

Subject:	Progress Report on the Workforce Equalities Action Plan		
Date of Meeting:	12 June 2014		
Report of:	Executive Director Finance & Resources		
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Ward(s) affected:	All		

FOR GENERAL RELEASE

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT & POLICY CONTEXT:

- 1.1 At its meeting in July 2013, the Committee considered a report detailing the findings from the council commissioned assessment of race equality in employment at the council that had been carried out by the consultants, Global HPO. Whilst the findings identified specific issues in relation to race equality, many were relevant to all equality groups and indeed to more fundamental performance and cultural issues within the council.
- 1.2 Given the extent and nature of the issues raised by Global HPO, it was recognised that if the council wished to effectively address these issues and so effect and embed real cultural change within the organisation, it would be necessary to develop an action plan over a three year period.
- 1.3 Therefore, at the July 2013 Policy & Resources Committee, members agreed a high-level three year action plan. At the same time they also agreed the work programme that would be carried out in the first year.
- 1.4 The purpose of this report is to brief members on the progress that has been made against the Year 1 Action Plan and to seek approval for the work it is proposed to carry out in Year 2.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 2.1 That the Committee note the progress made against the Year 1 Action Plan, as set out in paragraphs 3.7 - 3.10 and Appendix 1.
- 2.2 That the Committee approve the Year 2 Workforce Equalities Action Plan set out in Appendix 2.

3. CONTEXT/BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

Background

- 3.1 The Workforce Equalities Action Plan has been incorporated within the council's Corporate Plan and is a key area of focus under the organisation's modernisation agenda. The prioritisation of issues was developed through a stakeholder prioritisation exercise including representation from the Workers' Forums, Human Resources & Organisational Development (HR&OD) teams and the Communities, Equality & Third Sector team.
- 3.2 Year 1 of the Workforce Equalities Action Plan (see Appendix 1) focussed on the agreed priority actions that were the fundamental precursors to any future work. For example, many of the actions related to improving the capture, quality and analysis of our workforce and recruitment data. Good quality data is vital in helping any organisation identify equality issues, patterns and trends that need to be addressed. So, it was sensible for the council to set about establishing a baseline of high-quality, robust employment data as one of the first tasks so that this could be used to inform future action planning.
- 3.3 As a result, a significant proportion of all the recommendations made by Global HPO, were included within the Year 1 Action Plan and, therefore, the amount of work it was proposed to complete within the first twelve months was a challenging commitment and endorsed on that basis.
- 3.4 The Year 1 Action Plan has been monitored by the Workforce Equalities Group (WEG), chaired by the Head of HR&OD, and comprising representatives from the four Staff Workers' Forums, Trade Unions, HR&OD and the Communities, Equality & Third Sector team. The main purpose of this group is to provide a place for challenge on the council's progress towards implementing the Workforce Equalities Action Plan.
- 3.5 The Year 1 action plan has also been monitored by the BME (Black & Minority Ethnic) Audit Project Board, chaired by the Executive Director of Finance & Resources in her capacity as the Executive Leadership Team's Equalities Champion. The primary purpose of this group, which includes representatives from the BME Workers' Forum Steering Group and HR, was to review progress against the action plan specifically from the perspective of BME staff and to discuss any issues or concerns that might arise as a consequence of that work. A copy of the Governance and Monitoring Framework for this work is attached at Appendix 3 for information.

Progress made against the Year 1 Action Plan

- 3.6 A considerable amount of work has already been carried out in the last year to address the key issues highlighted in the Global HPO report. A summary of that work is summarised below. For ease of reference, the activity undertaken has been grouped under the four distinct headings in the Action Plan itself:

3.7 Workforce data & analysis

- The council's progress towards achieving a more diverse workforce is now being measured against new workforce targets that are in line with the City's economically active population. Work underway by the Communities, Equality and Third Sector team through the BME Needs Assessment is specifically looking at wider employment and economic activity issues with the Economic Development Team. This work will inform any targeted employment interventions that may take place as part of the Year 2 Action Plan
- Equality categories for monitoring both workforce profile and recruitment activity have been expanded in line with Global HPO's recommendations
- Analysis of workforce and recruitment data has been expanded and improved and is now being reported regularly to senior management, the Workforce Equalities Group and Directorate Equalities Groups on a quarterly basis
- Work is continuing to improve the quality of our workforce data by reducing the percentage of employees and casual workers for whom the council holds either incomplete, or no, personal equalities data. Particular effort has been focussed on capturing data from employees working in those service areas where declaration rates are lowest e.g. CityClean and CityParks. The level of "unknowns" has so far been reduced by approximately 2% although it is expected that this figure will improve further as the equalities data currently being collected is input on to the council's HR management information system.
- Discussions are underway with our supplier of agency workers to improve the equalities data they provide to the council on those agency workers who have undertaken assignments within the organisation
- Work has been carried out to improve the capture, quality, and analysis of information collected from staff who leave the council by revising the exit questionnaire and introducing an online system for individuals to feedback, anonymously if they so wish, their experiences of working for the organisation

3.8 Recruitment & Retention

- Following publication of the findings from the BME Needs Assessment project, work is underway to build better relationships with BME communities within the City. As part of this community engagement work, HR is working closely with the Communities, Equality & Third Sector team to look at how, as an employer, the council can improve its reputation amongst those from local BME communities so that they begin to view the council as a good potential employer
- The council's recruitment and selection training, including the e-learning module are being reviewed to ensure they are fit for purpose. Some initial work has already been completed to highlight to managers the risks of personal unconscious bias in the selection process
- All vacancies released for external advertising are now also being advertised on a relatively new job board called, Diversity Jobs, in an effort to encourage applications from groups under-represented within our workforce. This job board already hosts vacancies for some large

employers such as e-on, Royal Mail and EDF Energy who place diversity high on their corporate agenda.

3.9 Training & Development

- The council's Equalities and Diversity e-learning modules ("Introduction to Equality & Diversity" and "Equality & Diversity for Managers") have been reviewed and Global HPO have been commissioned to revise these to ensure they are fit for purpose
- The council's values and behaviours have been included in all corporate management training courses and the equalities and diversity content of these reviewed to ensure managers are competent and confident in managing diversity issues in the workplace
- The council's e-induction training programme has been reviewed and similarly updated. However, further work will be necessary to ensure it reflects the Equality and Diversity corporate training modules when these have been re-vamped
- Specific Trans awareness training for staff, as recommended by the Trans Equality Scrutiny Panel, has already been delivered to those employees working in Housing and is planned for Adult Social Care. More general awareness of Trans issues is being incorporated within the new corporate Equalities and Diversity e-learning modules
- Equalities & Diversity training for members has been delivered and feedback received to date has been helpful in planning future events with particularly positive responses to the Trans Equality training. The events were attended and a meeting has been scheduled with the training provider, Democratic Services and the Workforce Development team to discuss the feedback and future training needs. The training covered an Equality and Diversity Overview, Race & Religion, Disability and Transgender Awareness. Members' induction is also being reviewed and we aim to have equalities and diversity briefings/workshops featured within the programme.
- Working closely with Steering Group members from the four Workers' Forums, a training programme has been developed by the Communities, Equality & Third Sector team. The programme is designed to enable the Workers' Forums to work more effectively with the council on equalities issues.

3.10 Policies

- The Dignity & Respect at Work Policy has been revised having regard to the council's values and behaviour framework and the recommendations in the Global HPO report. The policy, that was re-launched last August, aims to improve the council's approach to dealing with instances of conflict or inappropriate behaviour in the workplace by placing greater emphasis on early interventions such as mediation. To this end, a new mediation scheme has been developed and recently launched
- HR staff who are required to carry out Equality Impact Assessments on council policies or changes to staffing structures have attended specific training to ensure that they are able to carry out these assessments effectively

- Work is underway to review recruitment and selection practices within the organisation to ensure that they are robust, effective and comply with best practice.
 - The council's Trans Toolkit is being reviewed having regard to the recommendations made by the Trans Equality Scrutiny Panel.
- 3.11 A detailed report showing the progress made against the Year 1 Action Plan is attached at Appendix 1.

Proposed Year 2 Action Plan

- 3.12 It has been recognised that the key focus of the Year 1 Action Plan was to establish a robust baseline of management information to be able to effectively analyse our workforce composition. This enables us to make informed decisions to identify Year 2 activities aimed at increasing the diversity of our workforce.
- 3.13 The work it is proposed to carry out in Year 2 has been determined by:
- reviewing the work that has already taken place in Year 1
 - determining from that review, whether any of the Year 1 actions need to continue into Year 2
 - establishing whether further, more in depth work is required as a result of any of the work already carried out this year
 - revisiting the full list of recommendations from the Global HPO report to identify which of these has yet to be addressed and finally
 - asking representatives from the Workers' Forums, Trade Unions, HR & OD and the Communities, Equality and Third Sector team to identify the actions they considered should be given priority in Year 2.
- 3.14 Following extensive discussion, and having regard to the priorities assigned by each group of stakeholders, it is proposed to implement the Year 2 Workforce Equalities Action Plan attached at Appendix 2.
- 3.15 The main areas of focus in Year 2 are summarised below:

Workforce data & analysis

- to expand further the scope of equalities workforce information that is captured, analysed and reported to senior management
- to use this body of data as a tool to scrutinise key HR processes to identify equality issues and implement actions designed to achieve tangible and improved diversity outcomes

Recruitment & Retention

- following the BME needs Assessment work, to re-establish effective links with the BME voluntary and community organisations in the City with a view to better understanding their perceptions of the council as an employer

- examine how recruitment and selection processes impact on specific BME groups and use this information to take specific actions designed to improve workforce diversity
- to further develop the content of the council's recruitment and selection training offer to ensure managers have the knowledge and expertise to make good, robust recruitment decisions that will contribute towards improved outcomes for applicants from under-represented groups

Training & Development

- to carry out a more in-depth and fundamental review of the council's learning and development offer to ensure equality and diversity is an integral part of all courses
- to work with Global HPO to revamp the council's equality and diversity e-learning and workshop-based training to ensure it is fit for purpose

Policies

- using recruitment data as a tool, review the recruitment and selection policy and practices to identify potential barriers to employment and to implement the necessary actions to increase the diversity of our workforce profile at all levels within the organisation
- develop a suite of key "markers" within the annual staff survey that will enable the council to identify the tangible outcomes as a result of the work being carried out under the Workforce Equalities Action Plan
- monitor the effectiveness of the recently introduced Mediation Scheme at informally resolving conflict in working relationships such as bullying without the need to use formal HR processes
- continue to regularly review HR&OD policies and procedures to ensure they effectively support positive diversity outcomes for our workforce.

4. ANALYSIS & CONSIDERATION OF ANY ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 4.1 There are no alternative options for the Committee to consider. The council has already given a commitment to implementing the recommendations set out in the Global HPO report via a three year Workforce Equalities Action Plan. This Action Plan has been incorporated within the council's Corporate Plan for 2014-15 and forms a key part of the organisation's modernisation agenda.

5. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND CONSULTATION

- 5.1 The content of this report has been discussed fully with members of the Workforce Equalities Group. The representatives from the Workers' Forums and Trade Unions who sit on this group have provided the following joint statement in relation to the work carried out so far:

"We were pleased with the commissioning of Global HPO to examine race equality in employment with the aim to address some long standing equalities issues. Since the recommendations were delivered and the Workforce Equalities Action Plan developed we have seen and heard a commitment to improve. We acknowledge there needed to be a step back in

order to move forward. The WEG are pleased with the progress made on equalities since commissioning the Global HPO report. We recognise it's an ongoing process and the current signs are positive. We now need to see the changes. We look forward to seeing demonstrable evidence based progress going forward and within that we acknowledge our own positions and responsibilities in this process."

6. FINANCIAL & OTHER IMPLICATIONS:

6.1 Financial Implications:

Year 2 of the Workforce Equalities Action Plan is expected to be implemented by in-house staff and be absorbed into existing workloads. Other costs noted such as the revision of the council's Equality and Diversity e-learning modules by Global HPO will be met from within existing budgets.

Finance Officer Consulted: Peter Francis Date: 23 May 2014

Legal Implications:

- 6.2 The Action Plan set out in Appendix 2 is consistent with the council's general equality duty as specified in section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 and will facilitate compliance with the council's specific equality duty under section 153 of the same Act.

Lawyer Consulted: Oliver Dixon Date: 27 May 2014

Equalities Implications:

- 6.3 This report ensures that the council meets its legal obligations under the Equality Act 2010 in regard to its workforce as well as its Corporate Plan commitments.

Sustainability Implications:

- 6.4 There are no direct sustainability implications arising from this report.

Any other significant Implications:

- 6.5 There are no other significant implications arising from this report.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Appendices:

- Appendix 1: Progress Report on the Workforce Equalities Action Plan - Year 1
- Appendix 2: Proposed Workforce Equalities Action Plan - Year 2
- Appendix 3: Governance and Monitoring Framework for the Workforce Equalities Action Plan

Background Documents:

None.