



Subject:	Equality and Diversity: Audit of Inequalities and Equality Action Plan 2021-24
Date:	19th February, 2021
Reporting Officer:	John Walsh, City Solicitor / Director of Legal and Civic Services
Contact Officer:	Sarah Williams, Governance and Compliance Manager; Lorraine Dennis, Equality and Diversity Officer

Restricted Reports	
Is this report restricted?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?	
After Committee Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
After Council Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sometime in the future	<input type="checkbox"/>
Never	<input type="checkbox"/>

Call-in	
Is the decision eligible for Call-in?	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>

1.0	Purpose of report or Summary of main issues
1.1	The purpose of this report is to submit for approval a draft version of the Audit of Inequalities and Equality Action Plan 2021-24.
2.0	Recommendations
2.1	The Committee is asked to approve the draft documents and note the timeline for next steps.
3.0	Main Report
3.1	<u>Background</u> In addition to the requirements under section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 which requires public authorities to:

	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. report annually to the ECNI on the progress of the implementation of its Equality Scheme (revised Scheme ratified by Council in January 2021 and submitted to the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland (ECNI) for legislative approval) 2. carry out a review of their Equality Scheme every five years and make any relevant updates (also approved by Council in January 2021) <p>ECNI's revised Section 75 Guide for Public Authorities recommends that public authorities:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. undertake an Audit of Inequalities to identify inequalities across the nine Section 75 categories, relevant to a public authority's functions and 4. use the audit information to develop and implement an Action Plan to address inequalities relative to its functions which is recommended to align with the public authority's corporate planning cycle.
3.2	<p><u>Key Issues</u></p> <p>Audit of Inequalities</p> <p>An Audit of Inequalities is to identify inequalities, across the nine Section 75 categories (religious belief, political opinion, race, age, gender, disability, marital status, sexual orientation, people with dependants or without), relevant to a public authority's functions in order to inform the development of an action plan to promote equality of opportunity and good relations.</p> <p>The Audit of Inequalities is intended to produce a more strategic picture of inequalities that a public authority may be in a position to influence, rather than examining inequalities on a policy-by-policy basis, undertaken as part of any screening and equality impact assessment (EQIA) processes.</p>
3.3	<p><u>Equality Action Plan</u></p> <p>Having carried out an Audit of Inequalities, public authorities should then consider addressing these inequalities in light of what they are already doing and decide whether new actions are required to address the inequalities identified and / or whether building upon or amending existing organisational actions is required. These actions or amended actions should be listed in the authority's Equality Action Plan.</p> <p>The ECNI recommends that these documents align with the public authority's organisational planning cycle. The Equality Action Plan is now designed to make the process of collecting the updates for the Annual Report to the ECNI easier for both EDU and the departments.</p>

3.4	A draft Audit of Inequalities (Appendix 1) and Equality Action Plan (Appendix 2) have been developed in collaboration with departments over the last six months. They reflect the themes and are aligned to the timescale of the current Corporate Plan 2020-2024. These were approved by the Equality and Diversity Network – Strategic (EDNS) on 3 February 2021.
3.5	<p><u>Next steps</u></p> <p>These documents are required to be submitted to ECNI within six months of the approval of the Equality Scheme therefore the following timetable is proposed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • March – May: carry out 12-week public consultation • May – June: update documents based on consideration of consultation responses and prepare consultation report • June: submit final documents to SP&R • July: submit approved documents to ECNI •
3.6	<p><u>Financial and Resource Implications</u></p> <p>This work is covered by existing budgets. Whilst the EDU will lead on this work, officer input from across Departments will be required.</p>
3.7	<p><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u></p> <p>The actions outlined contribute to our legal compliance regarding the promotion of equality and good relations.</p>
4.0	Documents Attached
	<p>Appendix 1: Audit of Inequalities</p> <p>Appendix 2: Equality Action Plan 2021-24</p>