

Report of the Cabinet Member for Health and Community Engagement

“A Fairer York” – Progress on developing York’s Equality Scheme

Summary

1. The council is working on behalf of the Fairness and Equalities Board (FEB) to develop a new equality plan - “A Fairer York” - for the city covering the period 2015-17. This report explains the approach being taken and progress made, and asks Cabinet to note the proposed implementation of the plan.

Background

2. Since 2012, York’s Single Equality Scheme 2012-2015 has provided the objectives and targets for the city to work to in pursuit of greater fairness and equality. This document was shaped by the work of the York Fairness Commission, an independent body set up by the City of York Council to advise the authority on how to address deprivation, exclusion and inequality in the city. As a single document identifying challenges of fairness, the Equality Scheme has moved the agenda forward for the council and provided guidance for the work of council services.
3. In producing a new plan to cover the next period, up to 2017, consideration has been given to the strengths and weaknesses of the previous approach. Having a comprehensive plan which brings together an evidence base and a set of priorities has proved useful as a single focal point. However, partners have viewed the previous plan as council-centric, and it has not, perhaps, been seen as easily accessible or applicable across the wider city as it might.
4. In response, the new plan has been developed through consultation across the city, and will be owned by the city as a whole, though the Fairness and Equalities Board, rather than by the council. Although at

one level this is a small change, it is significant in recognising that no one agency can tackle the city's inequalities in isolation. Only through individuals, communities and organisations working together will the vision of "a Fairer York" be realised.

5. Whilst it is self-evident to a degree, it is worth noting that the value of the plan is in the action it generates and the outcomes it achieves. Having a plan in itself does not add value. Therefore, having a document that is engaging and accessible, inspiring individuals and organisations to change is of primary importance.
6. On this basis, the Equality Plan is intended to:
 - a. Provide a clear vision for what "A Fairer York" means
 - b. Provide an evidence base of fairness and equality in the city
 - c. Give clear priority areas for action
 - d. Inspire the city to act
 - e. Allow us to assess whether we have achieved the aims of the plan
7. Presenting a single document which achieves all these things, whilst remaining easy to read and accessible is challenging. Consideration is being given to the format in which it will be presented to ensure it is more than just a document which is seen, read and forgotten.

Consultation

8. Over the past 9 months, a huge amount of work has been undertaken to pull together an evidence base, baseline current performance and capture activities across the city in support of fairness. This has built upon the previous Single Equality Scheme, and involved consultation through a wide range of forums across the city. Annex A lists the groups involved to date.
9. This consultation has resulted in a set of priorities, agreed by the Fairness and Equalities Board that highlight the areas in which the city can improve to become a fairer place for all. These are outlined in the "Priorities" section below. These priorities are intentionally broad and will encompass a wide range of activity, reflecting a city-wide response.
10. Sitting beneath the priorities will be an action plan, which collates planned work from across the city into one place. This will not be a prescriptive or rigid action plan. By its nature, much of the work will be through partnerships and organisations working together – this

cannot be prescribed by any single authority. However, the action plan provides a starting point of activities which will contribute to the priorities, and it is hoped will be bolstered by further activity across the city.

11. Within the council, the Fairness Leadership Advisory Group (FLAG) has reviewed the draft plan and provided feedback on how it can be taken forward. The group highlighted the need for clarity on what will be different if the aims of the plan are achieved. This is further noted in the Vision section, below.

12. The Fairness and Equalities Board has reviewed progress and recommended an approach to the final structure of the plan. Whilst the group welcomed the evidence base and the priorities, the group wanted to see a very clear vision of what would be different as a result of achieving the plan's aims. Critically, the Fairness and Equalities Board wanted the plan to be brought to life through the views and ideas of communities across the city. For this reason, further work will be carried out to allow the content of the plan to be illustrated in this way.

Vision

13. In order that the plan achieves impact, the vision of what "A Fairer York" looks like is critical. At a detailed level, it will mean different things for different people. It is the intention that a sample of these different perspectives will be captured both within the plan itself, but there will be further opportunity for people to provide their views in a variety of ways throughout the life of the plan.

14. However, there still remains a need for a clear higher-level vision to which everybody can relate. This will describe the behaviour of people within "A Fairer York", so that it identifies action and highlights individual as well as organisations' contributions.

15. A working draft of this vision is "*A city where we all consider the effects of our actions on others and work together to make sure everybody gets fair opportunities. We look for inequality and where we find it, we work together to solve it for the good of the city as a whole.*"

16. This will lead to the outcome that "*individuals can realise their potential, to work productively, to feel comfortable, healthy and happy,*

and to have a sense of achievement and belonging, together with the ability to make a contribution to their community.”

Priorities Identified

17. Through the analysis of indicators, review of previous work and consultation, the following priorities have been identified and agreed by Fairness and Equalities Board, which will form the focus of the plan:

a. **Economic Wellbeing:**

Ensuring that York enjoys good economic growth, decreasing the number of people on benefits, tackling inequality in employment and training, and addressing precarious employment (such as zero hour contracts), particularly for women, lone parents, BME communities, older people, young people, disabled people and those with a mental health condition.

Through our economic strategies we will also focus on reducing the gender pay gap, increasing adoption of the ‘Living Wage’ and continuing to tackle poverty particularly the number of children living in poverty.

b. **Learning and Educational Wellbeing:**

Improving the skills of York residents, increasing attainment of formal qualifications by people who don’t have any. We will focus on improving educational attainment for children entitled to Free School Meals, Looked after Children, Gypsy and Traveller Children, BME children, and those with Special Educational Needs.

c. **Health and Wellbeing:**

Working to improve health outcomes for those living within deprived neighbourhoods, preventing homelessness, reducing the increasing incidence of food and fuel poverty, tackling alcohol, smoking and substance misuse issues amongst young people and pregnant women, reducing obesity, particularly childhood obesity, and increase the number of physically active adults.

We will improve support for those with a mental health condition and the increasing number of people with dementia and/or suffering social isolation whilst enabling them to live independently within the community.

We will recognise the valuable contribution that volunteers, carers, young carers and communities make.

d. Community Wellbeing:

Making York a welcoming city, respecting and celebrating diversity, building strong communities where people from different backgrounds respect each other and get on well together, where people feel safe and children are happy, tackling and preventing hate crime, bullying in schools (particularly against LGB pupils), anti-social behaviour, honour crime and domestic violence.

We will empower communities to develop their own solutions to local issues enabling them to access, influence and co-design and commission services to meet agreed outcomes.

We will improve housing conditions and increase access to affordable housing for the elderly, disabled people, those with a mental health condition, the BME community, Gypsy and Traveller Families and young people particularly those leaving care.

We will ensure that equality information is collected, monitored and used to improve access to services and service provision, and we will tackle negative and discriminatory attitudes from the public and service providers towards BME, LGBT, disabled people, those with a mental health condition and deaf people.

18. The descriptions of these will be refined as we gather feedback of what these outcomes mean for our communities.

19. Indicators which underpin these priorities are provided in Annexes B to E.

Implementation and Monitoring

20. As noted above, the plan will be owned by the Fairness and Equalities Board. It is anticipated that work to develop the plan will be complete in February, after which it will be signed off by the board.

21. It is recommended that there is then a Cabinet Member decision on whether City of York Council will sign up to the plan.

22. In order to achieve maximum impact, it is envisaged that there will be a public launch of the plan, with subsequent awareness-raising at key forums across the city. To achieve wider engagement, options are being considered for asking people to respond, outlining what “A Fairer York” means to them. This could be done in a number of ways, which would allow people to respond in a number of formats, producing a rich and varied picture of the city’s ambitions for fairness. The options for this will be further considered with the Fairness and Equality Board.
23. Monitoring will primarily be based on outcomes, seen through equality indicators monitored by the council and the Fairness and Equalities Board. It will not be feasible to monitor every action across the city, but the board will continue to seek out good practice or will investigate further any issues which are brought to light through feedback or equality indicators.

Council Plan

24. The Equality Plan supports all of the council plan priorities in ensuring that all services are fairly provided. It has particular relevance to Protecting Vulnerable People, as individual communities of identity may be vulnerable to discrimination.
25. The plan is also relevant to Creating Jobs and Growing the Economy. Research by OECD and WMF shows that inequality can suppress economic growth. Conversely, a fairer economy is likely to achieve greater levels of sustained growth.

Implications

- 26.
- **Financial** – There are no direct financial implications.
 - **Human Resources (HR)** – There are no HR implications
 - **Equalities** – The plan relates directly to the city’s ambitions for fairness and equality. It is the intended purpose of the plan to improve equality, tackle inequality and promote an awareness of the benefits of a fairer city.
 - **Legal** - The public sector equality duty consists of a general equality duty, set out in section 149 of the Equality Act 2010, and the specific duties which came into law in 2011. In

summary, those subject to the equality duty must, in the exercise of their functions, have due regard to the need to:

- a. Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act.
- b. Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- c. Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

The Act explains that having due regard for advancing equality involves:

- Removing or minimising disadvantages suffered by people due to their protected characteristics.
- Taking steps to meet the needs of people from protected groups where these are different from the needs of other people.
- Encouraging people from protected groups to participate in public life or in other activities where their participation is disproportionately low
- **Crime and Disorder** – There are no direct crime and disorder implications, although the plan will address areas which seek to improve the city's response to Hate Crime and discrimination under the Equality Act 2010
- **Information Technology (IT)** - There are no IT implications
- **Property** – There are no property implications

Risk Management

27. No known risks

Recommendations

28. Members are asked to note the progress made and the proposed way forward, and for a future Member Decision on whether the Council will sign up to the plan.

Reason: To allow work to continue, on behalf of the Fairness and Equalities Board, in pursuit of A Fairer York.

Contact Details

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Specialist Implications Officer(s)			
Wards Affected: All			√
For further information please contact the author of the report			

Annexes

Annex A - Groups consulted in the development of the Equality Plan
 Annex B – Economic Wellbeing
 Annex C – Learning and Educational Wellbeing
 Annex D – Health and Wellbeing
 Annex E – Community Wellbeing

Abbreviations

BME – Black and Minority Ethnic
 FEB – Fairness and Equalities Board
 FLAG – Fairness Leadership Advisory Group
 LGBT – Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender
 OECD – Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
 WMF – World Monetary Fund