

<b>REPORT TO:</b>	Cabinet	
<b>DATE:</b>	21 January 2026	
<b>PORTFOLIO:</b>	<b>Cllr Ethan Rawcliffe, People and Communities</b>	
<b>REPORT AUTHOR:</b>	Kirsten Burnett	
<b>TITLE OF REPORT:</b>	Equality and Diversity Strategy 2026-30	
<b>EXEMPT REPORT (Local Government Act 1972, Schedule 12A)</b>	<b>Options</b>	Not applicable
<b>KEY DECISION:</b>	<b>No</b>	If yes, date of publication:

## 1. Purpose of Report

1.1 To seek Cabinet approval for the adoption of the Equality and Diversity Strategy 2026-2030.

## 2. Recommendations

2.1 Cabinet is recommended to approve the Equality and Diversity Strategy 2026-2030 as set out at Appendix 1.

## 3. Reasons for Recommendations and Background

3.1 The Council's previous Equality and Diversity Strategy covered the period 2020-2025. This new strategy updates our approach for 2026-2030 and reflects significant changes in both our local context and the legislative landscape.

3.2 The strategy is underpinned by comprehensive 2021 Census data, which provides an up-to-date picture of Hyndburn's diverse communities. Key demographic changes since the 2011 Census include:

- Population growth to 82,234 residents
- Increase in ethnic minority population from 12.3% to 17.3%
- Significant increase in residents aged 65+ from 12,809 to 15,006
- 20.8% of residents are disabled under the Equality Act

- 3.3 The strategy incorporates recent legislative developments including the Worker Protection (Amendment of Equality Act 2010) Act 2023, which came into force in October 2024 and places enhanced duties on employers to prevent sexual harassment, and the Domestic Abuse Act 2021.
- 3.4 New content in this strategy includes recognition of neurodiversity and neurodivergence, reflecting growing understanding of conditions such as autism, ADHD, dyslexia and dyspraxia. The strategy also addresses contemporary challenges including digital exclusion, the ongoing impacts of the cost-of-living crisis on residents with protected characteristics, and the need to embed equality considerations in major regeneration projects.
- 3.5 The strategy maintains the Council's established approach of using Customer First Analyses (our equality impact assessment process) to ensure equality considerations are embedded in decision-making. It sets out specific actions covering areas including workforce monitoring, training, accessibility, hate crime awareness, support for refugees and asylum seekers, and monitoring of service delivery.
- 3.6 The Public Sector Equality Duty under the Equality Act 2010 requires the Council to have due regard to eliminating prohibited conduct, advancing equality of opportunity, and fostering good relations between people who share protected characteristics and those who do not. This strategy demonstrates how we will meet these duties across all our functions including employment, service delivery, budget setting, procurement and regulatory activities.

#### **4. Alternative Options considered and Reasons for Rejection**

- 4.1 The Council could choose not to adopt a refreshed strategy and continue operating under the 2020-2025 strategy. This option is rejected as the previous strategy is now out of date. Failing to update our strategy would not demonstrate our commitment to equality and diversity or support effective compliance with the Public Sector Equality Duty.

#### **5. Consultations**

- 5.1 The Strategy provides a framework for meeting equality duties which includes the use of customer first analyses in decision-making. Where appropriate, this includes consultation responses from affected people / groups of people.
- 5.2 The strategy has been developed following review of the previous strategy and consideration of updated demographic data, legislative requirements and emerging issues affecting equality and diversity. The strategy will be published on the Council's website and made available in alternative formats on request.



## 6. Implications

<b>Financial implications (including any future financial commitments for the Council)</b>	There are no direct financial implications arising from the adoption of this strategy. Actions identified will be delivered within existing resources and budgets. Where specific initiatives require additional funding, these will be subject to separate reports and business cases as appropriate.
<b>Legal and human rights implications</b>	The Equality Act 2010 places a Public Sector Equality Duty on the Council to have due regard to eliminating discrimination, advancing equality of opportunity and fostering good relations. This strategy demonstrates how the Council will meet these statutory duties. The strategy also supports compliance with the Worker Protection (Amendment of Equality Act 2010) Act 2023 and the Domestic Abuse Act 2021. Adoption of this strategy helps to mitigate legal risks associated with failure to meet equality duties and supports the Council's obligations under the Human Rights Act 1998.
<b>Assessment of risk</b>	The main risk would be in not adopting an updated strategy, which could leave the Council operating with out-of-date policies that do not reflect current demographics, legislation or emerging issues. This could result in failure to meet the Public Sector Equality Duty, potential legal challenge, and reputational damage. Adoption of this strategy mitigates these risks by providing a clear framework for embedding equality and diversity considerations across all Council functions.
<b>Equality and diversity implications</b> A <i>Customer First Analysis</i> should be completed in relation to policy decisions and should be attached as an appendix to the report.	This strategy is specifically designed to advance equality and diversity across the Council's work. A Customer First Analysis is not required as the strategy itself sets out the Council's approach to equality and diversity. The strategy has positive implications for all protected characteristic groups and demonstrates the Council's commitment to eliminating discrimination, advancing equality of opportunity and fostering good relations.

7. **Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985:  
List of Background Papers**

7.1 None.

8. **Freedom of Information**

8.1 The report does not contain exempt information under the Local Government Act 1972, Schedule 12A and all information can be disclosed under the Freedom of Information Act 2000.