

# PEOPLE AND OD COMMITTEE

## Inclusion Strategy

10<sup>th</sup> July 2025

### Report of the Organisational Development Manager

#### PURPOSE OF REPORT

To consult with members of the People and Organisational Development Committee on the Council's Inclusion Strategy and agree implementation.

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This report is public

#### RECOMMENDATIONS

**That the new Inclusion Strategy as detailed in this report is considered and approved by the People and Organisational Development Committee.**

##### 1.0 Introduction

1.1 This report sets out the Council's proposed strategy and action plan relating to inclusion, which is essential so that the council has a culture where all people and roles are valued, meaning that every individual feels safe, experiences a sense of belonging, and therefore empowered to achieve their full potential in order to deliver the Council Plan.

1.2 This new strategy is presented to the Committee for their consideration.

##### 2.0 Background

2.1 The new Workforce Inclusion Strategy has been developed as part of the People Plan 2023-2026. A need for a coordinated and structured strategy was identified to build on the foundations of a number of existing initiatives.

2.2 The strategy supports the notion that everyone should have a right to equal access to employment, training and development based on merit alone. As well as this, everyone should have the right to be free of any direct or indirect discrimination and harassment or bullying.

2.3 The Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) report that the main business benefits of taking inclusion and diversity seriously are talent and corporate reputation. Simply put, to attract the best talent to work for Lancaster City Council, it is necessary to demonstrate that good employment practices are in place. People want to work for such employers and they want to feel valued and respected at work. When this is achieved, individuals feel able to make their best contribution, and it is less likely that they will leave. Openness to diversity widens access to the best talent. Inclusion allows for effective engagement with talent. Equality enables delivery of fair outcomes. Together,

this leads to enhanced innovation, creativity, productivity, reputation, engagement and organisational outcomes.

- 2.4 It is important to note that the aim of the strategy is to create an inclusive workplace culture, which involves taking a holistic view of workplace practices. It is not about simply ensuring compliance with the Equality Act 2010 or providing an equality and diversity training programme.

### **3.0 Strategy development**

- 3.1 The Council already has a Dignity, Equity and Inclusion Policy, which sets out our commitment to supporting dignity, equity and inclusion, and eliminating discrimination and bullying in the workplace. Our approach to dealing with breaches of the policy is also set out, linking to the Grievance and Disciplinary Policies.
- 3.2 The Workforce Inclusion Strategy sets out what we mean by inclusion in this context, the Leadership Team's commitment to ensuring that we have an inclusive culture, how the strategy was put together, what our inclusion priorities are, and an action plan.
- 3.3 Working with an expert partner, Inclusive Employers, the strategy was co-created with staff. The first stage was desktop research (data, policies, etc) and bringing people together (staff, managers and leaders including the Chief Executive and Leadership Team, council members and staff networks) to understand the issues to address, which are detailed below:
- Becoming more deliberate and targeted in true inclusion priorities
  - A foundational need to strengthen the approach to capture and use EDI data
  - Distribute responsibility for inclusion more widely and deeply across the council
  - Equip line managers and leaders with a shared understanding of inclusion needs and the necessary skills
  - A cultural shift is needed to engage every colleague and embed diversity and inclusion into the day to day actions and behaviours of colleagues, line managers and leaders.

The initial phase also identified that our intent and commitment towards building an inclusive culture was commendable and that we were already on our way to achieving it.

- 3.4 Following the initial phase, co-creation workshops were held with colleagues from across the council, including staff networks. The strategy was then created using the Inclusive Employer's 6 Pillars of Inclusion, with the following priorities:
- Improve our data and insight to build an evidence based approach to inclusion work
  - Support our staff networks to foster an inclusive workplace culture
  - Develop inclusive leadership and line management practices
  - Support a further cultural shift toward greater inclusion through inclusive policy development, inclusive HR practices and inclusive communications

An Action Plan has been developed to support the delivery of those priorities. The aim is to deliver the action plan over two years.

- 3.5 Since the strategy and action plan were designed, further consultation has taken place, with input invited from staff networks, the HR and OD team, trade unions and leadership team.

## 4.0 Recommendations

The Committee is asked to consider the Workforce Inclusion Strategy, make any relevant comments and suggestions on the content, and agree implementation.

### **CONCLUSION OF IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

**(including Health & Safety, Equality & Diversity, Human Rights, Community Safety, Sustainability and Rural Proofing):**

The strategy and action plan sets out the Council's commitment to creating a more inclusive workplace, with the aim of having a positive impact on equality and diversity and human rights.

### **LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

In line with the Equality Act 2010.

### **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

Cost neutral.

### **OTHER RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS, such as Human Resources, Information Services, Property, Open Spaces:**

Human resource to deliver the action plan.

### **SECTION 151 OFFICER'S COMMENTS**

The Section 151 Officer has been consulted and has no comments to add.

### **MONITORING OFFICER'S COMMENTS**

The Monitoring Officer has been consulted and has no comments to add.

### **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

None

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