

<b>Subject:</b>	<b>Progress Report on the Workforce Equalities Action Plan</b>		
<b>Date of Meeting:</b>	<b>13 July 2017</b>		
<b>Report of:</b>	<b>Executive Director Finance &amp; Resources</b>		
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<b>Ward(s) affected:</b>	<b>All</b>		

**FOR GENERAL RELEASE**

**1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND POLICY CONTEXT**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to update Members on how the council is performing against its Workforce Equalities Action Plan, which was developed following the commissioned review by Global HPO in 2013.
- 1.2 The Action Plan has four areas of focus: workforce data and analysis; recruitment and retention; workforce development & employee engagement; and policies.
- 1.3 The council has progressively built on the solid foundations laid during the first two years with subsequent activity focussing predominantly on:
  - improving recruitment and selection policy, processes and practices to increase diversity; and
  - embedding cultural change through implementing an improved performance management framework across the organisation so that staff are assessed as much on what they achieve as how they go about achieving it.

**2. RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- 2.1 That the Committee note the progress made during Year 4 of the Workforce Equalities Action Plan as summarised in paragraphs 3.7-3.28.
- 2.2 That the Committee approve the areas of focus of the work programme under the Action Plan for the year.

**3. CONTEXT/ BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

- 3.1 The council's Workforce Equalities Action Plan was developed in 2013 in response to the recommendations from Global HPO following their review into the experiences of our BME workforce.

3.2 The consultants' recommendations were grouped into four key areas of focus: workforce data and analysis; recruitment and retention; workforce development & employee engagement and policies.

3.3 To date, a considerable amount of work has been carried out to address the two fundamental issues highlighted by Global HPO. These were:

- the experiences of BME employees were closely linked to the council's workplace culture; and
- the council needed to improve significantly the capture, quality and analysis of its recruitment and workforce data so that it could identify effectively the equality and diversity issues that needed to be addressed.

3.4 As a result of the progress made within the first two years, the council has progressively moved away from an action plan that sets out planned work activities in great detail to one which focusses on the tangible outcomes it aims to deliver. The success of the work undertaken is then measured by comparing recruitment and workforce data metrics with those at the end of the following year.

3.5 The proposed areas of focus for Year 4 were identified from feedback via the following sources:

- Workforce Equalities Group \*
- Member feedback on the Annual Equalities Report
- Staff Survey
- Standards set out in the Equalities Framework for Local Government and the feedback from the Peer review.

*\* The WEG will now be chaired by the Executive Director, Finance & Resources (following the departure of the Head of HR&OD) and comprises representatives from the four Staff Workers' Forums, Trade Unions, HR&OD and the Communities, Equality & Third Sector team.*

3.6 These sources were identified in order to:

- use workforce information and insight to develop areas for positive action activity and to monitor the effectiveness of this activity through established monitoring mechanisms
- develop a diversity recruitment campaign to attract and retain staff from more diverse backgrounds
- underpin practice with effective learning, reflection and a robust policy framework.

### ***Progress made against the Year 4 Action Plan***

3.7 The progress made against each of the four main areas of the Action Plan during Year 4 is summarised below.

## Workforce data & analysis

We have:

- seen a modest increase in the diversity of the workforce with the proportion of BME staff increasing by 0.5% in the last twelve months.
- revised the workforce target for disabled staff from 7.5% to 8% in 2016/17 in response to the council achieving the original target during the preceding year.
- published the council's second Workforce Equalities Report. This set out a comprehensive analysis of our workforce and recruitment data in 2015/16.

3.8 Whilst we are making progress it is slow and we remain below our workforce representation target for BME. Whilst an increase of 0.5% over the last year is relatively modest, it should be viewed in the context of an average annual increase over the life of the Action Plan of 0.2%. Prior to that, the proportion of BME staff working for the council had remained unchanged at 5.5% for nearly 18 months.

3.9 There is evidence that the work we are undertaking such as reviewing our recruitment policy, processes and practices and using positive action initiatives as part of specific recruitment campaigns, is beginning to have effect in enabling the council to attract and recruit more people from a BME background.

3.10 Indeed, analysis of the recruitment data for 2016/17 has shown that :

- there has been an increase of approximately 1.4% in the proportion of applicants from a BME background for council jobs (excluding those based in schools)
- there has been a noticeable improvement in the success rate for BME applicants in terms of securing interviews (up 5.9%) and job offers (up 2.4%) compared with the previous year
- BME applicants were significantly more successful in securing job offers for permanent roles (7.1%) compared with a figure of 2.8% for the previous year
- there was a marked improvement in the proportion of BME applicants securing jobs within the lower and, more significantly, in the middle grade band (grade SO1/2 to M8) compared with the figures for 2015/16.

3.11 However, whilst there are positive indicators, BME staff remain significantly under-represented within the most senior roles within the organisation and this situation is compounded by the fact that only 8 applicants out of the 81 who applied for jobs at this level during 2016/17 were from a BME background and none of these individuals was successful in being appointed. This is a clear focus for future positive action.

## **Recruitment and retention**

We have:

- reviewed and made improvements to the council's jobs site to make it easier to navigate and find important information on how to apply for jobs
- strengthened the diversity messaging throughout the site
- revised our online recruitment system to make it easier for applicants to complete the knowledge, skills and experience section of the application form
- used positive action as an integral part of specific recruitment campaigns – see case study below
- made the process for reviewing and reducing the length of person specifications for jobs as they are evaluated/ advertised more robust
- developed a recruitment toolkit for managers to improve practice, particularly in relation to using positive action and being aware of unconscious bias in decision-making
- co-created a scheme with members of the WEG to use employees as independent observers on a number of recruitment activities each year. The observers' role will be to scrutinise the standard of recruitment practice within the council and feedback comments/concerns to HR for review and, where necessary, action

### ***Case Study on the use of positive action in the recruitment of Children's Social Workers***

- 3.12 Over the last year, we worked closely with colleagues in social care to improve recruitment of children's social workers - both newly qualified and experienced practitioners.
- 3.13 A review of the workforce data for the service had shown that the level of representation of BME staff was not only below that for the council as a whole but was also lower than in other service areas within the Directorate.
- 3.14 In view of this, positive action initiatives were employed as part of the advertising campaign for these jobs with the aim of attracting and recruiting more diverse candidates.

***The outcome***

*These positive action initiatives resulted in a significant increase in the proportion of BME applicants (26.6%) compared with previous recruitments where positive action had not been used (c. 12%) and in the number of BME recruits.*

*BME applicants for these posts were also more successful in being shortlisted for interview (33.85%) and fared slightly better in securing job offers (7.7%) when compared with this group's success rate when applying for permanent council vacancies across the whole council (21.5% and 7.1% respectively).*

*Similarly positive results were observed in respect of disabled applicants. Not only did the positive action lead to a noticeable increase in the proportion of disabled applicants but they fared as well as their non-disabled counterparts in securing job offers.*

- 3.15 This case study is a good example of positive action addressing under-representation or disadvantage for individuals who share a particular protected characteristic.
- 3.16 However, it is still evident that the success rate for BME candidates is still below that for White British candidates.
- 3.17 Anonymising applications is acknowledged as one method of addressing this issue. By removing candidates' names, recruiting managers cannot be influenced, consciously or unconsciously, by the perceived ethnic background of the individual. Whilst the council supports this approach, the constraints of our online recruitment system mean that, unfortunately, it is not possible currently to introduce this functionality. We are working with our supplier to change this.
- 3.18 Examination of a number of application forms submitted by BME candidates found that the main reason for them not being shortlisted was the applicants' failure to sufficiently demonstrate how they met each of the requisite criteria on the person specification for the job they were applying for.
- 3.19 Although we have improved the guidance for applicants on how to complete the skills, knowledge and experience section of the application form and made that information much easier to find on our jobs site, there is clearly still further work to do to address this issue.

## ***Workforce Development & Employee Engagement***

We have:

- Finalised and implemented a new Behaviour Framework against which staff performance will be assessed and managed
- Revised and undertaken the Staff Survey for 2017
- Purchased and launched an elearning module to raise awareness and understanding of unconscious bias in the workplace
- Reviewed the corporate equality and diversity elearning module to ensure it is fit for purpose
- Recruited and trained 12 employees as volunteer workplace mediators to provide additional capacity to help employees resolve conflict in working relationships informally without the need to use formal procedures

- 3.20 The primary focus here has been on finalising the council's new Behaviour Framework. It has been designed to support culture change by ensuring that when assessing and managing staff performance, managers place as much emphasis on how their staff go about achieving their objectives as on what they actually achieve.
- 3.21 Nearly 200 individuals including council staff, the Workers' Forums, representatives from the council's partner organisations and members of local community groups contributed to the development of the framework by providing over 2,400 desirable behaviour statements.
- 3.22 These were then rationalised and refined to create the final framework which was launched, initially to the top four tiers of management, in March 2017. The implementation was supported by a leadership development programme to ensure that senior managers were equipped to use the framework effectively when carrying out 1:1 meetings and PDP reviews with their staff. It is intended to roll out the framework to all remaining managers in 2018.
- 3.23 The other main area of work has been on conducting a Staff Survey this year. With the results of the previous survey in Autumn 2015 showing that the Values were well embedded within the organisation, it was considered appropriate to re-group this year's questions into a set of new indicators that aligned with the new Behaviour framework. This revised approach has enabled the council to better identify trends and hotspots within the organisation where the desired behaviours are less well embedded. Targeted and supportive interventions can then be used to improve the performance of those managers who appear to be performing less effectively.
- 3.24 The other change made to the survey this year was the introduction of a new workplace respect indicator. It was recognised that there had not been enough previous focus to enable the council to understand the issues within the workplace in enough depth to make including those questions worthwhile.

- 3.25 Therefore, this year we identified four questions within the survey which formed the workplace respect indicator for each team across the organisation. Three of the questions aimed to measure employees' perception of workplace respect at a team level with the remaining question designed to understand whether staff believe the council, as an organisation, takes the issues of bullying, harassment and discrimination seriously.
- 3.26 This revised approach will enable identification of those teams where the respect indicator is below average so that more detailed work can be carried out to better understand the issues. Appropriate action can then be taken to address these.
- 3.27 The results of this year's staff survey in relation to the workplace respect indicator (see Table 1 below) show a pleasing improvement on the previous survey, showing that the work carried has supported the desired change towards a more respectful and inclusive culture. Improvement activity going forward will include an organisational awareness campaign in collaboration with the Communities and Equalities team.

**Table 1: Percentage of respondents who stated they “Agreed” or “Strongly Agreed” with each of the workplace respect statements in the 2015 and 2017 Staff Surveys.**

Statement	% of respondents (2015)	% of respondents (2017)	External benchmark figure *
I believe the organisation takes the issues of bullying, harassment & discrimination seriously	64%	65%	57%
Open and honest conversations are encouraged in my team	75%	75%	74%
My line manager treats me with respect	81%	87%	85%
I receive respect at work from my colleagues	81%	86%	82%

\* External benchmark figure is compiled from both private and public sector organisations within the UK

## **Policies**

We have:

- Finalised and launched a new policy to support Trans employees in the workplace.
- Finalised and launched a new policy to support employees who may be experiencing or may have experienced in the past, domestic violence and abuse or sexual violence
- Developed, following a request from the WEG, a factsheet to raise managers' awareness and understanding of Autism and to provide guidance on how best to support employees on the spectrum in the workplace

3.28 The two new policies introduced this year have been developed in close collaboration with staff, the Workers' Forums and Trade Unions. In each case, a subject matter expert acted as a critical friend throughout the development process to ensure the resultant policy was fit for purpose. Both policies have been well received and feedback has been very positive.

### ***Areas of focus for Year 5 Action Plan***

3.29 The proposed areas of focus for Year 5 Action Plan are designed to build on the good progress made. The success of this work will be assessed by comparing current recruitment and workforce data metrics with those at the end of next year. The areas of focus for Year 5 have been identified from feedback via the following sources:

- Workforce Equalities Group
- Staff Survey
- Council Equality Action Plan designed to enable the council to achieve an "excellent" rating under the Equality Framework for Local Government by 2020

3.30 They are:

- use workforce information and insight to identify areas for positive action activity and to monitor the effectiveness of this activity
- develop a recruitment campaign, in collaboration with the Workers' Forums, with the aim of attracting a more diverse pool of applicants. We will do this through:
  - the use of social media to target a wider demographic and new audiences i.e. those individuals who may not have thought about working for the council before
  - developing and communicating our brand as an employer more effectively and reflect positive experience and benefits of working for BHCC and in the City
- underpin practice with positive learning outcomes, reflection and a robust policy framework
- re-commission Global HPO to review the progress the council has made since 2013 and to identify priority areas of focus.

## **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 its Workforce Equalities Action Plan 2013-2019. This Action Plan is an integral part of the council's Corporate Plan for 2015-19 and forms a key part of the organisation's modernisation agenda.

## 5. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT & CONSULTATION

- 5.1 The content of this report has been discussed with members of the Workforce Equalities Group.

## 6. FINANCIAL & OTHER IMPLICATIONS:

### Financial Implications:

- 6.1 Year 5 of the Workforce Equalities Action Plan is expected to be implemented by in-house staff and managed within existing workloads. Any associated costs are expected to be met from within existing budgets.

*Finance Officer Consulted: Nigel Manvell Date: 30/06/2017*

### Legal Implications:

- 6.2 The Year 5 Action Plan will be 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 duties imposed by regulations made pursuant to section 153 of the same Act.

*Lawyer Consulted: Victoria Simpson Date: 30/06/2017*

### 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:**

None.

### **Documents in Members' Rooms**

None.

## **Background Documents**

None.