

# REPORT FOR DECISION

<b>DECISION OF:</b>	<b>Cabinet</b>
<b>DATE:</b>	<b>20 June 2020</b>
<b>SUBJECT:</b>	<b>COVID 19 Response - Equalities</b>
<b>REPORT FROM:</b>	<b>Councillor Tahir Rafiq, Cabinet Member for Corporate Affairs &amp; HR</b>
<b>CONTACT OFFICER:</b>	<b>Lynne Ridsdale, Deputy Chief Executive</b>
<b>SUMMARY:</b>	This papers sets out a summary of the current approach to equality within the Council and One Commissioning Organisation partnership and proposals for further work to protect our vulnerable communities during the current pandemic and to further equality objectives within the partnership
<b>OPTIONS &amp; RECOMMENDED OPTION</b>	<p>Cabinet is asked to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Note the current commitment to equality including the approach to staff risk assessments, which will expand at pace</li> <li>• endorse the Council's approach to proposed equality strategy work. A similar decision will be sought from the CCG Governing Body in order that this work may progress via the Strategic Commissioning Board</li> </ul>
<b>IMPLICATIONS:</b>	
<b>Corporate Aims/Policy Framework:</b>	The proposals accord with the policy framework
<b>Statement by the S151 Officer:</b>	The cost of the proposed equality review will be met from the corporate transformation reserve
<b>Equality/Diversity implications:</b>	The proposals in this paper are consistent with the Public Sector Equality Duty
<b>Considered by Monitoring Officer:</b>	The Council has obligations under the Equality Act 2010 to comply with its public sector equality duty and therefore it must have due regard to the need to

	eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation in all decisions it makes. The current proposals in the report take account of that duty and are a necessary review of the Council's position, particularly in light of the current pandemic.
<b>Wards Affected:</b>	All

## **Bury Council and CCG Equality Strategy: Update and COVID-19 response**

### **Background**

Bury Council and One Commissioning Organisation (OCO) staff are committed to furthering equality between all parts of our diverse communities and improving outcomes for all. Over recent weeks the national picture has presented an imperative to take further action in pursuit of this objective. In particular:

- The protests in the United States of America, this country and across the world following the killing of George Floyd has led to a renewed focus on addressing racism and inequality in all parts of society. The Leader of this Council has expressed the need to be united in tackling racism and inequality and that the diversity of our Borough is a key strength whilst the Council's Chief Executive/ CCG Chief Accountable Officer has reaffirmed that, *"as an employer and service provider, Bury Council and NHS Bury CCG remain determined to oppose racist attitudes in everything we do"*.
- The Public Health England report *Disparities in the risk and outcomes of COVID-19* (June 2<sup>nd</sup> 2020) provided emerging evidence that black and minority ethnic (BAME) communities are disproportionately affected by COVID-19

In this context it is important that the Bury partnership takes action to:

- protect our BAME communities and other vulnerable groups during the current pandemic and
- ensure that our organisations and culture is equality-proofed and provides the conditions for a diverse workforce and partnership to thrive.

This paper sets out a summary of the current approach to equality within the partnership and proposals for further work to protect our vulnerable communities and further equality.

### **Current position**

Bury Council and OCO have a robust approach to workforce equality which includes:

- a commitment made by the Chief Executive/Chief Accountable Officer to staff that there would be a review of our equalities strategy, including specific work with our BAME staff group so that BAME staff feel supported and together we drive change so that our workforce - including at a senior

level - comes to reflect the communities we serve and we attract the talents of our diverse communities to work for us and be part of our future.

- Respective equality policies and underpinning processes, including Equality Impact Assessments of every decision
- Joint signature to the Greater Manchester Workforce Race Equality Standard which is seeking ambitious progress in race equality and workforce representation
- Support to active staff groups which represent all protected characteristics, including race
- Signature to the letter from all Greater Manchester Leaders which expressed horror and defiance about George Floyd's death and a n intention to do everything practicable to defy racism in Greater Manchester

During the further response of the partnership in relation to equality has included:

- joint guidance to all our staff to manage their health and safety at work, based on a risk assessed approach which follows dynamic government guidance; the COVID-19 secure working principles and meets the statutory Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999
- a targeted risk assessment of all adult social care staff of BAME background, using the template provided by the GMCA
- the promotion of health and wellbeing support to the BAME staff in the primary care sector in particular, following the PHE publication, this included prioritised access to Personal Protective Equipment and publication of NHS Employer Risk assessment Guidance
- detailed Equality Impact Assessment of our COVID response work including particular work with communities of faith to reduce transmission during lockdown.

It is important to note that the reasons for the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on BAME communities is not yet understood, but the health inequalities present for BAME communities have long been recognised. This papers therefore proposes two key further actions, as a basis for Cabinet agreement.

### **Proposed further action – COVID 19 response**

It is recommended that the workforce risk assessment tools are further developed and, subject to consultation with staff groups and the Trade Union side, are:

- proactively completed for every employee who wishes to engage and has been identified as potentially vulnerable, including older people and those from a BAME background or who have households / family members from BAME background

- recommended to our commissioned providers including staff in care homes and domiciliary care
- recommended to the network of c700 volunteers who are supporting our Community Hubs

The risk assessment approach is intended to support managers to have sensitive and comprehensive conversations with their BAME staff. They should identify any existing underlying health conditions that may increase the risks for them in undertaking their frontline roles, in any capacity. Most importantly, the conversations should also, on an ongoing basis, consider the feelings of BAME colleagues, particularly regarding both their physical safety, their psychological safety, and their mental health. The objective of the risk assessment process is to seek to reduce, avoid or eliminate risks identified.

### **Proposed action – furthering equality**

It is proposed that an independent partner is engaged to undertake an equalities audit across both the Council and the OCO, with reference to the Equality Framework for Local Government (EFLG) or similar. The intention will be to produce a strategy and outcomes framework in the context of an objective, best practice standard. The commission will report to the Strategic Commissioning Board, as a partnership deliverable and to take the opportunity of furthering system-wide partnership leadership on equalities which will be an intrinsic part of the organisation transformation to which the Council has committed.

The review will consider all protected characteristics, including race. It will be co-designed and delivered in conjunction with staff side representatives.

The specific proposed components of the commission at this stage, as a basis for engagement with staff groups, will include:

- Undertaking an assessment of the partnership's current performance in relation to equalities, identifying areas of strength and specific areas for improvement. The assessment will be based on a review of relevant policies and procedures as well as consultation and engagement with community leaders from all protected characteristics and the relevant staff-side groups
- Producing a proposed Equalities Strategy in the context of key findings, which is aligned to our Bury 2030 strategy and emerging neighbourhood model.
- Review and refresh current policies relating to equalities.
- Alongside the strategy, to develop equality objectives, based on sector experience and understanding of best practice – and advising on actions that are required to achieve those objectives
- Developing an implementation plan setting out the actions required to meet key recommendations. Actions are likely to include policy and procedural work as well as training and organisational culture development

- To secure skills transfer through this work to officers in the team to develop and sustain a culture of embedding equality into core organisational practices.
- To produce recommendations on the partnership equality training offer for staff.

### **Next Steps**

Cabinet is asked to:

- Note the current commitment to equality including the approach to staff risk assessments, which will expand at pace
- endorse the Council's approach to proposed equality strategy work. A similar decision will be sought from the CCG Governing Body in order that this work may progress via the Strategic Commissioning Board.