and recognises their unique	No Specific concerns	Develop an action plan to address implement the decision to treat

	challenges. The Strategy specifically highlights the Council decision to treat people with lived care experience as if they were a protected characteristic.		those with lived care experience as if it were a protected characteristic.
Other groups: e.g., rural isolation, deprivation, health inequality, carers, asylum seeker and refugee communities, looked after children, deprived or disadvantaged communities	The strategy acknowledges these specific groups and recognises their unique challenges. Community engagement and partnerships aim to address the needs of these communities.	Concern that issues of socio-economic inequalities should also be addressed	The strategy will encourage wider engaging a broad range of communities. Socio-economic status has not been enacted as a protected characteristic within the Equality Act.

5- Action Plan			
Produce a framework to outline how identified risks/concerns identified in section 4 will be mitigated.			
What action is planned?	Who is responsible for the action?	Timescale	Expected outcome
Work on engagement with community groups and staff groups to ensure diverse voices and experiences are heard and used to implement the strategy	Policy Team Corporate HR	2024-2028	The voice and experience of communities and staff is a key driver for the implementation of the strategy.
Ensure all policies and guidance relating to EDI service delivery and workforce issues are kept up-to-date in line with legislation and best practice	Policy Team Corporate HR	2024-28	Policy and guidance documents are up-to-date and in line with legislation and best practice.

REPORT OF THE CONSTITUTION COMMITTEE

A. APPOINTMENT OF INDEPENDENT PERSONS

Introduction

1. This report concerns the appointment of Independent Persons to support the Member Conduct Complaints Process as required under Section 28 (7) of the Localism Act 2011 and to support the procedures for dealing with the dismissal of the Chief Executive, the Monitoring Officer and the Chief Financial Officer, as required by the Local Authorities (Standing Order) England Regulations 2001 (as amended).

Background

2. The Localism Act 2011 sets out provisions regarding the conduct of members. It is a requirement under this Act that the Council appoint at least one Independent Person, whose view must be sought and taken into account by the Authority before it makes a decision on any allegation and whose views may be sought about allegations.
3. The Local Authorities (Standing Order) England (Amendment) Regulations 2015 set out the procedure for dealing with the dismissal of the Chief Executive, the Monitoring Officer and the Chief Financial Officer.
4. At its meeting on 30 September 2020, the Council appointed six Independent Persons for a period of four years to form a Panel from which any one could be contacted to advise on particular allegations.
5. The Independent Persons appointed by the County Council in 2020 were appointed for a period of four years. With their terms of service due to expire in September 2024, a joint recruitment process was undertaken in July with the Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland Combined Fire Authority (CFA). The position was publicly advertised and an interview process undertaken to recruit a pool of Independent Persons to support both organisations' member complaints process and the dismissal process for senior officers as outlined above. The Interview Panel consisted of Members drawn from the Corporate Governance Committee and the Employment Committee of both the County Council and the CFA, supported by the County Council's Director of Law and Governance and the Assistant Director of Corporate Resources – Corporate Services.

Proposed Appointments

6. A pool of six candidates is recommended for appointment for the four-year term from 25 September 2024 to cover the joint role of supporting the County Council and CFA, to allow greater flexibility and to avoid the possibility of a conflict of interest. All those recommended are eligible, live in Leicester or Leicestershire and are considered suitable candidates.
7. The regulations permit independent persons to be reappointed. The Monitoring Officer wrote to both the existing appointees to thank them for their work to date and confirm that they were welcome to re-apply. Four of the six current Independent Persons applied for the position and passed the benchmark set by the Shortlisting Panel for invitation to interview.
8. The Shortlisting Panel concluded that, as the four applicants that were current Independent Persons met the standard for this position, that they should not be interviewed again but have their appointments extended as they had demonstrated their suitability for the role when interviewed in 2020, updated positive references had been received for all four and the requirements for the role had not changed. This mirrored the approach taken in other local authorities and was agreed by the Monitoring Officer and the Appointment Panel.
9. The Appointment Committee met on Wednesday 21 August 2024 to interview candidates for the role and agreed to recommend the following people for appointment, and in some cases reappointment:-

Richard Gough
Gordon Grimes
Surinder Sharma
Pamela Roberts
John Pilgrim
Kimberley Kingsley

Further details of the above candidates are set out in the Appendix to this report.

10. Candidates will be appointed for a term of four years until 30 September 2028.
11. Two of the current cohort of Independent Persons (Ms T Herring and Ms H Kotecha) have chosen not to reapply and will cease their role on 25 September when the County Council appoints a new panel of Independent Persons.

Resource Implications

12. By running a joint recruitment process for both the County Council and the Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland Combined Fire Authority, economies of scale have been achieved through reduced advertising costs, officer administration time and the servicing of a joint recruitment Panel.

13. Any payments made to the independent persons appointed, for travel and subsistence expenses (where appropriate), will fall outside the Members Allowance Scheme which only applies to either elected or co-opted members of either Authority. An allowance will not be paid.

Equality Implications

14. The opportunities were advertised widely to ensure that a diverse pool of potential applicants was aware of the opportunities available.

Human Rights Implications

15. There are no human rights implications arising from the recommendations in this report.

Consideration by the Constitution Committee

16. The Constitution Committee at its meeting on 13 September considered the proposed appointment of Independent Persons. The decision of the Committee is reflected in the motion below.

(Motion to be moved: -

(a) That Richard Gough, Gordon Grimes, Surinder Sharma, Pamela Roberts, John Pilgrim and Kimberley Kingsley be appointed to serve as Independent Persons for a term of four years ending on 30 September 2028;

(b) That Ms T Herring and Ms H Kotecha be thanked for their valuable work in supporting the Monitoring Officer in the operation of the Members' Code of Conduct complaints process over the last four years.)

13 September 2024

Mrs D Taylor CC
Deputy Chairman

Background Papers

Report to the Constitution Committee, 13 September 2024 – Appointment of Independent Persons

<https://democracy.leics.gov.uk/documents/s185108/Appointment%20of%20Independent%20Persons.pdf>

Appendix

Proposed Independent Persons 2024

Proposed Independent Persons 2024**Richard Gough**

Mr Gough has been an Independent Person for the Combined Fire Authority since 2012 and was also appointed in the same year, as an Independent Person by Leicestershire Borough and District Councils. He served as a Magistrate on the Leicester Bench for 20 years. His previous career was in the financial services industry. He lives in Wigston Fields.

Gordon Grimes

Mr Grimes, a retired Senior Civil Servant, has been an Independent Person for various local authorities in Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland since 2012. He is currently an Independent Member of the Leicestershire County Council's Corporate Governance Committee. He lives in Enderby.

Prof. Surinder Sharma

Prof. Sharma has been an Independent Person for the County Council since 2012. He has wide ranging experience gained from working in the public, private and voluntary sectors, has been Chair of the Equal Opportunities Commission, a Magistrate and an elected member of a local authority. He lives in Stoneygate.

Pamela Roberts

Ms Roberts, a retired Civil Servant, has a wide career in public service, including in local government. She has a wide experience of policy formation and delivery, planning and ensuring that standards are maintained. She currently volunteers as a Trustee at a local charity. She lives in Market Harborough.

Kimberley Kingsley

Miss Kingsley has had a diverse career in the NHS at a senior management level with a strong clinical background as a registered nurse, and also at a regional and national level. Now retired, she has sought out volunteering opportunities including volunteering abroad. She lives in Wigston.

John Pilgrim

Mr Pilgrim, now retired, had a long career in the financial services sector including PwC LLP, Ernst and Young LLP and HM Customs and Excise. He is currently a trustee of local charities and has committee experience. He lives in Ashby de la Zouch.

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REPORT OF THE CORPORATE GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE

A. CHANGES TO THE FINANCIAL PROCEDURE RULES

Introduction

1. The purpose of this report is to seek approval of proposed changes to the Council's Financial Procedure Rules.

Background

2. The Financial Procedure Rules set out the main financial management requirements of the County Council. They apply to the Executive and Committees and to officers of the County Council.
3. The Standard Financial Instructions supplement the Financial Procedure Rules. They are proposed by the Chief Financial Officer and cover the more detailed procedures required for the control of the financial affairs of the Council. They include procedures for control of the capital programme, revenue budgets, contracts, ordering, payments, income collection, stocks and assets, banking and insurance.

Proposed Revisions to the Financial Procedure Rules

4. In order that the Financial Procedure Rules remain up to date and relevant it is necessary to regularly review and propose updates to the Rules. A review of the Rules has been undertaken which has identified a number of small changes needed to ensure that the Rules are up to date and fit for purpose. These are contained within Appendix A attached to this report.

Resource Implications

5. There are no resources implications associated with the changes to the Financial Procedure Rules.

Equality Implications

6. There are no equalities implications arising from the changes proposed to the Financial Procedure Rules.

Human Rights Implications

7. There are no human rights implications arising from the changes proposed to the Financial Procedure Rules.

Consideration by the Corporate Governance Committee

8. The Corporate Governance Committee at its meeting on 16 September considered the proposed changes to the Financial Procedure Rules. The Committee highlighted the need for consistency in the use of gender neutral language and asked that the Rules be further updated to address this. Subject to those changes being made, the decision of the Committee is reflected in the motion below.

(Motion to be moved: -

That the proposed amendments to the Financial Procedure Rules, set out in Appendix A to this report, be approved.)

16 September 2024

**Mr T Barkley CC
Chairman**

Background Papers

Report to the Corporate Governance Committee, 16 September 2024, Changes to the Contract Procedure Rules and Financial Procedure Rules

<https://democracy.leics.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=434&MId=7722&Ver=4>

Appendix

Appendix A – Proposed amendments to the Financial Procedure Rules

**PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO THE CONSTITUTION
OF LEICESTERSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL
SEPTEMBER 2024**

<u>ITEM</u>	<u>PROPOSED AMENDMENT</u>	<u>EXPLANATION</u>
<u>PART 4F – FINANCIAL PROCEDURE RULES</u>		
General (throughout)	Remove reference to the rules and SFI's to (school) 'Governors'.	Not required. Schools follow the School Funding Regulations, covered in SFI 22.
General (throughout)	Replace Chief Finance Officer, with Chief Financial Officer	Minor wording update to ensure consistency.
General (throughout)	Replace 'he/she' with 'they'	Updated wording.
Rule 12 – Implementation and amendment of approved budgets and plans	<p>Amend Rule to make it clear that this Rule relates to the revenue budget. (Rules 7 and 8 relate to the capital programme).</p> <p><u>Implementation and amendment of approved revenue budgets and plans</u></p> <p>(a) When the annual revenue budget has been approved the appropriate chief will be responsible for ensuring expected income is received and budgeted expenditure is not exceeded.</p> <p>(b) The Executive will be responsible for maintaining a control over the total of County Council's revenue expenditure and income.</p> <p>(c) Amendments to the approved annual revenue budget will be subject to the virement arrangements specified in the Standard Financial Instructions. This is unless they are deemed by the Chief Financial Officer to involve a Key Decision, in which case there may be a need for consultation with the Scrutiny Commission, approval by the Executive and possible further approval by the County Council.</p>	Minor updates to wording to clarify this Rule relates to the revenue budget.

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<u>ITEM</u>	<u>PROPOSED AMENDMENT</u>	<u>EXPLANATION</u>
Rule 19 – Redeployment or redundancy	<p>Amend paragraph (b) as set out below:</p> <p>(b) When preparing an Action Plan, the Chief Officer will have due regard to the requirements of the County Council's Organisational Change Policy. Chief Officers shall consult the Chief Financial Officer over Action Plan proposals and where the Action Plan results in additional costs, the Chief Financial Officer must give approval.</p>	Wording updated to require CFO approval where proposals result in additional costs.
Rule 23 – Property Management	<p>Amend paragraph (c) as set out below:</p> <p>(c) The Chief Financial Officer will act as the Corporate landlord for County Council properties. In addition where buildings have joint use, they may also undertake some of the responsibilities of the tenant.</p>	'Corporate' inserted before landlord. Property assets are managed corporately as part of a centralised function of the Council.
Rule 24 - Information and communication technology	<p>Amend wording in paragraphs (a) and (c), as set out below:</p> <p>(a) Replace 'Corporate Information and Technology Strategy' with 'IT & Digital Strategy'</p> <p>(c) Replace 'IT Strategy' with 'IT & Digital Strategy'</p>	Minor updates to wording.
<u>Standard Financial Instructions (SFI's)</u>		
Instruction 7 – Contracts	Amend wording throughout to replace 'private' with 'external' in respect of architects, quantity surveyors, engineers and consultants.	Minor updates to wording.

<p>Instruction 8 – Orders for work, goods and services</p>	<p>Update instruction as set out below:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) Orders for work, goods and services must not be placed unless the expenditure to be incurred is in accordance with the Financial Procedure Rules (Part 4F), the Contract Procedure Rules (Part 4G) and the Council’s Procure to Pay policy as set out by the Chief Financial Officer. (b) The County Council has adopted a ‘No Purchase Order, No Pay’ principle. No commitment should be made without a Purchase Order and contract/ legal agreement being in place, except where exemptions have been agreed by the Chief Financial Officer. (c) Where urgent orders are given informally, they must be confirmed by an official Purchase Order not later than the next working day following the day in which the oral order is given. (d) Orders must be placed using the Council’s Finance System, unless the Chief Financial Officer has agreed to alternative arrangements for specific classes of transaction. Orders must be authorised only by officers designated by the appropriate chief officer who are authorised to approve on their behalf and in line with the Council’s financial scheme of delegation. Before placing an order, Budget Managers must satisfy themselves that this would be proper expenditure and would be within the appropriate approved budget. (e) The Chief Officer of each department will be responsible for ensuring the validity of all orders issued and is in line with departmental plans. (f) Oracle Fusion is the Council’s Finance system for creating purchase orders, generating payments and accounting for related transactions. Only line of business systems, approved by the Chief Financial Officer, should be used to interface purchase orders and payment files to Oracle for the generation of the purchase order and payment. (g) Departments must obtain goods, works or services in a manner and from sources which demonstrate best value for money for the Council and in compliance with the Council’s Contract Procedure Rules. Chief Officers are responsible for obtaining goods, works or services that have been procured under a corporate contract or framework or they must seek exception and approval in advance, to source items from alternative sources. 	<p>Minor updating of wording and links to the Procure to Pay policy.</p> <p>Clarification that Oracle is the core financial system to be used.</p>
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<p>Instruction 9 – Payments of invoices and claims</p>	<p>Update instruction as set out below:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) Invoices should be on suppliers' official forms and must pass invoice validation requirements, as set out in the Council's payment terms. Each invoice must contain a valid official County Council Purchase Order number, unless an exception agreed by the Chief Financial Officer is in place. Suppliers should email their invoices direct to the Finance Service Centre email address, except where alternative arrangements have been agreed by the Chief Financial Officer. (b) The Chief Financial Officer is authorised to make all payments as they become due out of the General County Fund, its subsidiary accounts, and the Pension Fund. The payment validation system within departments should ensure that expenditure has been reviewed and validated by an officer authorised by the Chief Officer. (c) Before approving a Purchase Order or expense claim the approving officer must satisfy themselves that the expenditure is valid, appropriate budget exists and that it is allocated to the correct expenditure head. (d) All claims for the payment of employee travel and expenses must be submitted and approved in Oracle Fusion using the expenses process, unless alternative arrangements have been agreed by the Chief Financial Officer. Claims must be submitted promptly. Claims which are for a period over 3 months old will not be paid unless there are extenuating circumstances. (e) For payments made via other approved payment methods, as set out in the Procure to Pay Policy, the approving officer must satisfy themselves that the expenditure is valid, appropriate budget exists and that it is allocated to the correct expenditure head. (f) The Chief Financial Officer will examine, so far as they consider necessary, invoices and claims passed for payment and will be entitled to receive such information and explanations as required. For this purpose all documents relating to the payment, evidence of payment validation and goods receipt must be placed at their disposal. (g) Where the Chief Financial Officer considers it appropriate, they will call the attention of the chief officer and, if necessary, the Executive to any item which has been passed for payment. They will also report to the Executive on any such item which they consider for any good reason should not be paid. (h) Schools operating under Local Management are subject to specific regulations. These are contained in the LMS Scheme of Delegation. 	<p>Minor updating of wording and updates to link to the Procure to Pay Policy.</p>
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<p>Instruction 11 – stocktaking and consequential action</p>	<p>Amend paragraphs (c) and (d) as set out below:</p> <p>(c) Surpluses or deficiencies revealed during any one stocktaking can be adjusted up to a net book value of £5,000 on the authority of the relevant chief officer or their authorised representative. Above this amount surpluses or deficiencies must be reported to the Chief Financial Officer who can approve write-offs or adjustments. The Chief Financial Officer will have the right to report any write-off or adjustment to the Executive if they consider this appropriate.</p> <p>(d) Surplus or obsolete items of stocks and stores up to a total book value of £5,000 at any one time may be disposed of by a chief officer or their authorised representative. Where the book value is over this figure but the resale value is considered to be below this, the chief officer should arrange for a suitably qualified second person to give a written confirmation of the valuation prior to disposal. Where the estimated resale value is above £5,000, the agreement of the Chief Financial Officer is necessary and, wherever appropriate, disposal will be by competitive quotation or tender. A record should be kept of all details relating to disposals.</p>	<p>Limits raised to £5,000, previously £1,000 to reflect increase in prices and materiality.</p>
<p>Instruction 12 – Inventories and consequential action</p>	<p>Amend paragraphs (a) and (e) as set out below:</p> <p>(a) Items costing over £1,000 should be included on an inventory. Additionally, lower value attractive and portable items should be included, subject to a minimum value of £500. All inventories will be kept in a form approved by the Chief Financial Officer.</p> <p>(e) Surplus or obsolete items of any one commodity up to a total book value at any one time of £5,000 may be disposed of by a chief officer or their authorised representative. Where the book value is over this figure but the resale value is considered to be below this, the chief officer should arrange for a suitably qualified second person to give a written confirmation of the valuation prior to disposal. Where the estimated resale value is above £5,000, the agreement of the Chief Financial Officer is necessary and whenever appropriate disposal will be by competitive quotation or tender. A record should be kept of all details relating to disposals.</p>	<p>Limits raised from £250, and £50 respectively to reflect general increase in prices. Limits raised from £1,000 to £5,000 to reflect general increase in prices and materiality.</p>

<p>Instruction 14 – Write-Offs</p>	<p>Amend paragraphs (b) and (c) as set out below:</p> <p>(b) Amounts up to £20,000 in any one case may be written-off by the Chief Financial Officer with the agreement of the chief officer of the department concerned. In special categories of write-offs, such as library issues, the Chief Financial Officer may authorise chief officers or nominated officers to write-off debts on their behalf.</p> <p>(c) Amounts over £20,000 in any one case may be written off by the Chief Financial Officer after consultation with the Leader or their nominee except that, in the case of debts of organisations in liquidation, receivership or bankruptcy where the Director of Law and Governance advises there is no reasonable prospect of recovering any monies or debts partially recovered by means of an out of court settlement where the Director of Law and Governance advises there is no reasonable prospect of recovering any further monies, these may be written off directly by the Chief Financial Officer.</p>	<p>General update to limits to reflect no changes in the last 20 years, ensuring the larger write-offs continue to be approved by Members. The previous limit was £10,000.</p>
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<p>Instruction 15 – Review of charges</p>	<p>Update Instruction to that below:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) The Chief Officer of each department shall ensure that all charges for County Council services follow corporate charging policies, including that they are reviewed at least annually at the time of the preparation of the budget. Rents should be reviewed at least triennially unless they are subject to any longer review period under the terms of the rental agreement. (b) Chief Officers can decide on the pricing of discretionary services, i.e. traded services in consultation with the Chief Financial Officer and in compliance with corporate charging policies They must seek to cover all costs, including overheads, and where appropriate to make a profit, on all such activity. Where services are supplied within the County Council, any charges should not, as a matter of principle, seek to make a profit. (c) Charges for Statutory Services - where it is proposed to introduce, revise, or discontinue charges for statutory services, these must be subject to legal compliance, and consultation with the Chief Financial Officer before the proposal is progressed. Changes may be approved by the Chief Officer concerned following consultation with the Chief Financial Officer and appropriate Executive Lead Members. (d) Charges below £100 should be paid upfront where possible through payment at point of sale, e.g. card payment, and not via an invoice, unless the Chief Financial Officer has approved an exception. (e) During budget monitoring, where forecast income from fees and charges is more or less than that budgeted by 5% or £20,000, whichever is greater, Chief Officers should work closely with the Chief Financial Officer to determine the best course of action. Further advice is provided in the corporate charging policy. 	<p>Minor updates to wording and links to a new Fees and Charges Policy</p>
<p>Instruction 22 – School and Fair Funding Regulations</p>	<p>Amend the Instruction title to ‘Instruction 22 – Schools Funding Regulations’</p>	<p>Fair funding replaced with the National Funding Formula.</p>

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