

Report to Cabinet

29 September 2021

Subject:	Establishing an Equality Commission Team
Cabinet Member:	Cllr Kerrie Carmichael Neighbourhoods and Communities
Director:	Director of Law and Governance and Monitoring Officer Surjit Tour
Key Decision:	Yes
Contact Officer:	Maria Price Service Manager - Legal and Assurance

1 Recommendations

- 1.1 That approval is given to fund the Equality Team from Council Reserves for the current financial year 2021/2022 and a budget allocated to meet the costs of the Team for subsequent financial years.

2 Reasons for Recommendations

- 2.1 Emergency Committee approved the establishment of the Sandwell Equalities Commission as a catalyst to drive forward the Council's equalities agenda. To achieve this, it aims to break down barriers prohibiting an inclusive society, tackle unfairness caused by inequality and encourage community cohesion through increased understanding and awareness. For this reason, the scope of this project is extensive and far reaching.
- 2.2 Initially the resources for the Commission were met from internal staff. However, additional resources are required to deliver the Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion Agenda.



2.3 It is therefore proposed that a new team to support the Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion Agenda be established. There is no specific allocated/approved budget for the cost of this addition, however sufficient budget has been identified in reserves to meet the cost of this team during 2021/22 with further funding to be secured for subsequent years as part of the forthcoming budget setting process.

3 How does this deliver objectives of the Corporate Plan?

	Best start in life for children and young people
	People live well and age well
	Strong resilient communities
	Quality homes in thriving neighbourhoods
	A strong and inclusive economy
	A connected and accessible Sandwell

The proposal supports all of the council objectives and the Corporate Plan in ensuring that the Equality Team can deliver the objectives of the Equality Commission and drive Sandwell's exciting Equality Agenda.

4 Context and Key Issues

4.1 The current resourcing model seeks to utilise existing council resources, however it is recognised that a dedicated resource is required in order to drive the Equalities Agenda with the level of pace, focus and drive expected by the council, employees, stakeholders and residents.

4.2 In addition to this, where possible, employee network members (Ethnic Minorities, LGBT+ and Disability) have also been encouraged to engage and help shape the future direction of this Agenda.



New Resourcing Model

- 4.9 A dedicated Equalities team is proposed to support the Equalities, Inclusion and Diversity Agenda.
- 4.10A desktop regional benchmarking exercise has conducted to help inform the new Equalities team structure.
- 4.11 Dudley Council are in a similar position to Sandwell MBC, in that they are in the process of setting up a dedicated resource, which will be made up of one Equality Manager and one Equality Officer. This is currently being job evaluated so no salary information was available. Similarly, Solihull Council, has one manager, who is looking to recruit two Equality Officers.
- 4.12 Walsall Council, has a much larger structure of 17 employees to oversee equalities and community cohesion work. There are two equality roles within this team (Consultation and Equality lead and Consultation and Equality Officer) who look after corporate equalities, whereas the remaining job roles are community based. The equalities lead role is comparable to a Service Manager (Hay 1), and Officer role is a band H. (The grades have been amended to reflect Sandwell's salary grades).
- 4.13Wolverhampton Council, employ 7 staff to oversee equality-based work, this is made up of a Service Manager (Hay 1), a Project Manager (band G), Project Officer (graduate, band E), 1 Data Officer (band F) and 3 Equality Advisers (band F) for Race, LGBT and Disability. Wolverhampton Council's equalities objectives are similar to those outlined in the Equality Commission's Terms of Reference. (The grades have been amended to reflect Sandwell's salary grades).
- 4.14Wolverhampton Council are looking to strengthen their team by recruiting two further managers to oversee strategic and operational equalities duties.
- 4.15 The Commission has a broad remit, and this is illustrated by the 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.”

This mission statement illustrates the breadth of the Commission’s work along with the 8 key objectives it hopes to achieve. The Commission may also choose to establish Task Groups to conduct further work in respect of equalities imperatives such as Black Lives Matters, tackling disability discrimination, tackling homophobia and transphobia, celebrating Sandwell’s diversity and other such groups as it deems necessary in pursuit of its objectives.

4.16 To support this extensive agenda, it is imperative a dedicated core team is established which support the delivery of the council ambitious equalities, diversity and inclusion agendas.

Subject to Cabinet approving the recommendation in this report, the proposed Equalities Team structure is as follows:

TABLE 1

Post	Number	Grade	Cost (£) (inc on costs)
Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion Manager	1	J	72,920
Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Team Leader	1	I	67,147
Equality Advisor	1	G	53,685
Community Engagement Officer	2	G	107,370
Project Manager	2	F	90,854
Project Support Officer	1	E	38,509
Total			£430,385



4.17 Subject to funding being approved, all posts will be recruited in accordance with the council's normal recruit processes, namely they will be internally advertised before any remaining vacant posts are advertised publicly.

5 Alternative Options

- 5.1 The council could continue with the existing arrangements, which consists of support being provided by various departments to help deliver the Equalities Agenda. This does not provide the level of capacity, skills, expertise needed to drive this agenda with the level of pace and vigour required.
- 5.2 Alternatively, the council could second 2 or 3 employees to support and lead on the work of the Commission. While this option will result in some benefits, it will not be sufficient to achieve the ambitions and outcomes sought by the council.

6 Implications

Resources:	There is no allocated budget for the Equality Team. Finance have indicated that there is sufficient resource in the Council reserves to fund this year's team with resources to be secured in the council budget for subsequent years.
Legal and Governance:	The Council must comply with it legal duties and obligations arising under the Equality Act 2010.The additional resources will enable the council to do so and achieve the outcomes detailed within the Terms of Reference of the Sandwell Equalities Commission.
Risk:	If resources are not provided to support the project the project is at risk of not delivering the Council's Equality Agenda.



Equality:	The project promotes equality and challenges 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.
Health and Wellbeing:	Implications of the proposals on health and wellbeing of our communities

7. Appendices

None

8. Background Papers

Equalities Commission - Terms of Reference

