

Sandwell Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Commission (EDI Commission)

TERMS OF REFERENCE

The EDI Commission has been established to help promote and embed equality, diversity, and inclusion throughout the operations and activities of Sandwell Council. The Commission serves to help ensure that the council complies with its duties under the Equality Act 2010 and that all residents of Sandwell are treated equitably.

VISION

An open, fair and inclusive Borough that embraces and celebrates Sandwell's rich and diverse communities, cultures, and traditions; and where everyone is treated fairly and given opportunities to make the most of their talents and realise their aspirations.

MISSION STATEMENT

To promote equality and challenge discrimination and intolerances in all its forms. To break down barriers prohibiting an inclusive society by confidently tackling unfairness caused by inequality and encouraging community cohesion through increased understanding and awareness.

VALUES

An EDI Commission that is:
open and honest;
acts with integrity;
inclusive;
listens; and
is brave, bold and confident.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

The EDI Commission has 8 strategic objectives:

1. To help promote, embed and protect the rights of Sandwell residents to fairness, dignity and respect along with encouraging community cohesion across the Borough.
2. To challenge ignorance and intolerances in relation to all the protected characteristics by being a leading voice that promotes and celebrates the multi-cultural heritage of the Borough and the diverse nature of the local population.

3. To understand, involve and enable our diverse communities to play an active role in civic society and put the citizens' voice at the heart of decision-making.
4. To review and recommend changes (as necessary) to Council policies, procedures, and practices to ensure the authority complies with its legal obligations, fosters best practice and its workforce reflects the diversity of the people and communities it serves.
5. To champion and further embed equality in education (including career development) and employment for all residents of Sandwell regardless of race, disability, gender reassignment, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, age, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy, and maternity.
6. To work with partners, the business community, voluntary/faith sectors, and other stakeholders to challenge harmful prejudices, stereotypes and biases that undermine equal opportunity.
7. To engage and work regionally with councils and other stakeholders, and national bodies and Government, to help ensure inequality concerns and issues in Sandwell are heard, understood, and addressed (including the encouragement and fostering of excellent relations with policy and decision-makers).
8. To monitor, analyse and evaluate relevant data and benchmark information to inform and drive new initiatives to meet the EDI Commission's strategic objectives.

GOVERNANCE OF THE COMMISSION

The EDI Commission shall remain in place until July 2024.

The Executive and Directors Leadership Team shall receive regular progress reports and briefings from the EDI Team to keep them updated with EDI Commission's work, progress and developments (on a quarterly basis unless otherwise required more frequently).

The EDI Commission shall provide a progress/update report to Full Council on a bi-annual basis concerning its work, impact and outcomes.

The EDI Team shall attend meetings with the Executive, Directors and Full Council to present the EDI Commission's updates and/or briefings (as required).

The EDI Commission may request and receive documentation/data held within the Council, request documentation/data from external bodies and invite persons internal and/or external to the Council to assist with its work, subject to any legislative

restrictions, obligations or other limitations arising (e.g. Data Protection Act 2018, GDPR, Freedom of Information Act 2000, contractual obligations).

EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION COMMISSION BOARD

The EDI Commission Board is responsible for all functions of the EDI Commission. Its high-level responsibilities include:

- Leadership and direction – Support the strategic and operational direction to achieve the Commission’s Vision, Mission Statement and Objectives.
- Determine the focus and priorities of the EDI Commission having regard to the EDI Commission’s Objectives.
- Supporting the delivery of the Council’s EDI Agenda.
- Listen to individuals, departments, and organisations, whether internal and/or external, to understand the Council's EDI progress and compliance, and future improvements.
- Work with the Council’s Trade Unions to promote the EDI agenda and address issues and concerns.
- Support the development of the EDI Commission’s engagement and communications strategies and plans.
- Determine outcomes/outputs to be achieved by the EDI Commission
- Monitor progress of council’s EDI agenda.
- Approve new initiatives and ideas to further the objectives of the EDI Commission.
- To make recommendations to key decision makers in relation to the EDI agenda.

OPERATIONAL FUNCTIONS AND POWERS OF THE EDI COMMISSION BOARD

The EDI Commission Board shall help to: -

- Raise awareness in relation to all of the protected characteristics.
- Improve education and champion equality for all.
- Monitor the council’s progress in relation to the EDI agenda.
- Monitor progress in relation to the EDI strategic roadmap and action plan.
- Provide steers in relation to key initiatives.
- Provide a platform for consideration of EDI initiatives and for stakeholders to engage in the council’s EDI agenda.
- Gather insight and undertake research.
- Review the Council’s compliance with the Public-Sector Equality Duty and its Equalities Policy and make recommendations to the Council's Executive.
- Assess the Council's compliance with the Equality Act 2010 and any other relevant legislation, applicable Statutory Instruments, and other such regulations.

- Consider and recommend proposals on how the Council can better utilise its role, position, functions, and powers to address inequality in the Borough.
- Assess the effectiveness and ability of people with protected characteristics to access Council services.
- Promote and review civic participation and the involvement of diverse communities in the decision-making processes of the Council.
- Develop new ideas, initiatives, approaches to celebrate the varied diversity and heritage of Council employees.
- Support the fostering of good relations between Sandwell Council and our various partners, including but not limited to: the community at large, community groups, BAME groups, other equality stakeholder groups, Councillors/decision-makers, and other sectors such as the business and voluntary sectors.

EDI COMMISSION BOARD MEMBERSHIP

The EDI Commission will be chaired by the Leader of the Council (or her appointed Deputy, as applicable).

The EDI Commission Board membership shall be determined by the Leader of the Council (or Deputy Leader in the Leader's absence/unavailability).

The EDI Commission Board (unless varied by the leader) shall consist of:

- Five Sandwell Elected Members from a diverse range of backgrounds (who shall not be members of the Executive and includes one member of the Opposition Group (all of which will be voting members))
- Representative from Leadership Team
- Representative from each of the Staff Networks
- Representative from HR
- Representative from Learning and Development

Board members will remain on the Board whilst the EDI Commission remains in place (or unless the Board member resigns or is removed by the Leader of the Council). Where a member of the EDI Commission resigns, the Leader shall appoint their replacement.

The Leader may appoint an Elected Member of the Board as her Deputy to Chair the Board.

The EDI Commission shall have the authority to invite any individual or organisation from inside or outside the Council to attend meetings of the EDI Commission Board as it deems necessary to best inform and progress its work.

FREQUENCY OF BOARD MEETINGS AND QUORUM

The EDI Commission Board shall meet every two months unless otherwise agreed by the Chairperson.

The Chairperson shall be entitled to call a meeting of the EDI Commission Board as deemed necessary by giving 5 clear days' notice to EDI Commission Board members of the meeting (unless the matter requiring consideration by the EDI Commission is deemed urgent by the Chairperson in which case the meeting shall be convened as soon as practicably possible).

The Board shall be quorate providing three or more voting members are in attendance at the meeting.

Meetings of the EDI Commission Board can be held remotely using suitable ICT that enables each EDI Commission Board member who is able to attend the EDI Commission Board meeting to at least (i) hear the proceedings and other EDI Commission Board members, and (ii) engage in the proceedings and be heard by the other EDI Commission Board members.

DECISION-MAKING

The EDI Commission is not a decision-making body, however it will support the Leader and the Executive to implement the council's EDI agenda.

SUPPORT ARRANGEMENTS

The EDI Commission shall be supported by the Director of Law and Governance, the EDI Team, and other officers as required.

The EDI Commission shall receive administrative support from within the Council's EDI Team, Law & Governance Directorate and HR Team.

Such other Council teams/services shall support the work of the EDI Commission as is considered appropriate and necessary by the Council's senior management team.