

For General Release

REPORT TO:	CABINET 18 February 2021
SUBJECT:	Croydon Equalities Strategy
LEAD OFFICER:	Katherine Kerswell, Chief Executive
CABINET MEMBER:	Councillor David Wood, Cabinet Member for Safer Croydon and Communities
WARDS:	All

CORPORATE PRIORITY/POLICY CONTEXT/ AMBITIOUS FOR CROYDON

Equity and inclusion is integral to achieving our ambitions for Croydon – it is the very foundation upon which we ensure residents are treated fairly and equitably by the Council and its service providers, giving individuals the opportunity to be who they are and achieve the successes they aspire to. This is particularly important for those who are most disadvantaged, so they too, can reach their full potential.

We aim to value diversity and promote equity and inclusion through the services we provide and as an employer.

The organisations vision is to be a high performing organisation that is collaborative, inclusive and innovative, an employer that lets talent flourish and build workforce capability to meet our ambitions and reflect Croydon's communities.

As part of demonstrating the Council's understanding and awareness of its situation, it is important to acknowledge that the existing Corporate Plan for Croydon, 2018-2022 has been replaced by the new Priorities and Ways of Working, one of which prioritises tackling ingrained poverty and inequality in the Borough. These are set out below:

- We will live within our means, balance the books and provide value for money for our residents.
- We will focus on tackling ingrained inequality and poverty in the borough. We will follow the evidence to tackle the underlying causes of inequality and hardship, like structural racism, environmental injustice and economic injustice.
- We will focus on providing the best quality core service we can afford. First and foremost, providing social care services that keep our most vulnerable residents safe and healthy. And to keep our streets clean and safe. To ensure we get full benefit from every pound we spend, other services in these areas will only be provided where they can be shown to have a direct benefit in keeping people safe and reducing demand.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

There are no direct financial implications arising from the proposed Equalities Strategy.

This strategy comes at a time of great change for Croydon and we want to support our staff and residents through tough times. Croydon Council faces a financial crisis of unprecedented severity. Key to delivering this strategy will be aligning resources to

deliver positive outcomes, as far as is practicable at a time when the council is under significant financial pressure.

The new administration has provided a framework of priorities for 2021-24 and ways of working to inform the task of reshaping the council and refocusing its work which is required in order to put it on a stable financial footing and ensure that the most vulnerable residents are protected from the impacts of the Covid pandemic.

Given the current financial pressures, we have been mindful in developing this strategy to ensure it aligns with existing commitments whilst remaining ambitious - within existing resources, projects, programmes and actions.

FORWARD PLAN KEY DECISION REFERENCE NO. This is not a key decision

The Leader of the Council has delegated to the Cabinet the power to make the decisions set out in the recommendations below:

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

The Cabinet is recommended to:

- 1.1. Refer the adoption of the Equalities Strategy to Full Council with a recommendation for approval.
- 1.2. Refer the adoption of the new Equalities Objectives to Full Council with a recommendation for approval.
- 1.3. Note the engagement and consultation that has been undertaken to develop this strategy and supporting action plan to deliver its key priorities. Its content is applicable across the borough and is intended to benefit all our staff, residents and communities and thereby all who live and/or work in the borough, or working directly with Croydon's residents and communities.

2. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 2.1 **The Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) set out in the Equality Act 2010.**
The PSED is made up of a general equality duty which is supported by specific duties.

The **specific duty** requires the council to:

- Annually publish information to demonstrate how it is complying with the Public Sector Equality Duty. This information must relate to people who are affected by the Councils policies and practices such as service users and employees
- Prepare and publish equality objectives at least every four years. Our current equality objectives as outlined below come to an end this year.

- To increase the rate of employment for disabled people, young people, over 50s and lone parents who are furthest away from the job market.
- To reduce the rate of child poverty especially in the six most deprived wards.
- To improve attainment levels for white working class and Black Caribbean heritages, those in receipt of Free School Meals and Looked after Children, particularly at Key age 2 including those living in six most deprived wards.
- To increase the percentage of domestic violence sanctions.
- To increase the reporting and detection of the child sexual offences monitored.
- To reduce the number of young people who enter the youth justice system.
- To reduce social isolation amongst disabled people and older people.
- To improve the proportion of people from different backgrounds who get on well.
- To reduce differences in life expectancy between communities

2.2 This report sets out the process and work undertaken to develop a new Equalities Strategy and corporate equality objectives.

2.3 Significant research and benchmarking has been undertaken to ensure that we understand the strengths and challenges across Croydon, so that the new strategy can target action where it will be most effective.

2.4 Wide ranging consultation was also undertaken to inform the strategy. We are clear that the resident voice should be at the heart of the new strategy. The report outlines the approach taken to consultation, recognising the challenges and restrictions created by Covid-19, summarises the feedback and outlines how this has informed the proposed strategy objectives and outcomes.

2.5 Equality Strategy 2020-2024

The Strategy sets out the Councils vision that Croydon is a place of opportunity where everyone can belong, addressing the needs and aspirations of all those who live and work in the borough.

3. BACKGROUND

Statutory obligations

3.1 The Equality Act 2010 (the Act) came into force on 5 April 2011. Section 149 of the Act contains the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED). The duty applies to public bodies and others carrying out public functions.

The general equality duty requires the Council, in the exercise of functions, to have “due regard” to the need to:

- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and people who do not share it
 - Foster good relations between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not share
 - Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Act.
- 3.2 The Act and PSED support good decision-making by ensuring public bodies consider how different people will be affected by their activities, helping them to deliver policies and services which are efficient and effective; accessible to all; and which meet different people's needs.
- 3.3 Furthermore, section 153, of the Act imposes specific duties on public authorities to exercise public functions which will demonstrate their compliance with the PSED. The Council is also required to publish information to demonstrate their compliance with the general equality duty.
- 3.4 This information must relate to people who are the Council's employees or are affected by its policies and practices (for example, service users).
- 3.5 The objectives must be published at intervals of not greater than four years, beginning with the date of the last publication (i.e. 2020 for Croydon). Published objectives must be specific and measurable.
- 3.6 [Opportunity and Fairness Commission \(OFC\) 2016-2020](#)
- 3.6.1 The Opportunities and Fairness Commission (OFC) was set up to identify issues of inequality supported by lived experiences from residents across the borough.
- 3.6.2 The work of the Opportunity and Fairness Commission supported the Council's ambition to reduce inequality and promote fairness for all by working with partners in the public, business and voluntary sectors in order to secure better outcomes for all.
- 3.6.3 Croydon OFC published its final report on 28th January 2016. The report highlighted the key inequality and fairness challenges for the borough and presented recommendations on how these could be addressed by the Council and our statutory, voluntary and community sector partners.

The recommendations in the report were presented under the following headings:

- Vibrant, responsible and connected communities
- A town centre that lifts the whole borough
- Leaving no child behind
- A connected borough where no one is isolated
- Supporting residents to better times.

3.6.4 Work carried out during and following the OFC has provided a solid foundation to base our consultation for the development of our new strategy, with participants providing feedback on the current equality objectives, and areas we should focus on going forward. *Further detail is provided in section 8 of the report.*

4. MONITORING AND PERFORMANCE

4.1 Progress made in implementing the statutory equality objectives as set out in the Equality and Inclusion Policy 2016-20 were regularly reported to Cabinet and Scrutiny & Overview Committee through the annual Equalities Report.

4.2 In addition to the annual Equalities report, the Council utilised a range of external benchmarking processes to assess and improve our approach to equalities and inclusion. Some of these are outlined below;

4.3 Equality Framework for Local Government (EFLG): Equality Peer Challenge

4.3.1 The ELFG is a national benchmarking and assessment tool that helps local authorities to identify what they do well and where they can make improvements to, and deliver better equality outcomes for staff, residents and service users.

4.3.2 In November 2019, the Council asked the Local Government Association (LGA) to conduct an Equality Peer Challenge against the “Achieving” level of the Equality Framework for Local Government Accreditation. It undertook a self-assessment against five performance criteria:

- Knowing your communities
- Leadership, partnership and organisational commitment
- Involving your communities
- Responsive services and customer care
- A skilled and committed workforce

4.3.3 The Council satisfied the criteria for the Achieving level of the EFLG, the level we agreed to be assessed. The LGA made a number of recommendations to improve equality outcomes based upon the findings during the 3 day visit, which are set out in appendix 1 of the report.

4.4 Stonewall 2019/20 Workplace Equality Index

4.4.1 Croydon Council has been a Stonewall Diversity Champion and participated in the Stonewall Workplace Equality Index since 2014. This process assesses the Council’s progress on lesbian, gay, bi and trans inclusion in the workplace.

4.4.2 The process allowed the Council to demonstrate its work in the following ten areas of employment policy and practice:

- Policies and benefits
- The employee lifecycle
- LGBT employee network group Allies and role models
- Senior leadership
- Monitoring
- Procurement
- Community engagement
- Clients, customers and service users
- Additional work

4.4.3 In 2019, Croydon was ranked 148 out of over 500 organisations that took part. Stonewall made a number of recommendations to improve inclusion for lesbian, gay, bi and trans employees in the workplace.

4.5 Disability Confident Employer

4.5.1 The Council is a Disability Confident Employer (Level 2). To achieve this level, the Council carried out a self-assessment, against a set of statements about employing disabled people. The self-assessment is grouped into 2 themes:

- Theme 1 – getting the right people for your business
- Theme 2 – keeping and developing your people

4.5.2 The Disability Confident scheme supports employers to make the most of the talents disabled people can bring to the workplace. The scheme helps employers recruit and retain great people, and:

- draw from the widest possible pool of talent
- secure high quality staff who are skilled, loyal and hard working
- improve employee morale and commitment by demonstrating that you treat all employees fairly

4.5.3 It also helps customers and other businesses identify those employers who are committed to equality in the workplace.

4.6 Timewise Council

4.6.1 Croydon Council is also Timewise accredited. This means it is driving transformational change through flexible working practices. In practice, as an employer it embeds flexibility into its wider improvement plans, fostering a culture of learning and continual improvement that aligns the benefits to its employees with improvements in workplace efficiency.

4.7 Monitoring the Equality Strategy

4.7.1 The Council will establish a board to coordinate the equality arrangements for embedding equality and managing the implementation of the strategy. The board will be responsible for the evaluation (and review) of the Equality

Strategy. It will be reviewed annually by all departments and partnerships that own the objectives, measures and actions. The review will be coordinated by the Council's Equality Manager.

4.7.2 Progress will be regularly reported to the senior management team, cabinet, scrutiny and themed partnership boards such as the Health and Wellbeing Board when required.

4.7.3 The Council will implement an appropriate involvement strategy during these reviews which will be proportionate to the degree of change likely to be needed.

5. Working in partnership

5.1 Given the Council's current financial context, and the challenges that the national and local economy is facing, it is more important than ever to ensure we are delivering improved outcomes for those facing inequity and disadvantage and, that we do so in the most efficient way possible; pooling resources and expertise with partners where we can, for wider impact.

5.2 Prior to the pandemic, Croydon was experiencing increase in demand for support services, in addition to population growth, and changing requirements – this increased following the pandemic. As a result, we need to give greater focus on becoming more preventative, and proactive in our approach.

5.3 Like the Council, our infrastructure and local VCS groups have also been challenged by recent societal events. As such, they have also had to change, adapt and become more flexible in a fast changing local environment.

5.4 The administration's new priorities and ways of working highlight the need for the Council's relationship with residents, communities, businesses and partners. In working towards this aim, it will fully involve the residents of Croydon, its communities and its partners in its improvement work on its journey to becoming an efficient, effective and financially sustainable council.

6. EVIDENCE BASE FOR NEW STRATEGY: National Context

6.1 The external benchmarking activities highlighted in the previous section have provided useful in identifying where the Council has performed well, as well as recommendations on areas for improvement.

6.2 In developing the strategy, we have worked closely with the VCS sector, particularly our partner infrastructure groups, who themselves, as part of the local community, have gathered data 'on the ground', which we incorporated in the overall strategy development process.

6.3 In addition to this, and as part of the strategy development process, we have examined a range of qualitative and quantitative evidence to develop our

strategy, with resident voices at the heart. Sections 4.4-4.24 outline the evidence sources that we have tapped into as part of the process of developing the strategy.

6.4 The strategy is being developed against a backdrop of prevalent international and national themes, which have been particularly highlighted in recent months by the Covid-19 pandemic. The virus has been unequal in its impact, in particular on BAME communities, but this is a result of long standing structural inequalities and socio-economic determinants of health. We have also seen a strong social response to racism through the Black Lives Matter movement. Whilst media focus may have been on cases in the USA, racism remains a very real issue for us to tackle in the UK as well. Since the EU referendum we have seen a rise in hate crimes and racism. These provide the context for the backdrop against which the strategy has been written.

6.5 A number of national studies / reports have been produced in recent years which provide a helpful insight into inequality across the country. A summary of the following reports are provided below:

- Is Britain Fairer? The state of equality and human rights (Equality and Human Rights Commission)
- Health Inequality in England – The Marmot review 10 years on (Institute of Health Equity / Health Foundation)

Beyond the data: understanding the impact of Covid-19 on BAME groups (Chief Medical Officer for England).

6.6 [Is Britain Fairer? The state of equality and human rights](#)

6.6.1 The report was published by EHRC (Equality and Human Rights Commission) in 2018 and is the most comprehensive picture of people's life chances in Britain. It examines all areas of life, including education, work, living standards, health, justice and security, and participation in society.

6.6.2 The report acknowledges that there has been some progress in recent years, such as improvements in educational attainment, involvement in politics and equality in the workplace – but there are still serious challenges yet to be addressed in respect of access to justice, hate crime and sexual harassment.

6.6.3 Child poverty has increased, as has inequalities resulting from socio-economic disadvantage seriously affecting many people's lives. Women are still not benefitting from equality in practice and there are increasingly large gaps between the experiences and outcomes of disabled people and some ethnic minorities and the population as a whole.

6.6.4 All of this is set in a context of long-term reductions to public spending, spikes in hate crime, and ongoing uncertainty about the impact of leaving the European Union. According to the report, the national picture is one that says some progress has been made towards being a fairer society, but "substantial evidence shows that opportunities, chances and outcomes remain unequal.

From the cradle to the grave, race, religion, class, disability and gender can all have a bearing on a person's prospects".

6.7 [Health Inequity in England – The Marmot Review- 10 Years On](#)

6.7.1 This report was produced by the Institute of Health Equity and commissioned by the Health Foundation to examine progress in addressing health inequalities in England, 10 years on from the landmark study Fair Society, Healthy Lives (The Marmot Review). Led by Professor Sir Michael Marmot, the review explores changes since 2010 in five policy objectives. The recommendations in the report were presented under the following headings:

6.8 **Giving every child the best start in life:**

6.8.1 This looked at socioeconomic inequalities and how these affect those in less deprived areas resulting in lower levels of good development, increase in child poverty with over four million affected, and deprived areas losing funding for children and youth services even as need has increased.

6.9 **Enable all children, young people and adults to maximise their capabilities and have control over their lives:**

6.9.1 Clear and persistent social inequalities in educational attainment remain. These have more of an impact on gender, ethnic background children and young people in more deprived areas with those eligible for free school meals continuing to have lower levels of attainment.

6.9.2 Nationally since 2010, the number of exclusions have significantly increased in both primary and secondary schools. Children eligible for free school meals were four times more likely to be punished with a permanent exclusion. Across the country youth services have been cut since 2010 and violent youth crime has increased greatly over the period. According to the report, black children were more likely to be arrested than white children in 2017/18.

6.10 **Create fair employment and good work for all:**

6.10.1 There has been an increase in poor quality work – low-paid and unskilled including part-time, short-term contracts, self-employment and insecure employment.

6.10.2 The number of zero hour contracts has significantly increased since 2010 Real pay is still below 2010 levels and there has been an increase in the proportion of people in poverty living in a working household.

6.10.3 Minority ethnic groups, women, lone parents, and people with disabilities have higher unemployment rates.

6.11 **Ensure a healthy living standard for all:**

- 6.11.1 Wage growth has been low since 2010 and wage inequality persists - particularly for children and for those in work.
- 6.11.2 Lone parents with children have the highest risk of being in persistent poverty. The number of families with children who do not reach the minimum income standard has increased. Food insecurity has increased significantly.
- 6.11.3 Nearly half of those in poverty in the UK in 2018 - 6.9 million people - were from families in which someone had a disability.
- 6.11.4 Some ethnic groups face much higher rates of poverty than others, particularly those who are Black, Bangladeshi, Pakistani origin where rates of poverty after housing are as high as 50%.

6.12 **Create and develop healthy and sustainable places and communities:**

- 6.12.1 According to the report, Government spending has decreased most in deprived places and cuts in services outside health and social care have hit more deprived communities hardest.
- 6.12.2 The cost of housing has increased significantly including social housing, impacting on all the other social determinants of health and pushing people into poverty, homelessness and ill health.
- 6.12.3 The number of non-decent houses has decreased, including in the private rented sector, but this sector also has nationally high levels of cold, damp, and poor conditions including insecure tenures. Homelessness has increased significantly including more children in homeless families living in temporary accommodation

6.13 **[Beyond the data: Understanding the impact of Covid 19 on BAME groups](#)**

- 6.13.1 This piece of work was commissioned by the Chief Medical Officer for England to understand the extent that ethnicity impacts upon risk and outcomes of Covid-19. The PHE review of disparities in the risk and outcomes of COVID-19 shows that there is an association between belonging to some ethnic groups and the likelihood of testing positive and dying with COVID-19.
- 6.13.2 The review found that the highest age standardised diagnosis rates of COVID-19 per 100,000 population were in people of Black ethnic groups (486 in females and 649 in males) and the lowest were in people of White ethnic groups (220 in females and 224 in males).
- 6.13.3 An analysis of survival among confirmed COVID-19 cases showed that, after accounting for the effect of sex, age, deprivation and region, people of Bangladeshi ethnicity had around twice the risk of death when compared to people of White British ethnicity. People of Chinese, Indian, Pakistani, Other Asian, Caribbean and Other Black ethnicity had between 10 and 50% higher

risk of death when compared to White British.

6.13.4 Death rates from COVID-19 were higher for Black and Asian ethnic groups when compared to White ethnic groups. This is the opposite of what is seen in previous years, when the all-cause mortality rates are lower in Asian and Black ethnic groups.

6.13.5 The literature review and stakeholder feedback indicate that risks associated with COVID-19 transmission, morbidity, and mortality can be exacerbated by the housing challenges faced by some members of BAME groups. The most recent research from the UK suggests that both ethnicity and income inequality are independently associated with COVID-19 mortality. Individuals from BAME groups are more likely to work in occupations with a higher risk of COVID-19 exposure. They are more likely to use public transportation to travel to their essential work. Historic racism and poorer experiences of healthcare or at work may mean that individuals in BAME groups are less likely to seek care when needed or as NHS staff are less likely to speak up when they have concerns about Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) or risk

6.14 Black Lives Matter

6.14.1 The brutal killing of George Floyd and the subsequent involvement of many across the world in the Black Lives Matters movement has illustrated the depth and breadth of feeling about disproportionality and racial injustice.

6.14.2 As the graphic below demonstrates, whilst BAME residents recognise racism is less of an issue than 30 years ago in the UK, nearly half still feel racism still exists 'a great deal'.

6.14.1 The Council's new equality strategy therefore includes a strong focus on race and racism and how it will address service improvement, by collecting and sharing best practice in tackling inequality; coordinating, where appropriate, across service areas – with the aim of helping local initiatives to tackle unfair outcomes (e.g. those disproportionately affecting Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic communities) – supported by targeted early intervention.

84% of BAME Britons think racism still exists in Britain today, but less severe than 30 years ago

% of 1,270 BAME adults in GB



YouGov

10-17 June 2020

6.15 Hate Crime Surge

6.15.1 According to the Home Office, there were 103,379 hate crimes recorded by the police in England and Wales, an increase of eight per cent compared with year ending March 2019 (97,446 offences). This is following certain events such as the EU Referendum and the terrorist attacks in 2017.

6.15.2 Hate crime offences recorded by the police rose by 8% compared with year ending March 2019 (97,446 offences) in year ending March 2020, there were 105,090 hate crimes recorded by the police in England and Wales

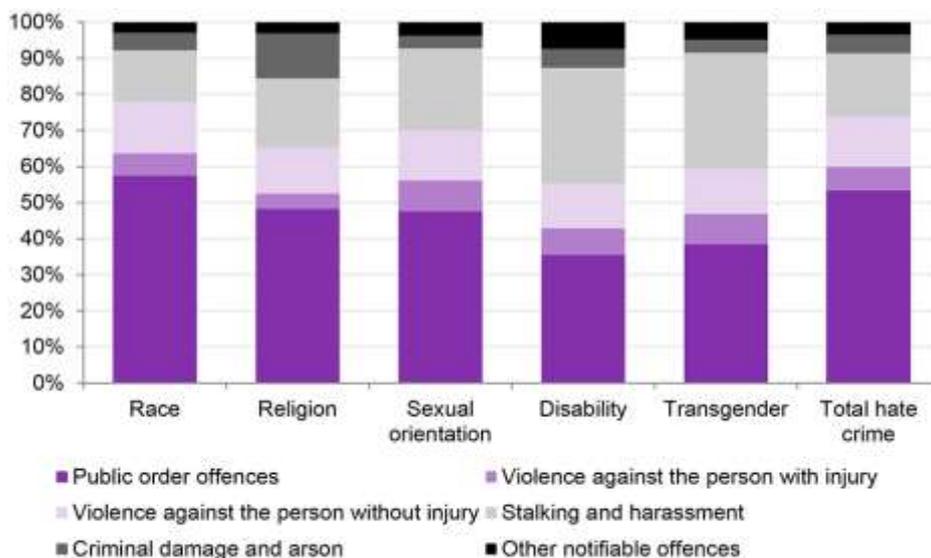
6.15.3 As in previous years, the majority of hate crimes were race hate crimes, accounting for around three-quarters of offences (72%; 76,070 offences). These increased by six per cent between year ending March 2019 and year ending March 2020.

6.15.4 Religious hate crimes fell by five per cent (to 6,822 offences), down from a peak of 7,203 in the previous year. This was the first fall in religious hate crimes since year ending March 2013.

6.15.5 Sexual orientation hate crimes increased 19 per cent (to 15,835), disability hate crimes by nine per cent (to 8,469) and transgender identity hate crimes by 16 per cent (to 2,540). These percentage increases are smaller than seen in recent years.

6.15.6 Over half (53%) of the hate crimes recorded by the police were for public order offences and a further third (38%) were for violence against the person offences. Five per cent were recorded as criminal damage and arson offences.

6.15.7 Around 12% of hate crimes offences in 2018/19 were estimated to have more than one motivating factor, the majority of these were hate crimes related to both race and religion



6.16 EVIDENCE BASE FOR NEW STRATEGY: Local Context

6.16.1 Croydon is the second largest of all the London boroughs in terms of population. Its population continues to grow. The borough population recorded in Census 2001 was 330,587 and in the 2011 Census it had increased to 363,378. Based on ONS mid-year estimates, 2017, Croydon is home to 384,837 people and this is expected to increase to just under 500,000 by 2050.

6.17 Deprivation

6.17.1 Croydon faces challenges around deprivation and inequalities in regard not only to income but other factors including health, education and housing. There remains geographic inequality in the distribution of deprivation in the borough with the North and East of the borough remaining more deprived.

6.18 Income

6.18.1 Croydon has an average score of 0.136 for the income domain, which places it as the 97th most deprived local authority out of the 317 lower tier authority districts in England or 73rd out of 151 upper tier authorities. Croydon is ranked 18th most deprived out of 33 London boroughs.

6.18.2 41 LSOAs out of the 220 LSOAs in the borough (18.6%) are in the top 20% most deprived LSOAs in the country. These deprived areas are mainly in the north and east of the borough. One neighbourhood area in the ward of West Thornton is in the top 5% most deprived areas in the country.

6.19 Employment

6.19.1 The average score for the Employment domain was 0.092, placing Croydon as the 143rd most deprived LSOA out of the 317 lower tier districts or 87th out of 151 upper tier districts. Croydon is 15th most deprived out of 33 London boroughs.

6.19.2 Under the employment domain, only 2 LSOAs, less than 1% of all the LSOAs in Croydon, are in the 5%-10% most deprived areas in England. These 2 areas are located within the wards of West Thornton and New Addington South

6.19.3 The proportion of out of work claimants has risen by around 5% since March 2020 – directly as a result of the impact of the Covid19 pandemic on the economy.

6.19.4 There has been a huge increase in unemployment for 18-24 year olds and 50-64 year olds since April 2020.

6.20 Education, skills and training

6.20.1 Croydon is in the bottom third of local authorities in the country under this domain; the average score for the borough was 15.577 making it the 220th most deprived borough out of the 317 lower tier districts or 117th out of 151 upper tier authorities. Croydon is 12th most deprived out of 33 London boroughs.

6.20.2 There are just 3 LSOAs in the top 5%-10% most deprived areas in the country and these areas are in the East of the borough with known historic issues around lower average attainment scores for pupils and a higher proportion of adults with no qualifications. The take up of funded hours in Early Years settings in Croydon is still below regional and national averages.

6.20.3 The proportion of children achieving grades AAB or above at Key Stage 5 is much lower than the national and regional averages.

6.20.4 Since 2015 at local, regional and national levels there has been a lower proportion of children from Black backgrounds achieving Attainment 8 scores.

6.20.5 Like with England as a whole Black Caribbean pupils in Croydon have the greatest level of disproportionately when it comes to exclusion from school.

6.21 Health deprivation and disability

6.21.1 The average score for Croydon for this domain was -0.174, making it the 165th most deprived lower tier authority out of the 317 or 95th out of 151 upper tier authorities. Croydon is 13th most deprived out of 33 London boroughs.

6.21.2 Less than 0.5% of the Croydon LSOAs under this deprivation domain were in the top 5%-10% most deprived areas in the country. The most deprived areas in Croydon in this domain are in the centre of Croydon, and in the East of the borough. These areas scored highly across each of the measures used for this domain.

6.22 Living environment

6.22.1 The living environment domain looks at both the indoor and outdoor living environments. The indoor living environment is based on the proportion of houses without central heating and the proportion of houses that are in poor condition. The outdoor living environment looks at air quality and road traffic accidents that cause injury to pedestrians and cyclists.

6.22.2 The most deprived areas for this domain are predominantly located in the centre of the borough. These areas have high scores both for the indoor and outdoor living environment measures.

6.23 Income Deprivation Affecting Children

6.23.1 The North and East of the borough are relatively more deprived than the South West of the borough. There is a southernmost area in the borough

which is within the new Old Coulsdon ward, (formerly Coulsdon East), which scores high on income deprivation affecting children.

6.24 Income Deprivation Affecting Older People

6.24.1 In Croydon 17% of older people were income deprived. This puts Croydon in the top third most deprived areas for this domain. These are predominantly in the North of the borough, with a few in the East.

6.25 Housing

6.25.1 The most common reasons for homelessness is parental evictions, exclusions by relatives and friends and relationship breakdowns. Croydon was the first London borough to halve its use of temporary accommodation in line with the target set by government.

6.25.2 Latest figures for 2019/2020 show that more than half (56%) of homeless people in Croydon are in the 25-44 years age band.

6.25.3 Over the years, by far the highest proportion of accepted homeless households in Croydon have been made up of lone parents with dependent children.

6.25.4 There has been a disproportionately high percentage of homeless people from the Black community, both currently and historically.

6.26 Community Safety

6.26.1 In Croydon the total number of hate crimes has been increasing year on year over the past 3 years.

6.26.2 The majority of reported hate crimes in Croydon have been racist and then homophobic hate crimes. Racist hate crime has been recorded for longer than others so there is likely to be a better reporting rate for racist crimes.

6.26.3 The number of race hate crimes continue to increase every year. The first 6 months of the current financial year indicates that the upward trend is likely to continue and the year-end position is likely to show the highest number of racist hate crimes for 4 years. The average monthly number is 723 so far this year compared to only 585 per month over the previous 36 months.

6.26.4 The number of disability hate crimes in Croydon has averaged around 18 per month over the previous 24 months. Since April 2020, the average rate has been 26 per month which is significant even though the actual numbers are low.

6.26.5 The number of faith hate crimes had been falling in Croydon during the 2018/2019 period. The first half of the 2019/2020 year continued this downward trend until the last 5 months when the numbers rose again. Figure

16 shows that these crimes have gone back to the 2018/2019 levels but the trend line suggests that they may reduce in the coming months to year-end.

6.26.6 BREXIT, even though supposedly concluded, still continues to contribute to the presence of extremist groups and this, in turn, has contributed to a rise in the number of anti-semitic incidents reported to the Police.

6.26.7 In Croydon, there continues to be a year on year increase in sexual orientation (homophobic) hate crime reported to the MPS. The figures have risen from a base of around 20-30 crimes in 2012/2013 to an average monthly figure of 67 per month over the 3 years 2017/2018 to 2019/2020. For the first 6 months of 2020/2021, the monthly average is 104.

6.26.8 Croydon has seen an increase in the number of transgender hate crimes, particularly over the last financial year ending 31. March 2020. Figure 20 shows that for the first half-year of the current 2020/2021 financial year there is a downward trend for the first time in 3 years.

7. OUR APPROACH TO DEVELOPING A NEW EQUALITY & INCLUSION STRATEGY

7.1 As previously mentioned, the strategy is being developed against a backdrop of prevalent international and national themes as outlined in section 4 of the report.

7.2 We identified and benchmarked against best practice and reviewed a range of plans and strategies as part of the process of developing the strategy in order to determine equality issues and challenges on a regional and national level. *These can be found in Appendix 5.*

7.3 We also reviewed national and local evidence as outlined in sections 4 and 5 of the report to ensure the process was data and intelligence led.

7.4 To further strengthen the above we examined independent feedback provided by third party 'critical friends' such as the LGA through our recent EFLG Peer Challenge and Stonewall Workplace Equality Index recommendations both of which provided us with a solid starting point, and key indicators for improvement in tackling inequality and promoting greater inclusion amongst protected groups within our workforce, in the community and beyond.

7.5 To avoid duplication, and create wider more diverse and varied efficiencies, we identified existing synergies and opportunities by examining current Council strategies, policies and plans that support delivery of equality, diversity, inclusion and/or can be mapped to existing commitments. It should be noted that there are many Council services who through their strategies are currently contributing to tackling inequalities and addressing disadvantage across the borough for protected groups. The following is a sample of the more recently developed strategies and not intended to be exhaustive list:

Strategy Name	Protected Groups
Corporate Plan 2018/22	All protected groups
Workforce Strategy 2019-2022	All protected groups
Refreshed Recruitment Policy	Race, Disability, Gender
Schools Improvement Plan	
Croydon Partnership Early Help Strategy 2018/20	Age; Disability; Gender
Joint Health & Wellbeing Strategy 2018/22	Age; Disability; Pregnancy Maternity; Gender
Autism Strategy (pending)	Autism, Disability
Housing Strategy (pending)	All protected groups
Economic Recovery Plan (pending)	All protected groups

8. CONSULTATION

- 8.1 We sought internal and external stakeholder input help us test our existing equality objectives (*as outlined in Appendix 4*), identify where our priorities should lie going forward across the nine protected characteristics, extending to socio-economic circumstances which have a considerable impact on inequality, inclusion and quality of life. We also wanted to use the opportunity to gather views on what the Council does well and what it can do better to reduce inequalities in the Borough.
- 8.2 We consulted with residents across the Borough, taking into account the diversity of the Borough and the needs of all residents across protected characteristics as defined by the Equality Act.
- 8.3 We ensured we consulted with VCS organisations that were representative of all communities across the Borough and often supporting some of the most vulnerable residents.
- 8.4 We ensured we consulted with staff across all protected characteristics and across all levels in the organisation. This also included Cabinet Members and Councillors.
- 8.5 In order to reach a wide range of people within each stakeholder group, and recognise the differences between the stakeholder groups, a range of channels were utilised to promote engagement in the equality strategy consultation. Restrictions as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic meant that some usual channels, such as face to face workshops or VCS engagement events could not be utilised. We also had to adapt regular communication channels.

We run four promotion campaigns on the Council's social media – i.e. Facebook, Twitter and Instagram between July and September. We have also advertised opportunities to get involved on the intranet, in the weekly newsletter Your Croydon, weekly Our Croydon bulletin, which gave us the potential to reach in excess of 80,000 residents.

- 8.6 Consultation consisted of an online survey and online focus groups. Telephone interviews were used to reach people that were unable to engage through online channels – this represented a more cost effective and direct approach than postal methods, which have been discounted. We were also invited to attend stakeholder meetings with Croydon BME Forum, Asian Resource Centre (ARCC), Youth Parliament, and Empire for Looked after Children.
- 8.7 We also ensured engagement opportunities were flexible – including late evenings and Saturdays to accommodate wider participation of protected groups. 1-2-1 telephone calls would be at the convenience of respondents, they were also used to complete the online survey with respondents who were reluctant or unable to take part in online focus groups.
- 8.8 The hardest to reach protected groups have been those within the transgender community and pregnant women. In part because during Covid-19, maternity clinics were not being held in the usual manner. We therefore approached partner organisations to promote the opportunity and contacted all known local transgender groups.
- 8.9 The online survey was developed and launched using the Council's 'Get Involved' platform. The site has software adjustments for those with visual impairments. The online survey /questionnaire was designed as a 'perception' survey that allowed respondents to give us their views on how the Council is tackling inequality; comment on current equality objectives; suggest additional objectives and priorities the Council should focus on for the next four years.
- 8.10 The online workshops asked the same questions as the online survey, with responses captured anonymously using an online tool called Retrium. By using this tool we were able to encourage more open and honest feedback while protecting individual identities during workshops. As a result feedback from the workshops was much more granular, honest and practical than one might otherwise expect.
- 8.11 In total we hosted 30 online workshops with attendees across the 9 protected groups (note that no person, community group or organisation was required to declare an interest), in addition we also held twelve 1-2-1 telephone interviews for those unable or unwilling to use online channels. On an average virtual workshops were attended by between 5-6 attendees with the exception of the BME Forum and ARCC workshops, whose sessions were at capacity. Online workshops were also held with staff in their capacity as employee, resident and service provider. Lastly, we also held meetings with each of the Council's staff diversity networks.
- 8.12 In total, we were able to engage with around 334 participants over a three month period.
- 8.13 We found that although most people agreed with the current objectives, some of the most important issues for respondents were not included in the

objectives and there were many other issues that have arisen in the last 4 years. Responses that focussed on new or 'emerging issues' – areas not covered by the current objectives' – were classed as 'emerging themes'.

8.14 Below are some of the high level findings.

- Respondents agreed with the current equalities objectives.
- Respondents also felt that the current objectives did not cover all of their concerns.
- In the last 4 years, people's concerns around equality have changed and there are a plethora of new and emerging issues.
- Across different groups and protected characteristics there are numerous concerns relating to individual circumstances, however there are key issues that are consistent across all groups.
- Overall, a high proportion of respondents felt that the aims should be measurable and progress should be made easily available for all residents to access.
- Respondents felt that the new priorities should also contain information specifically related to the council's role in tackling and reducing inequality.

8.15 Below is a further breakdown of feedback in relation to the key themes, including existing themes and emerging themes:

8.16 Jobs and the economy

- Need for the council to support those who have been financially affected by COVID-19, such as elderly and disabled people
- Need to support people back into employment, as well as job retention
- Ensure that all residents feel the benefit of development, particularly in overcrowded areas such as Thornton Heath

8.17 Housing

- Need for more affordable housing across the borough for its poorest residents, particularly in the North of the Borough
- Need for housing to be allocated in a fair and equitable way, to ensure there is no discrimination against particular groups.
- Need to tackle homelessness, and particularly for BAME men in the borough, who are more likely to end up being classed as homeless.

8.18 Children and Families

- Disproportionate treatment of young people (particularly black males) by police and in education
- Lack of youth services on offer for young people in the borough
- Concern about violence amongst young people
- High number of exclusion rates for young BAME people
- Education outcomes across different groups

8.19 Community Safety

- Need to address the root cause of domestic violence
- Concern about violence amongst young people and feeling unsafe for young people in the North of the Borough

8.20 Social Isolation

- Linked to many other issues throughout the consultation
- Lack of access and need for service improvement for disabled and particularly autistic people has a detrimental effect on mental health and feel isolated.
- Covid 19 and key contributor to social isolation particularly for older people, disabled people and those who have become unemployed.
- Need for community support and an active voluntary sector, supported by the council

8.21 Stronger communities

- Importance of a thriving VCS in the borough
- Need to engage different groups in different communities
- Need for partnership effort between VCS, local community leaders

8.22 Health

- Training and awareness in relation to autism
- Need for more support and services for those living with autism
- Need for improved accessibility in relation to disability
- Need to tackle health inequalities and outcomes for different groups

8.23 Societal inequities (emerging theme)

- Need for more equitable treatment of groups especially black communities

8.24 Council as an employer (emerging theme)

- Need for more diverse workforce making key-decisions
- Need for a diverse management team that reflects the diversity of the borough.
- Increasing training and awareness of staff, particularly frontline staff
- Council as a role model

8.25 Council as a community leader and service provider (emerging theme)

- Council as a role model around equity and inclusion
- Need to build equality into the commissioning process
- Service delivery models should reflect the inequities across the borough
- Council championing equality in the community and with its partners

You can obtain further information about the consultation in appendix 4.

9. NEW EQUALITY AND INCLUSION STRATEGY

- 9.1 The draft strategy is attached as appendix 8. This has been drafted based on the evidence and consultation findings summarised in previous sections.
- 9.2 The report starts with a Foreword by the Cabinet Member for Safer Croydon and Communities, this is followed by a section introducing the report. This is followed by some key equality statistics. It also includes a plan on a page that provides a concise, simple, at-a-glance summary of the strategy that will allow every single employee to pick it up, understand what it says, and understand what needs to be done.
- 9.3 The strategy sets out 4 clear outcomes, each with a set of 3 objectives that inform the smart actions that will be delivered over the course of the next four years.

Outcome 1: The Council addresses social inequities as a community leader and an employer

Objectives

1. The Council's workforce reflects our diverse communities at all levels
2. The Council acts as a role model and champions a fair society
3. We ensure equality training is central to the way work, is regularly undertaken, and is reviewed to meet changing needs

Outcome 2: We work with our residents to better understand our communities

Objectives

1. Continue to increase our network across seldom heard groups
2. Information about the council's work towards tackling inequality is easy to access and understand
3. Data about local communities is more effectively collected, analysed and used to inform decisions and improve services.

Outcome 3: Use partnerships to improve access and meet individual needs as they arise

Objectives

1. Enable better education outcomes by offering support to groups who need it most
2. Support the creation of jobs that enhance quality of life
3. Services are proactive in targeting groups that have accessibility issues as a result of disability, age, mental health, language, digital and/ or physical barriers

Outcome 4: People in Croydon are supported to be in good health

Objectives

1. Work with partners to tackle social isolation and bring people together

2. With our partners use our knowledge of specific health challenges to support improvements
3. We work with our partners to open the door to health services, and support them to make sure residents know where and how to access services

10. PRE-DECISION SCRUTINY

- 10.1 The Scrutiny & Overview Committee have received regular reports on progress against the Council's existing equality objectives. In May 2020, the Committee received a report outlining the proposal to create a new strategy. This provided the Committee with an opportunity to have direct input to the approach and the consultation plan. Overall comments from the committee were the Council needs to demonstrate progress against objectives over time, reporting on factors we want to improve. The also felt that the action plan leading from the new strategy needs to be challenging but achievable, with realistic, timed milestones and named responsible officers. Officers also felt that the council will need to ensure how it will use more up-to-date equality data going forward and also consider intersectionality and seldom heard groups such as neuro diverse groups.
- 10.2 This was followed by Informal Scrutiny & Overview Committee meeting in June where the Committee received the draft engagement and consultation plan. The report gave details of the consultation plan, survey questions, timescales and stakeholders. Overall comments from the committee were SMART objectives need to be built into the next strategy, focused on results not outputs, strategy needed to be developed in full awareness and consideration of recent events and conversations – namely Black Lives Matter movement, need to ensure we hear from wide range of voices –not just usual suspects, strategy needs to be ambitious, but also recognise Council's ability to influence actions.
- 10.3 In September the latest results of the consultation were presented to the Scrutiny & Overview Committee informal meeting, alongside initial ideas for strategy, our approach to develop the strategy and draft outcomes and objectives. Overall comments from the committee were positive and members of the committee responded well to the idea of a strategy being developed with the voice of residents at its core. Monitoring; implementation mechanism - include information about this is in cabinet and scrutiny reports and final strategy.
- 10.4 The draft strategy was presented to an Informal Scrutiny Review meeting in Jan 2021. Overall comments from the committee were positive. The committee was of the view that more could have been done to raise awareness of the strategy to residents and communities, including providing feedback to stakeholders that were involved in developing the strategy, officers also felt that going forward more needs to done to improve the collection and analysis of equalities data such as developing an equalities dashboard. The committee also felt that consideration needed to be given to

areas such as domestic abuse, mental health, autism and Brexit and the impact on food poverty. Following that meeting, the committee will then report findings to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting on 9 February 2021.

11 FINANCIAL AND RISK ASSESSMENT CONSIDERATIONS

- 11.1 There are no direct financial implications for this plan. The Council's Equality Strategy incorporates the council's public sector equality duties as well as the national equality service improvement framework. It demonstrates the Council's compliance with the current legal framework.
- 11.2 Failure to implement and annually report on the Council's Equality and Inclusion priorities and actions will expose the Council to risk of claims for breach of statutory duty. Failing to implement actions identified in the equality analysis conducted to support decision-making or compliance with the public sector equality duties will also expose the Council to risk.
- 11.3 The Equality Strategy will be published in an electronic format and will not incur a publication cost to the Council.
- 11.4 Publication of the Equality Strategy will not incur production costs. The Strategy must be accessible and therefore made available in different formats, in summary and electronically - on the Council's website and intranet. Provision for this is available from existing budgets available to the Resources Department.
- 11.5 Key to delivering this strategy will be aligning resources to deliver positive outcomes, as far as is practicable at a time when the council is under significant financial pressure. Given the current financial pressures, we have been mindful in developing this strategy to ensure it aligns with existing commitments whilst remaining ambitious - within existing resources, projects, programmes and actions.
- 11.6 **The effect of the decision**
The approval of the Equality and Inclusion Annual Report will have no effect on the current financial situation. Action will be delivered in accordance with the risk management process.
- 11.7 **Risks**
The risk of not adopting the Equalities Strategy could mean that the council and its partners fail to meet the needs of our residents which could have a direct impact on their life prospects and opportunities to achieve positive outcomes.
- 11.8 **Options**
Outlined below in section 12.
- 11.9 **Future savings/ efficiencies**

There are no savings or efficiencies associated with the approval of this report.

Approved by Matthew Davis, Deputy S151 Officer, Finance Investment and Risk on behalf of Lisa Taylor, Director Finance Investment and Risk

12. LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS

- 12.1 The Head of Litigation and Corporate Law comments on behalf of the interim Director of Law and Governance that the Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties) Regulations 2011 sets out that the Council must publish information to demonstrate its compliance with the duty imposed by section 149(1) of the Equality Act 2010, not later than 31st January 2012; and subsequently at intervals of not greater than one year beginning with the date of last publication. The information which the Council publishes must include, in particular, information relating to persons who share a relevant protected characteristic who are—
- a) its employees;
 - b) other persons affected by its policies and practices.
- 12.2 Section 149(1) (a) to (c) sets out the public sector equality duty with which the Council is required to comply. A public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to—
- a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;
 - b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
 - c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.
- 12.3 In addition, the Council is required to publish one or more objectives it thinks it should achieve to do any of the things mentioned in paragraphs (a) to (c) of subsection (1) of section 149 of the Act referenced above.
- 12.4 The objectives must be published—not later than 6th April 2020; and subsequently at intervals of not greater than four years beginning with the date of last publication.
- 12.5 An objective published by a public authority in compliance with paragraph (1) must be specific and measurable and must be published in such a manner that the information is accessible to the public.
- 12.6 The Equality strategy will help the Council meet the PSED in full, and the supporting Action Plan, along with the approach to monitor its success and deliverability meets Section 153 of the Act, thus minimising any reason or likelihood of a successful legal challenge on this.

Approved by: Sandra Herbert Head of Litigation and Corporate Law on behalf of the interim Director of Law and Governance.

13. HUMAN RESOURCES IMPACT

- 13.1 Equality is integral to our workforce processes, policies and practices, including becoming an employer of choice. We continue to make positive progress towards having a workforce that reflects its community and where inclusivity is embedded in our practice, though it is recognised that there is more to do.
- 13.2 The strategy will help the Council achieve its ambition to be an organisation that is collaborative, inclusive and innovative, an employer that let's talent flourish and build workforce capability to meet our ambitions and reflects Croydon's communities

Approved by Sue Moorman, Director Human Resources

14. EQUALITIES IMPACT

- 14.1 The Equality Strategy seeks to understand the issues and challenges faced by the people of Croydon in order to create a place of opportunity where everyone can belong, addressing the needs and aspirations of all those who live and work in the borough.
- 14.2 The Strategy sets out the Council's Equality objectives 2020-2024. This will help the Council meet the PSED in full, and the supporting Action Plan, along with the approach to monitor its success and deliverability meets Section 153 of the Act, thus minimising any reason or likelihood of a successful legal challenge on this.
- 14.3 The strategy was developed in partnership with Croydon's residents, businesses, Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) and staff. We gathered information from a range of impact and needs assessments, identified key challenges and invited a range of internal and external stakeholders to confirm these. We also utilised information a range of national and local sources, some of which are outlined in section 6 of the report.
- 14.4 An equality analysis was undertaken to ascertain the potential impact the strategy and associated action plan would have on groups that share protected characteristics. This concluded that the strategy would have a positive impact on all groups that share protected characteristics as it seeks to address the greatest inequalities faced by vulnerable and disadvantaged communities in the Borough

Approved by Yvonne Okiyo, Equalities Manager

15. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

- 15.1 There are no environmental issues arising as a result of this report and accompanying strategy

16. CRIME AND DISORDER REDUCTION IMPACT

- 16.1 The strategy will help the Council foster good relations between communities and work towards building a cohesive and inclusive Borough through addressing key issues such as discrimination and hate
- 16.2 The priorities of the Violence Reduction Network, which seeks to take a public health approach to tackling violence, are aligned with the priorities within this strategy.

17. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS/PROPOSED DECISION

- 17.1 The proposed recommendations are as follows:
- 17.2 Refer the adoption of the Equalities Strategy to Full Council with a recommendation for approval.
- 17.3 Refer the adoption of the new Equalities Objectives to Full Council with a recommendation for approval.
- 17.4 Note the engagement and consultation that has been undertaken to develop this strategy and supporting action plan to deliver its key priorities. Its content is applicable across the borough and is intended to benefit all our staff, residents and communities and thereby all who live and/or work in the borough, or working directly with Croydon's residents and communities

18. OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED

- 18.1 Retain and roll forward existing strategy. Not recommended due to the significant change over the last 4 years, and recognition that we need to have more targeted objectives
- 18.2 Do not have a separate equality strategy, but rely on the equality and inclusion elements in existing strategies (see earlier analysis) – not recommended as it is not best practice and could open us to legal challenge
- 18.3 Delay adopting the strategy and undertake further consultation – not recommended, as we have a legal duty to review objectives every 4 years – which is 2020.

19. DATA PROTECTION IMPLICATIONS

19.1 WILL THE SUBJECT OF THE REPORT INVOLVE THE PROCESSING OF 'PERSONAL DATA'?

No

19.2 HAS A DATA PROTECTION IMPACT ASSESSMENT (DPIA) BEEN COMPLETED?

Data protection impact assessment was completed as part of the consultation process (see appendix 6)

Approved by Gavin Handford, Director of Policy and Partnerships

CONTACT OFFICER:

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APPENDICES TO THIS REPORT

Appendix 1: Equality Framework for Local Government (EFLG) LGA Report

Appendix 2: Stonewall Workplace Equality Index

Appendix 3: Equality Strategy Consultation Report

Appendix 4: DPIA

Appendix 5: Equality Analysis

Appendix 6: Draft Equality Strategy

BACKGROUND PAPERS:

None