

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

Table of Contents

1. Introduction	3
2. Method	3
2.1 ‘Have Your Say’ Survey	4
2.2 Consultation activities	5
3. Findings – ‘Have Your Say’ Survey	6
3.1 Analysis by Pillar	7
3.1.1 Visible Leadership and Commitment	7
3.1.2 Workforce and Culture	8
3.1.3 Evidence and Data Based	9
3.1.4 Strong Community Engagement.....	10
3.1.5 Positive Commercial Arrangements.....	12
3.1.6 Accessible and Fair Services	13
3.1.7 Accreditations	14
3.2 Strategy Overall	15
4. Findings - Consultation Meetings	16
4.1 Meeting Findings	16
5. Council’s Scrutiny Commission	18
6. Changes to the Strategy	19
7. Conclusion	20

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.

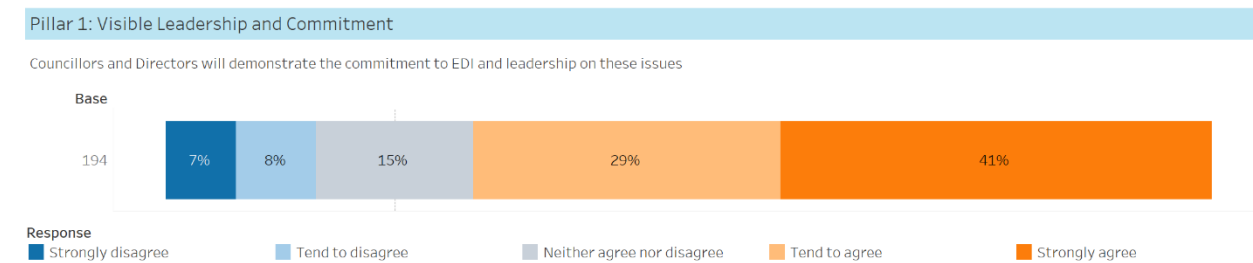
- Just under a third (31%) said they had a long-standing illness, disability, or infirmity.
- The majority identified as white (87%) and over a tenth (13%) identified with a Black and Minority Ethnic group.
- The largest proportion of respondents said they had no religion (49%), 38% said they followed 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:

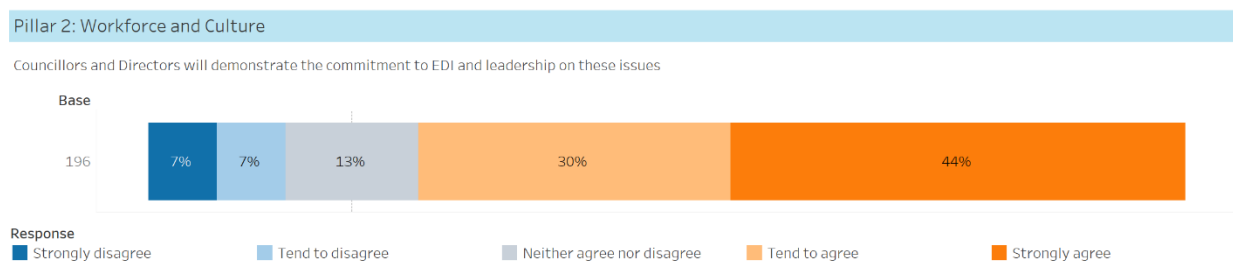
- **Recognition of Importance:** Respondents emphasised the significance of visible leadership at all levels within the authority, highlighting the need for commitment from Members and senior officers.
- **Culture Setting:** Leadership is crucial for shaping the culture of the Council, with leaders urged 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:

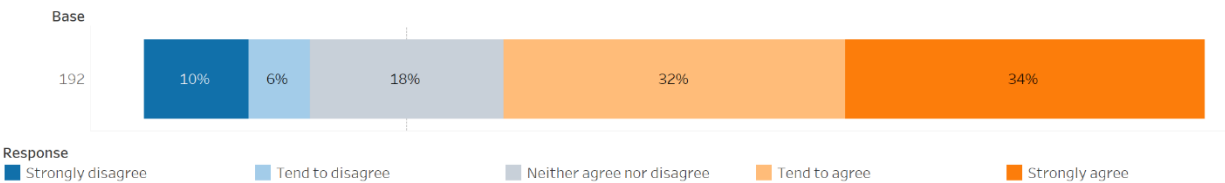
- Issues of Discrimination: Concerns raised about instances of discrimination, bias, and unfair treatment, particularly in hiring, training, and promotion practices. There are reports of BAME staff leaving the organisation due to perceived biases and lack of opportunities.
- Need for Improvement: While 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:

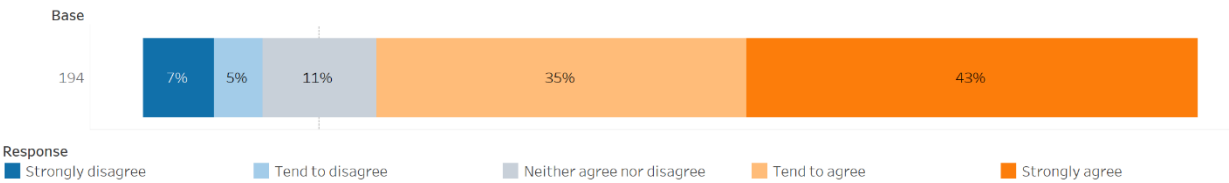
- Privacy Concerns: Concerns about the intrusiveness of collecting certain types of personal data, such as sexual orientation or religion. Suggestion that individuals should not be required to disclose such information.
- Need for LGBTQ+ Data: Concerns about the lack of LGBTQ+ data, highlighting the 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:

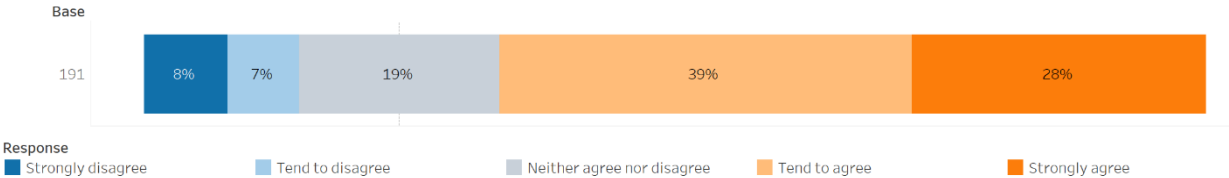
- Narrow Scope of Engagement: The scope of community engagement is too narrow and should encompass a broader range of communities, not focusing solely on specific faiths or nationalities.
- Lack of Support for Certain Groups: Concerns about the lack of support for specific groups, such as those with 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.

Pillar 5: Positive Commercial Arrangements

The council has a commitment to positive commercial arrangements and the strategy encourages businesses and partner organisations to consider best EDI practice



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.

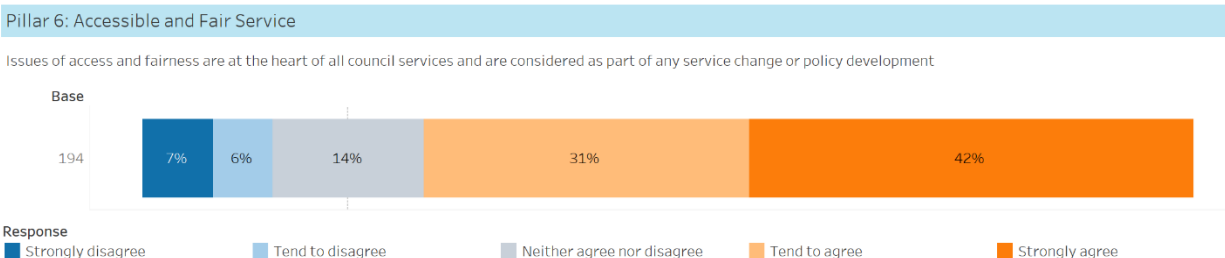
Disagreement/Concerns:

- 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.

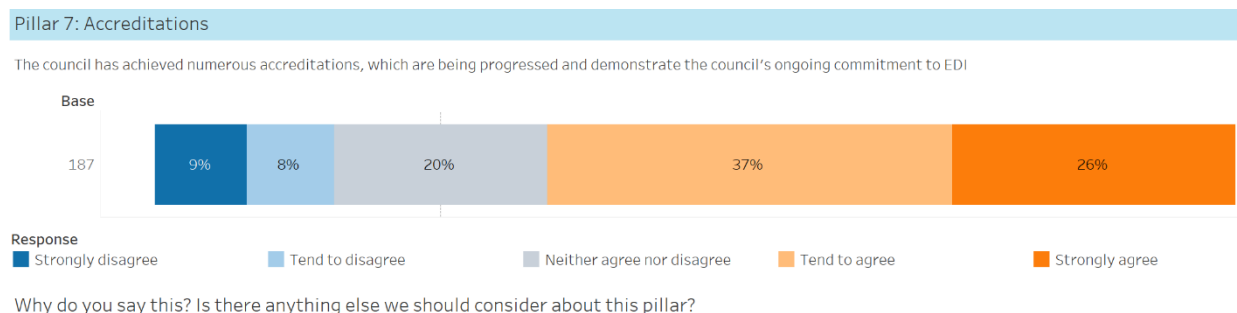
- Strategy can reference the recent decision to make people with lived care experience a “protected characteristic.”

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.

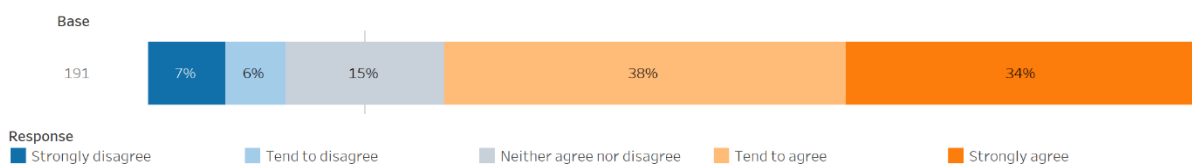
Disagreement/Concerns:

- **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.

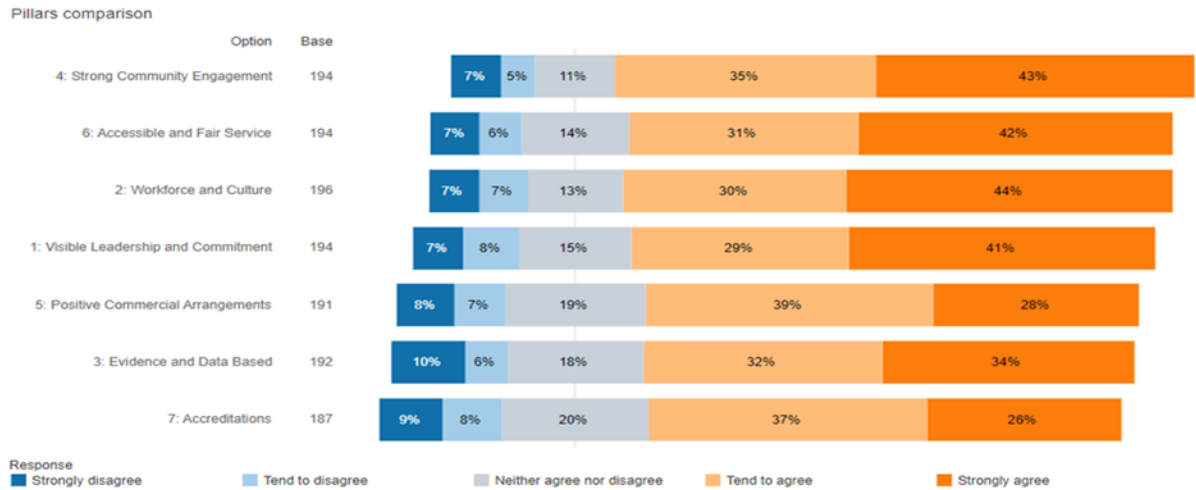
3.2 Strategy Overall

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.