



## Equalities Committee

**Monday 12 October 2015 at 6.00 pm**

Board Room 6 - Brent Civic Centre, Engineers Way,  
Wembley HA9 0FJ

### Membership:

#### Members

Councillors:

Pavey (Chair)

Kansagra (Vice-Chair)

Harrison

Tatler

Thomas

#### Substitute Members

Councillors:

Colwill and Maurice

**For further information contact:** Peter Goss, Democratic Services Manager  
020 8937 1353, [peter.goss@brent.gov.uk](mailto:peter.goss@brent.gov.uk)

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**The press and public are welcome to attend this meeting**

# Agenda

Introductions, if appropriate.

Apologies for absence and clarification of alternate members.

Item	Page
<b>1 Declarations of interests</b>	
Members are invited to declare at this stage of the meeting, any relevant financial or other interest in the items on this agenda.	
<b>2 Minutes of the previous meeting</b>	1 - 4
<b>3 Matters arising (if any)</b>	
<b>4 Deputations (if any)</b>	
<b>5 Progress update on Cllr Pavey's Review action plan on Equalities</b>	5 - 20
<b>6 Update from Acting Director HR: Achieving Excellence in Employment Policies</b>	
<b>7 Accessibility improvements to the Civic Centre</b>	21 - 34
This report sets out the access related works undertaken to the Civic Centre since opening in 2013 to further improve the high level of accessibility to the building based on practical usage and feedback from residents, relevant groups and users of the building.	
<b>8 Council's Equality Impact Assessment process</b>	35 - 44
In the minutes of the Members' Equalities Committee meeting on 13 July 2015 a request was made at p3 (iii) that a discussion paper on the Equality Impact Assessment process currently in place within the Council be presented to the next meeting of the committee. The current report outlines the equality impact assessment (also known as equality analysis) process that the council has put in place to ensure its decision-making is fair, robust and transparent.	
<b>9 Equality Framework for Local Government</b>	45 - 60
The London Borough of Brent (LBB) asked the Local Government Association (LGA) to conduct an Equality Peer Challenge against the Excellent level of the Equality Framework for Local Government. This	

report is a summary of the peer team's findings. The Peer Challenge is designed to validate a council's own self-assessment by considering documentary evidence and carrying out a series of interviews and focus groups with employees and other stakeholders.

#### **10 Date of next meeting**

The next scheduled meeting of the committee is on 11 January 2015.

#### **11 Any other urgent business**

Notice of items to be raised under this heading must be given in writing to the Head of Executive and Member Services or his representative before the meeting in accordance with Standing Order 64.

**Date of the next meeting: Monday 11 January 2016**



- Please remember to ***SWITCH OFF*** your mobile phone during the meeting.
- The meeting room is accessible by lift and seats will be provided for members of the public.

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## **MINUTES OF THE EQUALITIES COMMITTEE** **Monday 13 July 2015 at 6.00 pm**

PRESENT: Councillor Pavey (Chair), and Councillors Harrison, Kansagra, Tatler and Thomas

Also Present: Councillors Kabir

### **1. Declarations of interests**

None declared.

### **2. Roles and responsibilities**

Members of the Committee noted the terms of reference agreed by Full Council as part of the Council's Constitution.

Members of the Committee suggested additional wording to reflect the role of the Committee in ensuring the Council meets and even exceeds national guidelines relating to equalities issues.

RESOLVED:

- (i) that the final form of wording for the committee's terms of reference be agreed by way of correspondence with members of the committee;
- (ii) that Full Council be asked to agree the proposed revised wording at its meeting in September.

### **3. Deputations**

None.

### **4. Equalities Framework for Local Government : self assessment report**

Councillor Pavey introduced the item asking Christine Gilbert (Chief Executive) to introduce the self assessment report.

Christine Gilbert informed Committee Members that the council had been working towards the 'Excellent' level of the LGA's Equality Framework for Local Government for the past couple of years, as part of the Council's commitment to becoming a model of equality and diversity practice. She informed Committee Members that a group of peers had visited Brent to assess progress against the five performance areas:

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

The five members of the review team had spent three days in Brent. During their visit, they had met with a range of internal and external stakeholders, including partners, community and voluntary organisations, councillors, service users and staff.

Christine Gilbert informed Committee Members that the peer team had found that Brent was on the cusp of the 'Excellent' level but had indicated the wish to return for a shorter visit in a few months' time to confirm the position. She reported that this put Brent Council amongst the highest performing public services in the country in terms of Equalities. Nationally, only 17 councils out of 353 had secured the top rating.

Christine Gilbert informed Committee Members that the peer review team highlighted a significant number of strengths, from the commitment of Brent's leadership right across the council to the in-depth understanding of our diverse local communities. The team had singled out many examples of excellent practice from every service area. External partners, when they met the team, and service users, had felt there had been a notable improvement in Brent's equalities, transparency and community engagement over the past three years.

Committee Members noted that the team had also identified a number of areas where performance could be further improved, in particular in relation to accessibility for disabled people in the Civic Centre. The assessment team had also wanted to see Brent's good work with some of the newer communities, like the Roma community, bed in.

Committee Members noted that the review team felt that the Council could address their recommendations and achieve the 'Excellent' level in a just a few months, when a couple of people would return for a day to check the necessary progress had been made.

Councillor Pavey stated that this would also give the Council the opportunity to demonstrate the impact of the more recent equalities initiatives, including further progressing the recommendations of the HR and Equality Policy Review.

Following a discussion about the role of the Equalities Committee, Committee Members asked for a discussion paper at a future meeting about complaints to the Council on equalities issues, such as accessibility. This would include letters to departments registering concerns.

It was agreed also that the Committee, at its next meeting, would consider a discussion paper about the Equality Impact Assessment process in place in Brent.

RESOLVED:

- (i) that a report on accessibility improvements to the Civic Centre be submitted to the next meeting of the committee;
- (ii) that a report on complaints to the Council on equalities issues, such as accessibility be submitted to a future meeting of the committee;
- (iii) that a discussion paper on the Equality Impact Assessment process currently in place within the Council be presented to the next meeting of the committee.

## **5. Equalities and HR review: action plan**

Christine Gilbert (Chief Executive) introduced the Equalities and HR Review action plan. Committee Members noted that each of the four areas for action was being overseen by a member of the Council's Corporate Management Team.

Members of the Committee noted the key activities and milestones and discussed the leadership development programmes available to staff in Brent.

It was agreed that officers would develop proposals for a leadership development programme with a weighting system to encourage participation from BAME staff in Brent.

Members of the Committee discussed the development of a revised Competency Framework and noted the Chief Executive's advice to continue with any revisions to the current one; Members agreed that Brent's newly appointed Chief Executive, Carolyn Downs, might wish to have input in a very different set.

Members of the Committee queried one of the success criteria in the action plan: Low level of tribunals and success in defending them. Members of the Committee agreed that this criteria should be removed from the action plan.

RESOLVED:

- (i) that progress on the action plan be noted;
- (ii) that 'Low level of tribunals and success in defending them' be removed as a measure of success in the action plan.

## **6. Date of next meeting**

Members of the Committee agreed to invite each member of the Council's Corporate Management Team overseeing one of the four areas for action in the Equalities and HR Review action plan to each Committee meeting in order to update the Committee on the action plan progress against their name..

Members of the Committee invited Andy Donald, Strategic Director, Regeneration and Growth to the Equalities Committee meeting taking place in October.

RESOLVED:

that dates of Committee meetings for the current municipal year be as follows:

- 12 October 2015, 6pm
- 11 January 2016, 6pm
- 18 April 2016, 6pm

**7. Any other urgent business**

With the permission of the Chair, Councillor Sandra Kabir (Queensbury Ward) raised the issue of bus services serving the Civic Centre. Members of the Committee agreed to make representation, in conjunction with the Cabinet Member for Environment, to Transport for London on this issue.

Mildred Philips (Director, Human Resources) updated Members of the Committee on the appointment to the vacant Head of Equalities post.

The meeting closed at 7.30 pm

M PAVEY  
Chair



1	<b>ACHIEVING CONSISTENCY IN STAFF PROGRESSION AND DIVERSITY AT MANAGEMENT LEVELS</b> CMT Lead, Andy Donald, Strategic Director, Regeneration & Growth
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Objective	Key Activities	Success criteria	Progress Milestones	Progress to date	Owner	Actions Taken
<p>Page 5</p> <p>To ensure best practice in implementing recruitment policies and procedures</p>	Train all managers and elected members who participate in recruitment and selection, incorporating unconscious bias into training	100% managers and Members involved in recruitment and selection to be trained so unconscious bias does not impact on recruitment and selection decisions. 90% good or excellent satisfaction levels on training	Members of the Senior Staff Appointments Sub Committee to be trained by end April 2015. Unconscious bias training for these Members undertaken by end of April 2015	Completed	Head of Equalities	• Member Training on unconscious bias training took place
			Build training on unconscious bias and recruitment and selection into annual Member development programme, May 2015	Completed	Head of Equalities	• Training on unconscious bias is now embedded into Member's annual programme.
			New e-learning module on recruitment including unconscious bias training to be developed by end of April 2015 and rolled out to all managers by the end of June 2015.	Completed Roll out began in June and all Manager's trained in advance of sitting on panels.	Mildred Phillips	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New e-learning module developed.</li> <li>• Managers mandated to e-learning module prior to panels</li> </ul>
	Ensure decisions made at each stage of the recruitment and selection process are properly recorded	100% managers involved in recruitment and selection are trained	Recruiting managers issued with advice note and pro- forma amended by end of April 2015.	Completed New pro-forma and guide emailed prior to every shortlisting	Mildred Phillips	• Advice and note issued at every recruitment panel.

Objective	Key Activities	Success criteria	Progress Milestones	Progress to date	Owner	Actions Taken
Page 6			Quarterly reporting on recruitment and selection to HRIG from September 2015.	On target	Mildred Phillips	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Weekly recruitment information sent to Directors.</li> <li>Equalities statistics collected at long list, short list and interview stage Report to be considered by Diversities Reference Group on 29 September and</li> </ul>
	Collect and report on equalities data at all stages of the recruitment process.  Analyse recruitment diversity statistics by pay grades	Robust data collection and analysis.  Corporate HR KPIs demonstrate a positive direction of travel to demonstrate diversity at all levels of the workforce.	Implement recommendations in current annual equalities report throughout 2015	Ongoing	Mildred Phillips	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Report complete. To be signed off by Diversity Reference Group on 29 September anticipate that actions can be completed throughout 2015.</li> </ul>
			Equalities data for all stages of the recruitment process to be included in the Annual Equalities Workforce report 14/15, by June 2015.	Completed	Mildred Phillips	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>As above</li> </ul>
			Incorporate new reporting requirements in the annual Equalities Workforce report by April 2016.	Completed	Mildred Phillips	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Taleo ensures equality reporting requirements.</li> </ul>

Objective	Key Activities	Success criteria	Progress Milestones	Progress to date	Owner	Actions Taken
To ensure best practice in implementing HR policies	Ensure consistent application of HR policies and procedures and adherence to them by Managers.	Achievement of liP Gold level Low level of tribunals and success in defending them	Guidance on the role of DMTs in respect of workforce and equalities to be developed by end of April.	Completed	Mildred Phillips	• Guidance produced in April 2015. All DMTs will have discussed by October 2015
		Evidence of monthly case management meetings	Quarterly reporting to DMTs on departmental compliance with HR policies and/or procedures commencing May 2015.	Departmental breaches to be reported at DMTs July 2015	Mildred Phillips	Ongoing
			Annual report with recommendations for improvement produced in October 2015 and reported to HRIG.	Completed	Mildred Phillips	Completed
			Review of progress to achieve liP Gold to CMT April 2015	Completed	Mildred Phillips	• Directors meeting reviewed progress in April/July 2015.
		Evidence of senior management engagement in employment tribunal cases and other complex employee relations cases	Achievement of IIP Gold level December 2015.	Ongoing	Lorraine Langham	• Assessment Starts 14 September 2015
			Monthly case management reviews with HR and Legal April 2015 onwards.	On going from April 2015	Mildred Phillips	• Meeting reviews have been happening between HR and Legal teams since April 2015. From October 2015 COO will Chair.

Objective	Key Activities	Success criteria	Progress Milestones	Progress to date	Owner	Actions Taken
			As routine, meetings with relevant strategic and operational directors, HR Director and legal to consider all complex employee relations cases and potential employment tribunals	Meetings with SDs to be set up August 2015	Mildred Phillips	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Meetings have taken place and are arranged as and when required.</li> </ul>
<p>To ensure there is a creative approach to the development of talent &amp; leadership</p> <p>Page 8</p>	<p>Develop a leadership development programme for staff from under-represented groups to support promotion into senior manager posts</p> <p>Prepare a report establishing how to identify talent internally in a structured way.</p>	<p>Minimum of 90% satisfaction rating from all participants.</p> <p>Increasing proportion of: BAME senior managers; One female senior managers; disabled senior managers.</p> <p>Managers are supported in ensuring that staff are linked to and benefit from development opportunities and support required to progress.</p>	Programme developed by May 2015 and agreed by HRIG, TUs and CMT by June 2015.	Ongoing	Mildred Phillips	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Leadership and Development provider appointed Premier Partnership September 2015</li> <li>Accrediting Body Programme agreed by CMT. Content in development will be signed off by HRIG in September and by CMT in October.</li> </ul>
			Participants identified and programme rolled out between September 2015 and March 2016.	Slippage	Mildred Phillips	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>On target to roll out programme in December 2015 once content agreed.</li> </ul>

Objective	Key Activities	Success criteria	Progress Milestones	Progress to date	Owner	Actions Taken
			Programme evaluated April 2016.	On target	Mildred Phillips	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CMT discussed 9 box grid of talent management solution. Referred to HRIG for further work to produce a holistic talent management and appraisal package for next appraisal year April 2016.</li> </ul>
			Report prepared for December 2015, incorporating feedback from liP Gold Assessment	On target	Mildred Phillips	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Awaiting assessment.</li> </ul>
			Recommendations rolled out by April 2016.	On target	Mildred Phillips	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• On track</li> </ul>

Objective	Key Activities	Success criteria	Progress Milestones	Progress to date	Owner	Actions Taken
To support the development of under represented groups	Introduce innovative coaching and mentoring arrangements, including a diversity mentoring programme to support under-represented groups and reverse mentoring arrangements	100% new senior managers have mentors	New programme and coaching and mentoring policy developed and agreed by HRIG, TUS and CMT by May 2015.	New programme for Coaching and mentoring developed and rolled out.	Mildred Phillips	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Completed</li> </ul>
		100% apprentices and national graduates have mentors	New policy rolled out by from June 2015.	Completed	Mildred Phillips	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All graduates have been allocated SDs or DDs as mentors.</li> </ul>
		Staff to participate in reverse mentoring and the pilot is well reviewed.	Pilot reverse mentoring scheme from September 2015 and review in July 2016	Slippage	Head of Equalities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reverse Mentoring Programme will be developed by next Equalities Committee</li> <li>This has slipped by will be prioritized by new Head of Equalities</li> </ul>
		Upper quartile staff satisfaction levels on staff and management development in staff survey	Build diversity mentoring and coaching arrangements into the BAME senior management development programme from September 2015	On target	Mildred Phillips	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Will be part of course content.</li> <li>Leadership provider Premier Partnership will provide diversity mentoring in programme content.</li> </ul>

Objective	Key Activities	Success criteria	Progress Milestones	Progress to date	Owner	Actions Taken
To review and refresh the apprenticeship and graduate schemes so they are high quality programmes leading to employment	Evaluate the effectiveness of the current apprentice programme establish improvements	Internal schemes to grow our own future workforce are solid and effective.	External review of apprentice programme undertaken by end of April 2015 and recommendations implemented by June 2015.	Completed	Mildred Phillips	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Independent Review undertaken by external partners</li> <li>• Final report received</li> <li>• Report to CMT October 2015 recommendations already been implemented</li> </ul>
		Brent in top quartile for number of apprentices in London Councils.				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Completed</li> </ul>
	Review and improve the internal arrangements in place for the management of the National Graduate Development Programme for Local Government.	Support to reduced unemployment within the borough.	Review to incorporate focus group with apprentices to capture views about programme and opportunities for them to continue their career within Brent.	Completed	Mildred Phillips	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Completed</li> </ul>
		95% satisfaction with Brent graduate programme. 95% graduates get jobs in Brent	Review and agree changes to the Graduate Programme by June 2015.	Report for the review of the Graduate Programme Completed.	Mildred Phillips	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improvements made to current scheme.</li> <li>• Full improvements in place for new cohorts by the next intake date.</li> </ul>
		Graduates more reflective of the community	Roll out improved internal management arrangements of programme in advance of new intake in September 2015.	On-going		
	Introduce a local graduate development programme to complement the national scheme.		Proposals considered and agreed by October 2015 and rolled out in January to attract graduates graduating in June 2016.	On track	Mildred Phillips	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Local Graduate Programme agreed by CMT on 23 July and developed for rollout in January 2016.</li> </ul>

Objective	Key Activities	Success criteria	Progress Milestones	Progress to date	Owner	Actions Taken
To engage council staff in developing workforce strength and diversity.	Ensure all staff have updated their equalities profile on Oracle. Review equality reporting categories.	100% equalities profile reporting on Oracle  Achievement of corporate KPIs for recruitment to under represented areas at a senior level.	Ongoing campaign to encourage staff and managers to update equality profile on Oracle to increase reporting levels for all equalities reporting data. DRIG to monitor quarterly.	On going	Head of Equalities/ DMT's	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Active campaign to update equalities profile in Oracle system.</li> <li>Oracle system adapted to make entry easier for staff with good progress.</li> </ul>
	Consider implementing indicative, non binding targets for recruitment of under-representative groups at senior levels.		Review KPIs for recruitment of under-represented groups at a senior level by June 2015.  Consider report at CMT by October and then at General Purposes Committee.	Completed	Head of Equalities /DMT's	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>On track report to General Purposes Committee 2015.</li> </ul>
Page 12	Collect feedback during Induction regarding experience of recruitment process.		Feedback reported quarterly to CMT from July 2015. Annual report on recruitment incorporates experience of new employees, from September 2015.	On Target	Mildred Phillips / Head of Equalities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Report to CMT Sept 2015.</li> </ul>



2	<b>ACHIEVING EXCELLENCE IN EMPLOYMENT POLICIES</b> CMT Lead, Mildred Phillips, Director of HR
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Objective	Key Activities	Success criteria	Progress Milestones	Progress to date	Owner	Actions Taken
To ensure Brent's Human Resources policies and procedures reflect best practice so managers are supported well in leading and managing their teams.	Review and update policies in accordance with LGA feedback	100% managers complete Brent Manager Essential training	Consider and make minor policy changes by the middle of March 2015.	Completed	Mildred Phillips	• Relevant policy changes have been made
		100% managers who undertake investigations are trained in disciplinary and grievance investigations	Revise Code of Conduct by end of April 2015.	Completed	Mildred Phillips	• Code of conduct revised and agreed by CMT.
		Number of employment tribunals is low against benchmarked councils and ET cases are successfully defended	Provide a written explanation where an LGA recommendation is not being implemented by the end of April 2015.	Completed	Mildred Phillips	• Letter of explanation sent to LGA March 2015
			Consult with trade unions and HRIG on proposed changes by end of March 2015.	Completed	Mildred Phillips	• All changes agreed by the TU, HRIG and CMT
	Review the equality analyses of HR policies every three years	HR KPIs achieved	Agree minor policy changes with CMT & Lead Member by end of April 2015.	Completed	Mildred Phillips	• Agreed with Lead Member
		100 % Adherence to procedures and timelines in HR policies	Revise the Recruitment Policy by end of April 2015 to stipulate all managers must be trained before interviewing.	Completed	Mildred Phillips	• All managers trained before interview. HR keeps central record.
			Publish revised policies on intranet by end of April 2015. Communicate changes to policies to staff and managers by end of April 2015.	Completed	Mildred Phillips	• Policy published and promoted to staff and given high profile on new intranet.

Objective	Key Activities	Success criteria	Progress Milestones	Progress to date	Owner	Actions Taken
			First review to be undertaken in June 2015	Completed	Mildred Phillips	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Monitoring system in place.</li> <li>HR dashboard reports on compliance</li> <li>Review on adherence</li> </ul>

3	<b>ACHIEVING EXCELLENCE IN EMPLOYMENT AND MANAGEMENT PRACTICE</b> <b>CMT Lead, Phil Porter, Strategic Director, Adult and Social Care</b>					
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Objective	Key Activities	Success criteria	Progress Milestones	Progress to date	Owner	Actions Taken
<p>Page 14</p> <p>to establish a more coherent competency framework for the Council which defines clearly different behaviours and personal skills that determine how all staff should do their jobs.</p>	<p>Produce a new competency framework and embed it in the work of the Council</p>	<p>All recruitment and selection reflects the competencies framework.</p> <p>100% appraisals reflects the competencies</p>	<p>Develop a framework setting out a set of revised staff competencies and incorporate this into the next Appraisal process.</p>	Completed	Mildred Phillips	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Revised Competency Framework Agreed by CMT August 2015</li> </ul>
			<p>Review our approach to bullying and harassment and ensure best practice is captured in the revised competencies.</p>	Completed	Mildred Phillips	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reviewed by LGA and found to be sound</li> <li>Monitoring of bullying and harassment cases included in CMT quarterly reports.</li> </ul>

Objective	Key Activities	Success criteria	Progress Milestones	Progress to date	Owner	Actions Taken
			Ensure relevant policies recognise the requirement to be competency based by September 2015.	Completed	Mildred Phillips	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>New competency framework included in performance and development scheme guidance.</li> </ul>
			Devise a training programme that supports the framework for implementation from July 2015.	Completed	Mildred Phillips	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This is covered by training on appraisals and guidance provided to all managers.</li> </ul>
<p>To ensure the views of staff are used to shape the development of the Council.</p> <p>Page 15</p>	Establish bi-annual staff survey		<p>Staff survey designed and undertaken by March 2016.</p> <p>Results analysed and fed into the new Corporate Plan</p>	On target	Rob Mansfield	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Paper to go to CMT for approval at the end of October to agree methodology of survey.</li> </ul>

Objective	Key Activities	Success criteria	Progress Milestones	Progress to date	Owner	Actions Taken
	Organise a series of regular focus groups with different staff groups.		<p>Programme of focus groups for BAME staff, disabled staff, women and LGBT staff agreed by DRG by June 2015</p> <p>Focus group on recruitment and selection arrangements undertaken by June 2015 and any recommendations incorporated into annual report to CMT in September 2015.</p> <p>Other focus groups underway by September 2015 and outcomes reported to DRG on a quarterly basis from December 2015</p>	<p>Completed</p> <p>Completed</p>	Head of Equalities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Focus Groups were carried out in April 2015 by external facilitators, supported by the Equality Team. A report was published on the intranet.</li> <li>Staff Equalities Forums have been agreed. Will be launched in September 2015</li> </ul>
To ensure excellence in our approach to disabled staff	Develop guidance for managers on reasonable adjustments		Guidance for managers on reasonable adjustments agreed by DRG, HRIG and TUs and rolled out by June 2015.	Completed	Head of Equalities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Guidance for reasonable adjustments was developed and published on the intranet in June 2015.</li> </ul>

Objective	Key Activities	Success criteria	Progress Milestones	Progress to date	Owner	Actions Taken
To achieve excellence in employment and management practice	Undertake an Equal pay audit	100% staff are being paid equal pay for work of equal value	Equal pay audit undertaken by end of March 2015 and recommendations reported to DRG by April 2015 with any agreed action underway by May 2015	Completed	Head of Equalities and Mildred Phillips	• Equal Pay audit was undertaken in March, reviewed by DRG in April and publicised to all staff in April 2015.
	CMT & DMTs to consider equalities and workforce issues on a more regular basis.		Quarterly equalities and HR updates to CMT and DMTs commencing in May 2015.	Ongoing	Mildred Phillips	• On going
	Review equalities data on a regular basis and oversee implementation of HR and equalities action plan.		Quarterly reporting to DRG on a core set of equalities data from September 2015.	Ongoing	Head of Equalities	• Data on workforce profile, Equal Pay Audits, etc on agenda for DRG.
			Quarterly monitoring of the roll out of the HR and equalities action plan by DRG and HRIG, commencing in May 2015.	Ongoing		• Action plan is on agenda for DRG and HRIG
			Member monitoring of the Plan through Member Equalities Committee.	Ongoing	Peter Goss	• Committee had first meeting on 13 July.

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Objective	Key Activities	Success criteria	Progress Milestones	Progress to date	Owner	Actions Taken
To ensure learning from practice is used to improve performance	Implement a systematic approach to learning from internal discipline, grievance (including bullying and harassment), capability procedures and employment tribunals.	Number of employment and tribunals low against comparator boroughs and success high in employment tribunal outcomes.	Process for review developed and agreed by HRIG by end of March 2015 and CMT in April.	Completed	Mildred Phillips / Legal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• HR Team systematically reviews learning from employment tribunal cases</li> <li>• Learning points reported quarterly to HRIG and annually to CMT</li> <li>• Monthly case reviews discussed by COO</li> </ul>
			Roll out new review arrangements from May 2015. Monthly case management meetings with HR and Legal commencing April 2015	Ongoing	Mildred Phillips / HR Managers	Completed
			Ad hoc meetings with relevant director, HR and Legal on Employment Tribunals, commencing April 2015.	Ongoing	Mildred Phillips / HR Managers	On going
			Regular reports to CMT beginning May 2015	Ongoing	Mildred Phillips / HR Managers	On going – part of HR Quarterly Report.

Objective	Key Activities	Success criteria	Progress Milestones	Progress to date	Owner	Actions Taken
	Develop an annual report highlighting the learning from the implementation of the Council's policies on discipline, grievance and capability as well as the learning from employment tribunals.	Better employee management practice and stronger understanding of employee perceptions	Report on progress quarterly to CMT commencing in May as part of the HR report.  Annual analysis on findings of exit interviews to be considered by HRIG in April 2015 and incorporated into HR annual report 2016.	Ongoing	Mildred Phillips	CMT receives quarterly HR reports.

Objective	Key activities	Success criteria	Progress Milestones	Progress to date	Owner	Actions Taken
To ensure staff and elected members are aware of the outcomes of the HR and equalities policy review	Review Council's approach to internal communications.	Upper quartile satisfaction rates on internal communication in the staff survey.	Review of internal communication arrangements undertaken by June 2015 and new strategy implemented from July 2015	Ongoing	Comms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review complete.</li> <li>Internal Communication strategy deferred to September to allow incoming CE to input</li> <li>In the CMT forward plan</li> <li>New intranet launched September 2015</li> </ul>
	Communicate outcome of review and action plan to staff and Members.	100% of actions in action plan delivered on time	Publish action plan on intranet by beginning of May 2015, with references made too in various internal publications such as the Chief Executive's Blog, e-Sight lite.	Completed	Comms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review was published in January 2015 and the Action Plan is published at regular intervals to share progress.</li> </ul>
			<p>Action plan on HR and Equalities review to be considered by Scrutiny Committee end of April 2015.</p> <p>Six monthly reporting of progress reported to CMT and Members Equality Committee commencing September 2015.</p>	<p>Completed</p> <p>CMT considered the report on 17/09/15</p> <p>To be reviewed by Equalities Committee on 12/10/15.</p>	Mildred Phillips	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To be put onto CMT Forward Plan. In addition to Members Equalities Committee, the Scrutiny Committee considered this Action Plan and resolved to be provided with an update in October 2015.</li> </ul>
	Establish a committee of elected members to oversee progress towards the Excellent level in the EFLG		<p>Establish a committee in May 2015 to review progress towards Excellent in the Equalities Framework for Local Government</p> <p>Meetings held quarterly, commencing in June 2015.</p>	Completed		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Committee was established and met in July 2015. Minutes are available on line. Next meeting October 2015.</li> </ul>





## Equalities Committee

12 October 2015

### Report from the Strategic Director Regeneration & Growth

Information

Wards affected:  
ALL

## Update on Accessibility Improvements to the Civic Centre

### 1.0 Summary

- 1.1 This report sets out the access related works undertaken to the Civic Centre since opening in 2013 to further improve the high level of accessibility to the building based on practical usage and feedback from residents, relevant groups and users of the building.

### 2.0 Recommendations

- 2.1 To note the report and the series of improvement works undertaken to date
- 2.2 To note the improvements programmed for the future and the process by which feedback received by building users will be received, considered and addressed.

### 3.0 Detail

- 3.1 Brent Civic Centre was built in 2013. The move to a single, multi-use building brought together over 2,300 members of staff from across 14 council buildings. The aim of the Civic Centre was to streamline the efficient delivery of services to Brent's diverse community.

The building is officially recognised as the greenest public building in the UK through its BREEAM 'Outstanding' accreditation. Its purpose is not only to accommodate the council's departments, employees and Members but also to provide a range of facilities that benefit local residents and attract businesses to the borough. It comprises council offices, a customer services centre,

registration and nationality facilities, a new flagship central library and learning centre, a civic hall, a community hall, a winter garden, wedding and conference facilities and state of the art training facilities.

In commissioning the build of the Civic Centre the council aimed to improve the users' experience by providing accessible and comfortable services and spaces under one roof, and to demonstrate cost effective and practical solutions to increasing accessibility and reducing carbon emissions. It is designed to enhance the working environments for staff, members and visitors and to enable new ways of working for council staff such as flexible working and hot-desking.

- 3.2 The building was designed by Hopkins Architects who engaged an accessibility specialist throughout the building design process and the building is compliant with DDA requirements and other relevant legislation.
- 3.3 Post building occupancy and following feedback from certain groups the Council engaged an external specialist company, Direct Access Consultancy to carry out a full review of the building from an accessibility perspective (both physical and mental) in August 2014. Since the audit, consultation and engagement has also taken place with the Dementia Awareness Group, The Disability Forum as well as acting on feed back provided by building users through the building user survey and staff suggestion feedback.
- 3.4 The access audit highlighted a range of positive aspects of the Civic Centre and also areas in which there should be improvement. Examples of positive findings include accessible routes from the parking area, wide doors throughout the building, exceptionally well lit customer areas, step free access and visual and audible alarm systems.
- 3.5 The areas where improvements could be made within the building were set out in recommendations with timescales between 12 months and 5 years for implementation. These are generally beyond the requirements of DDA and some beyond the Council's ownership and outside of the Civic Centre building. However it was acknowledged certain elements would further enhance the user experience of the building overall. Officers therefore undertook an evaluation of the recommendations and following this carried out an exercise to prioritise those works. As a consequence, in March 2015, a sum of £75,000 was secured to implement these works over the time frame set out in the audit and to be addressed as part of a wider Civic Centre Development Programme. Outstanding items still to be implemented will be shared with the Equalities Team or other recommended body before progression to ensure improvements achieve the desired objective.
- 3.6 To date many improvements have been delivered in the building, inline with the recommendations and timescales set out in the audit report and the attached schedule (Appendix A) provides further detail, along with other works planned or anticipated for the future, some of which will be subject to funds being made available. The Audit identified areas of 'high priority' and elements of the Civic Centre Development Programme improvement works have taken this into account. These include:

- Installation of a specialist 'Changing Places' toilet which is publically advertised and which has many more features than a standard accessible toilet facility.
- signage improvements, particularly in the public areas of the building.
- Improvements to signage from Wembley Park Station installed in partnership with TFL.
- RADAR key access implemented to public accessible WC facilities.
- IT stations in customer service areas made height adjustable to aid wheelchair users or people of short stature.
- Implementation of a dedicated customer waiting area in the foyer with accessible seating.

All staff have been kept abreast of changes and decisions made as a result of the Access Audit through regular internal communication.

3.7 Further to recommendations made in the access audit, options for the possible accelerated delivery of the following items was made in September 2015:

- Colour contrasting solution for pillars within the public areas of the building
- Library and main disabled access doors – push button access on the outside.
- Feasibility for regular staircase to replace the spiral staircase in the customer service area.

Work to take these items forward has started with the aim of developing some options by the end of October 2015 and feasibility of re-engaging the buildings architect, Hopkins to help with the design aspects is being progressed.

3.8 The Civic Centre is a highly accessible building and one which Brent can rightly be proud of. Two high profile disability events have been successfully held in the building in the first two years of occupation. Brent Civic Centre has also recently been nominated at the Disability Smart Awards in the 'Premises' category and the outcome is awaited.

3.9 We will continue to seek ways to improve the building for our residents, visitors and staff through feedback channels and intend to carry forward work in a structured way where suggestions for improvements are considered in the context of the wider use of the building and decisions taken balancing the necessity of the proposals and cost and feasibility of undertaking the work.

#### **4.0 Financial Implications**

4.1 A budget has been identified for Civic Centre Improvement works and to date all such works have been within budget.

#### **5.0 Legal Implications**

5.1 The building is compliant with DDA requirements and other relevant regulations.

## **6.0 Diversity Implications**

- 6.1 Under the Equality Act 2010, the council has a duty to consider and make reasonable adjustments to its services, facilities and practices for disabled people, including Deaf people, people with partial or full sight loss, people with Learning Disabilities, etc. The duty is anticipatory and continuing which means that the organisation must proactively think in advance and on an ongoing basis about what disabled people with a range of impairments might reasonably need in order to remove any disadvantage faced by them.

The council must therefore ensure that its premises are as far as practically possible accessible to disabled staff, Members and visitors with disabilities. While not all adjustments will be considered reasonable, the council must be able to demonstrate that it has proactively considered all available options and can objectively justify its decision not to implement certain adjustments.

Any future suggestions for accessibility related improvements made by building users will be considered and where identified for progression, these will be shared with the Council's Equalities Team.

## **7.0 Staffing/Accommodation Implications (if appropriate)**

- 7.1 Staff considerations for improvements across the building are taken into account through a number of channels. Generally suggestions for building improvements can be made through the staff suggestion scheme or via the regular Civic Centre Stakeholder Group meetings with suggestions that are approved for delivery funded from the Civic Centre development programme.
- 7.2 It is anticipated that the identified work will be carried out within existing staffing resources.

### **Background Papers**

Appendix 1 - Accessibility Audit Progress Tracker

Contact Officers

Andrew Donald  
Strategic Director Regeneration & Growth

Item Ref.	Potential Improvement	Project	Priority	When completed by	Estimated cost	Complete?	Comment
	Improvements to walking routes in car park	Car park	Within 12 months	Jan-16			Skanska agreed to change to door with vision panel to improve visibility in tight space. A larger lobby is not practical.
2.8b	Basement car park door	N/A	Within 12 months	Jun-15		Y	This is at rear of building and has been used since building opening.
2.9A	Drop off point	N/A	Within 12 months	Jun-13		Y	

2.9B	Mobility scooter parking area	Disabled access	Within 12 months	Nov-15		N
5.14B	Signage to accessible entrances	Disabled access	Within 12 months	Jun-15		Y
6.5	Fixed Induction loop sign installed to reception desk	Disabled access	Within 12 months	Nov-15		Y
6.9A	Portable induction loop in place - FOH Reception Desk	N/A	Within 12 months	N/A		Y
6.9B	Portable induction loop in place - CSC Reception	N/A	Within 12 months	N/A		Y
6.9D	Portable induction loop in place - Training Rooms	N/A	Within 12 months	N/A		Y
7.3B	Portable ramp for Conference Hall	Disabled access	Within 12 months	Nov-15		N
7.6B	Signage to ground floor toilets improved	Disabled access	Within 12 months	Apr-15		Y
12.1A	Hold opens to doors to ground floor toilet corridor	Disabled access	Within 12 months	Nov-15		N
12.8A	Improvements to ground floor disabled shower area	Disabled access	Within 12 months	Nov-15	£1,565.00	N
13.1	Changing Places toilet installed	Disabled access	Within 12 months	Jan-15		Y
13.1.0	Sanitary bins in accessible toilets repositioned so not to cause blockages	N/A	Within 12 months	Jun-15		Y
14.6A	Portable induction loop installed within library	N/A	Within 12 months	N/A		Y
14.6B	Portable induction loop installed within library	N/A	Within 12 months	N/A		Y

	Review and signage 15.1 improvements implemented.	Disabled access	Within 12 months	Jan-15	Y
	Review and signage 15.3 improvements implemented.	Disabled access	Within 12 months	Jan-15	Y
	Review and signage 15.5 improvements implemented.	Disabled access	Within 12 months	Jan-15	Y
16.7A	Portable induction loop installed within marriage ceremony room	N/A	Within 12 months	N/A	Y
16.7B	Portable induction loop installed within Grand Hall and Conference Hall	N/A	Within 12 months	N/A	Y
16.8A	Portable induction loop available within CSC interview rooms	N/A	Within 12 months	N/A	Y
16.8C	Portable induction loop in place - Training Rooms	N/A	Within 12 months	N/A	Y
	Lifts, platform lifts and stair lifts checked regularly for proper functioning	N/A	Within 12 months	N/A	Y
	Means of escape and exit routes regularly checked for freedom of obstacles and alarm systems checked.	N/A	Within 12 months	N/A	Y
	PEEPS in place for the applicable staff	N/A	Within 12 months	N/A	Y

	18.7	Fire emergency Plan and PEEPs reviewed annually as per recommendations.	N/A	Within 12 months	N/A		Y	
	18.8	Emergency cord alarms to accessible WC are tested as part of Bilfinger PPM schedule.	N/A	Within 12 months	N/A		Y	
	1.1	Website updated with details on how to get to the civic centre and transport options	N/A	Within 12 - 24 months	N/A		Y	
	1.8	Signage improvements to local area have been made by Brent Council and Quintain	N/A	Within 12 - 24 months	N/A		Y	
	2.2	Signage added to each accessible bay within the car park	Disabled access	Within 12 - 24 months	Oct-15		N	
2.8A	2.3	Improvements to accessible bay floor markings within the car park	Car park	Within 12 - 24 months	Jan-16		N	
		Improvements to signage within the car park	Car park	Within 12 - 24 months	Jan-16		N	
	4.5B	Improvements to open risers on 13 steps from car park to Civic Centre.	Disabled access	Within 12 - 24 months	Nov-15	£650.00	N	For auditor



6.7B	New sign installed to CSC ground floor for telephone users that states 'if you have difficulties in using a telephone assistance is available' with pictorial telephone.	Disabled access	Within 12 - 24 months	Nov-15	N
6.7C	New sign installed to CSC Mezz floor for telephone users that states 'if you have difficulties in using a telephone assistance is available' with pictorial telephone.	Disabled access	Within 12 - 24 months	Nov-15	N
6.8A	Improvements to reception area planned to be installed.	Gnd floor wait furni	Within 12 - 24 months	Aug-15	N
6.9C	Portable induction loop installed within Melting Pot	N/A	Within 12 - 24 months	N/A	Y
6.9E	Portable induction loop installed to bar counter in Grand Hall	N/A	Within 12 - 24 months	N/A	Y
7.7	Bands of colour to be added at two heights to each concrete column in the building within public areas. Choice of colour to be confirmed.	Disabled access	Within 12 - 24 months	Nov-15	N

8.2C	Well contrasted manifestations to the conference hall entrance doors.	Disabled access	Within 12 - 24 months	Nov-15	N
8.4B	Signage at security barriers for wheelchair users using International Symbol for access	Disabled access	Within 12 - 24 months	Nov-15	N
12.4B	Toilet cubicles repaired.	N/A	Within 12 - 24 months	N/A	Y
12.6A	Toilet taps fixed	N/A	Within 12 - 24 months	N/A	Y
12.8B	Grab rails to be added to one male and one female shower	Disabled access	Within 12 - 24 months	Nov-15	N
14.1B	Chair with arm rests available within registrars area and can be taken to the Wedding Suite	N/A	Within 12 - 24 months	N/A	Y
14.1D	Well contrasted drop down rail to be added to each of the benches in the Training Centre corridor to aid people with ambulant disabilities.	Disabled access	Within 12 - 24 months	Nov-15	N
14.1E	Chair with arm rests can be taken to the Bridge area.	N/A	Within 12 - 24 months	N/A	Y

14.2C	Chairs with arm rests to be ordered and installed to registrars ground floor area.	Disabled access	Within 12 - 24 months	Nov-15	N	
14.4B	Accessible computer station installed to ground floor CSC area	Customer Services	Within 12 - 24 months	Jan-15	Y	
14.4C	2 x accessible computer stations installed to ground floor Library area	N/A	Within 12 - 24 months	N/A	Y	
14.6C	Libraries has accessible friendly information available.		Within 12 - 24 months			
16.5	Acoustic treatment to customer contact centre on 2nd floor	Noise	Within 12 - 24 months	Jan-15	Y	
1.4	Add colour contrast to long kerb edging to the right of the main entrance.		24 - 36 months	Nov-15	N	
1.6C	Bands of colour to be added at two heights to each concrete column in the building within public areas. Choice of colour to be confirmed.	Disabled access	25 - 36 months	Nov-15	N	Duplicate of 7.7

14.6D	Bands of colour to be added at two heights to at external long silver structural columns in the building. Choice of colour to be confirmed.	Disabled access	26 - 36 months	Nov-15	N	
1.6E	Bands of colour to be added at two heights to 13no light pillars in Paul Daisley Garden. Choice of colour to be confirmed.	Disabled access	27 - 36 months	Nov-15	N	
6.3A	Reception desk barriered area has been extended to allow access to accessible area	N/A	28 - 36 months	N/A	Y	
6.8B	Chairs with arm rests have been added to the registrars area on Mezz level	N/A	29 - 36 months	N/A	Y	
8.3	Hold opens to doors to ground floor toilet corridor	Disabled access	30 - 36 months	Nov-15	N	
10.6	Well contrasted manifestations to the escalator hand rails.	Disabled access	31 - 36 months	Nov-15	N	
14.4A	Accessible computer station installed to ground floor CSC area	Customer Services	32 - 36 months	Jan-15	Y	Duplicate of 14.4B

1.6B	Bands of colour to be added at two heights to at external long silver structural columns in the building. Choice of colour to be confirmed.		Up to 5 years	Nov-15	N	Duplicate of 14.6D
	Colour contrast to be added to the long car park entrance					
3.1	ramp	Car park	Up to 5 years	Jan-16	N	
	Steps up to Civic Centre from car park to have tactile paving added at top and bottom.					
4.1B		Disabled access	Up to 5 years	Nov-15	N	
	Site management check lighting levels during darker hours to ensure they are sufficient.	N/A	Up to 5 years	N/A	Y	
15.6C	Temporary notices typed in clear type face	N/A	Up to 5 years	N/A	Y	

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## Equalities Committee

12 October 2015

### Report from the HR Director

For Information

Wards affected:  
ALL

**Report title: Council's Equality Impact Assessment process**

## 1.0 Summary

- 1.1 In the minutes of the Members' Equalities Committee meeting on 13 July 2015 a request was made at p3 (iii) that a discussion paper on the Equality Impact Assessment process currently in place within the Council be presented to the next meeting of the committee.
- 1.2 The current report outlines the equality impact assessment (also known as equality analysis) process that the council has put in place to ensure its decision-making is fair, robust and transparent.

## 2.0 Recommendations

- 2.1 The Equality Committee to note the contents of this report.

## 3.0 Detail

### Background

- 3.1 Equality impact assessment, also known as equality analysis, has been core to policy design, service development and decision making at Brent for over ten years. The council's decision-makers view equality analysis as an essential tool to put our values into practice, by helping officers and Members to give thoughtful consideration to how our work could affect people in different ways and whether our policies and practices are fair.
- 3.2 Following its review of the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) in 2013, the Government acknowledged that equality impact assessments are the most effective method to demonstrate 'due regard' in case of a legal challenge. However, it encouraged public organisations to ensure that their assessments are evidence based and more explicitly linked to outcomes than may have been the case in the past. Hence, the shift in terminology from equality impact assessments to equality analyses.

- 3.3 After the general elections in May 2015 it was clear that local authorities would face even greater financial pressures which are also likely to increase their exposure to legal challenges. A fair, consistent and rigorous equality analysis process was therefore crucial in ensuring that decision-makers are informed about the impact of the decisions they are considering and are proactively supported in minimising negative implications and optimising positive outcomes.
- 3.4 The establishment of a new Equality team and the newly constituted Diversity Reference Group chaired by the Chief Executive offered an opportunity to review and refresh the council's approach to equality analysis and strengthen the expertise of staff across the council to undertake high quality analyses.

### **The Council's current Equality Analysis process**

- 3.5 Following its review of the equality analysis process the Equality Team, in partnership with Marshal ACM, developed an online equality analysis process to replace the old paper form. The online process also incorporated a screening tool to help officers determine whether a full equality analysis is required and that the level of analysis is proportionate to the relevance to equality.
- 3.6 The online equality analysis process is considered to be a low-cost and effective solution for reminding officers to start and complete equality analyses in a timely manner and for producing monitoring reports on completed equality analyses. Equality analysis writers can access guidance at each step of the process, draw on statistics and information in the portal's resource library and see examples of good analyses to assist them in producing robust equality analyses.
- 3.7 The online equality analysis process was launched in December 2014 and was supported by a structured communications and face-to-face training programme. The Equality team also introduced a mandatory e-learning module for all officers carrying out equality analyses and senior officers who are signing them off. Staff cannot access the online equality analysis toolkit until they have completed this training.
- 3.8 Since then the online equality analysis system has been used to analyse the impact of all proposals on service users with protected characteristics.

### **Additional changes to the Equality Analysis process**

The launch of the online system was also supported by a number of additional changes, as follows:

- 3.9 Developing an equality analysis template for restructures to ensure that all restructuring decisions and criteria are fair, transparent and non-discriminatory.
- 3.10 Strengthening the role of the Diversity Reference Group (DRG) and the Departmental Equality Groups (DEGs) in the equality analysis process. The DRG now takes responsibility for transmitting a strong message on the value of equality analysis as an evidence-based tool that helps the council



deliver responsive services for all residents. DRG members review the business planning process to set priorities for equality analysis and explore new ways to embed equality principles into the council's work.

- 3.11 The DEGs are now responsible for auditing their departments' equality analyses and providing peer support / challenge to their colleagues. This approach encourages departments to take more ownership over the equality agenda and ensures that equality analyses are scrutinised by officers who have a good understanding of the relevant service. Before implementing this change, the Equality team delivered advanced equality analysis workshops to all DEG members to equip them with the necessary skills and knowledge required for their new role.
- 3.12 Incorporating equality considerations into all business processes, including business planning, financial decision-making and procurement.

### **Outcomes**

- 3.13 In May 2015, the Equality team presented a report to the Corporate Management Team assessing the effectiveness of the implemented online equality analysis process. The purpose of the report was to calculate the cumulative impact of all the proposals on equality and highlight any significant or disproportionate impacts on any equality groups. Overall, the report found that the refreshed equality analysis process is sufficiently rigorous to support the council to make fair, evidenced-based and transparent decisions.
- 3.14 Over 200 officers have completed the equality analysis e-learning module, giving them the confidence and insight to carry out robust equality analyses. The Departmental Equality Groups are providing effective scrutiny and are also ensuring that equality analyses are started at the earliest possible stage. Brent was asked to share learning about its new approach to equality analysis with the London Equality Network in late 2014 and the London Project and Programme Management Forum in early 2015.
- 3.15 Further information on the findings of the Cumulative Equality Analysis report carried out in 2014-15 is available in Appendix 1.
- 3.16 When the council was preparing its budget for 2015-16 financial year the Chief Finance Officer worked closely with the Equality team to ensure that equalities considerations informed the decision making process. All proposed budget savings were reviewed at a departmental level to assess their potential impact on equality for service users and staff. The Head of Equality then analysed the collective set of proposals to identify the most significant equalities pressures confronting each of the council's main service areas and to produce a cumulative equality analysis of all the budget proposals.
- 3.17 The findings of the cumulative equality analysis – including any significant or disproportionate impacts on equality arising from the full package of savings proposals – were incorporated into the Chief Finance Officer's report that was submitted to Cabinet in February 2015. As a result, those

proposals which were highlighted as having the most significant negative impact on vulnerable equality groups, including closing rough sleepers' services and reducing customer service opening hours, were not taken forward by the Cabinet.

#### **4.0 Financial Implications**

- 4.1 The initial cost incurred for the implementation of the equality analysis online toolkit and e-learning module was £6,500 excluding VAT. The annual maintenance cost is £1,500 excluding VAT. The council has a rolling contract with Marshal ACM, the provider of the equality analysis toolkit and e-module, which is renewed in July each year.

#### **5.0 Legal Implications**

- 5.1 The council's approach to equality analysis ensures that we adhere to our statutory obligations under s149 of the Equality Act 2010, to demonstrate due regard to the Public Sector Equality Duty.

#### **6.0 Diversity Implications**

- 6.1 The council's robust approach to equality analysis ensures that we are meeting our obligations under the Equality Act, and that equality and diversity are a cross-council priority for all council employees.

#### **7.0 Staffing/Accommodation Implications (if appropriate)**

- 7.1 There are not staffing/accommodation implications arising from this report.

### **Background Papers**

Appendix 1: Cumulative Equality Analysis 2014-15

### **Contact Officers**

Mildred Phillips, HR Director  
Email: [mildred.phillips@brent.gov.uk](mailto:mildred.phillips@brent.gov.uk)  
Tel: 02089375442

Andreyana Ivanova, Head of Equality  
Email: [andreyana.ivanova@brent.gov.uk](mailto:andreyana.ivanova@brent.gov.uk)  
Tel: 02089373154

# Appendix 1: Cumulative Equality Analysis 2014 - 2015

## 1.0 Summary

- 1.1 This report presents an overview of the collective set of equality analyses that were completed over the 2014 – 2015 financial year to calculate the cumulative equalities impact of all the proposals and highlight any significant or disproportionate impacts on any equality groups. It puts forward recommendations to ensure that Brent's equality analysis process is sufficiently rigorous to support the council to make decisions in a fair, transparent and accountable way that takes into account the diverse needs of all local communities.

## 2.0 Detail Background

- 2.1 Equality analysis is core to policy development and decision making at Brent. It is an essential tool to put Brent's values into practice, by helping officers and Members to give thoughtful consideration to how the council's work could affect people in different ways. Equality analysis involves assessing a policy, strategy, proposal, service or practice in detail to identify and mitigate against any potential for discrimination. When used properly, equality analysis helps to ensure that policies and practices are fair and that the council delivers the most effective and responsive services for local communities.
- 2.2 Equality analysis is also the best way for the council to demonstrate that it is paying due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity, eliminate discrimination and foster good relations in the exercise of all its functions, as required under the Public Sector Equality Duty of the Equality Act 2010.

## 3.0 Completion rates

- 3.1 All proposed policies, strategies, projects and procurement exercises that were presented to the Cabinet for discussion and decision-making over the 2014 – 2015 financial year should have been subject to an equality analysis process. The Equality Team's records show that 32 equality analyses of such proposals were completed over this period as follows:
- 5 proposals from Adults Social Care
  - 2 proposals from Children and Young People
  - 6 proposals from Environment and Neighbourhood Services
  - 17 proposals from Regeneration and Growth
  - 2 proposals from the Corporate Centre.
- 3.3 In addition, all budget savings proposals were reviewed to assess their potential impact on equality for service users and staff. Following a screening process, it was identified that 46 proposals required a full equality analysis.
- 3.5 Equality analyses were also conducted on 15 HR policies during this period.

## Cumulative equalities impact

Characteristic	Positive impacts	Neutral or unknown impacts	Negative impacts
Age	34%	31%	35%
Disability	35%	33%	33%
Gender reassignment	11%	84%	5%
Marriage & civil partnership	0	100%	0
Pregnancy & maternity	20%	67%	13%
Race	21%	43%	36%
Religion or belief	10%	83%	8%
Sex	28%	54%	19%
Sexual orientation	15%	83%	3%

- 3.6 It is notable that there is a fairly even division between proposals with a positive, negative and neutral impact on age and disability. The majority of proposals with negative impacts on older people, younger people and disabled people related to budget savings proposals. In many cases, these budget savings proposals were rejected because of their harmful impact on these vulnerable groups of residents.
- 3.7 Race was the only equality characteristic for which proposals were found to have more negative than positive impacts. It should be noted that all of the negative impacts identified in relation to race were either mitigated or justified.
- 3.8 The majority of proposals were found to have a neutral or unknown impact on gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, religion or belief and sexual orientation. In many of these cases, it has not been possible to analyse the impact of proposals on these equality groups because of data gaps. Brent Multi Faith Forum has often raised lack of diversity monitoring in relation to religion or belief as an issue and stressed the importance of gathering this information in a borough like Brent where such a high proportion of service users (90 per cent) identify as having a religion or belief. Under the Equality Act 2010, Marriage and civil partnership is only a protected characteristic in relation to employment (and not service use) and so is rarely relevant to equality analyses that are focused on service users.

## Adults Social Care

Characteristic	Positive impacts	Neutral or unknown impacts	Negative impacts
Age	4	1	0
Disability	4	1	0
Gender reassignment	0	5	0
Marriage & civil partnership	0	5	0
Pregnancy & maternity	0	5	0
Race	2	2	1
Religion or belief	1	2	2
Sex	1	4	0
Sexual orientation	1	4	0

- 3.9 The majority of Adults Social Care proposals had a positive or neutral impact on equality. The negative impacts were minimal and related to a low take-up of particular services from some equality groups; these impacts were mitigated during equality analysis.

- 3.10 It is concerning that Adults Social Care rarely gathers or analyses information about gender reassignment and sexual orientation of service users. Research from across the UK shows that lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people have often experienced, or fear, discrimination because of their sexual orientation or gender identity and say this creates a barrier to receiving appropriate care and treatment. This data could help the council to evaluate whether social care services in Brent are inclusive of LGBT people.

### Children and Young People

Characteristic	Positive impacts	Neutral or unknown impacts	Negative impacts
Age	2	1	5
Disability	2	3	3
Gender reassignment	0	7	1
Marriage & civil partnership	0	8	0
Pregnancy & maternity	0	6	2
Race	2	0	6
Religion or belief	0	8	0
Sex	1	3	4
Sexual orientation	0	7	1

- 3.12 Excepting the budget savings proposals, equality analyses were only completed for two Children and Young People proposals before they were submitted to the Cabinet over the past financial year.
- 3.13 It is vital that all proposals from Children and Young People undergo a rigorous and timely equality analysis process to protect the council from any costly legal challenges. The Chair of the Children and Young People Departmental Equality Group and the Equality Team have discussed this and agreed a way forward to ensure that officers in the department carry out robust equality analyses in a more timely fashion.

### Environment and Neighbourhood Services

Characteristic	Positive impacts	Neutral or unknown impacts	Negative impacts
Age	4	5	15
Disability	3	7	14
Gender reassignment	2	21	1
Marriage & civil partnership	0	24	0
Pregnancy & maternity	2	16	6
Race	3	14	7
Religion or belief	2	20	2
Sex	4	17	3
Sexual orientation	2	20	2

- 3.14 Overall, the Environment and Neighbourhood Services budget savings proposals were found to have a cumulative negative impact on elderly, disabled and frail residents and on children and young people. Most of the negative impacts were minimal and were either mitigated against or justified in the context of the requirement to achieve significant savings. The negative impacts identified for all other proposals were mitigated effectively.

## Regeneration and Growth

Characteristic	Positive impacts	Neutral or unknown impacts	Negative impacts
Age	9	5	9
Disability	9	8	6
Gender reassignment	4	19	0
Marriage & civil partnership	0	23	0
Pregnancy & maternity	10	11	2
Race	6	9	8
Religion or belief	3	19	1
Sex	9	8	6
Sexual orientation	4	19	0

- 3.15 Regeneration and Growth completed more equality analyses throughout the year than any other department and have robust systems in place to ensure that equality analyses are produced and scrutinised in a timely fashion. Most of these equality analyses related to housing, employment and developments. All the negative impacts identified during routine equality analyses were mitigated against or justified.

## Corporate Centre

Characteristic	Positive impacts	Neutral or unknown impacts	Negative impacts
Age	6	11	0
Disability	7	7	3
Gender reassignment	2	13	2
Marriage & civil partnership	0	17	0
Pregnancy & maternity	4	13	0
Race	2	14	1
Religion or belief	3	14	0
Sex	5	10	2
Sexual orientation	4	13	0

- 3.16 The majority of Corporate Centre proposals were equality analyses of HR policies. Both the wording and the implementation of the HR policies were assessed to understand the effect of employment policies on equalities. Some amendments were made to the HR policies as a result of this exercise.
- 3.17 HR also supports departments to carry out equality analyses of restructuring exercises to ensure that all decisions and criteria are fair, transparent and non-discriminatory.

## Refresh of approach to equality analysis

- 3.18 In January 2015, the following changes were introduced to make the equality analysis process more robust and user-friendly:
- the old paper form was replaced by an online system with more straightforward questions and step-by-step guidance for users
  - a screening stage was introduced into the process to ensure that the level of analysis is proportionate to the relevance to equality
  - officers are now required to complete an e-learning module about equality analysis before being given access to the online system

- diversity profiles for the borough, wards and services are being developed and published on the online system to inform analysis
- a separate new form was developed to assess the equalities impact of restructuring exercises.

- 3.19 In addition, equality analyses are now audited by Departmental Equality Groups with support from the Equality Team. This approach aims to encourage departments to take greater ownership over the process and to share learning from equality analyses. To ensure that equality analyses are carried out in a timely manner, Departmental Equality Groups have reviewed their area's business plans to identify and assign the equality analyses that will be required over the current financial year.
- 3.20 The Diversity Reference Group is monitoring the effectiveness of this new approach. So far, feedback on the online system and new content of the form has largely been positive. Officers have commented that the questions are far clearer than the old paper form, the system is easy to use and that it is helpful to have more immediate access to equalities data and resources. In the early stages of the system, some officers have experienced technical difficulties, all of which have been resolved promptly by the system provider once reported.
- 3.21 All staff who are direct reports to Heads of Service and above have been asked to complete the e-learning module. In total, almost 200 officers from all areas and levels of the council have completed the module so far. CMT receives regular reports on equality analysis training take-up.

## **Next steps**

- 3.22 Getting equality analysis right will be vital for Brent to negotiate the challenges facing the local authority in the years ahead successfully. The Diversity Reference Group will continue to monitor the effectiveness of Brent's approach to equality analysis. CMT will continue to ensure that managers in their areas understand the importance of completing the e-learning module and carrying out high-quality equality analyses in a timely manner.

## **4.0 Financial Implications**

- 4.1 There are no financial implications.

## **5.0 Legal Implications**

- 5.1 Effective equality analysis supports the council to demonstrate compliance with the Public Sector Equality Duty and withstand legal challenges to decisions.

## **6.0 Diversity Implications**

- 6.1 Effective equality analysis supports the council to understand how its activities and decisions could impact on local communities and to identify and mitigate against any potential for discrimination.

## **7.0 Staffing/Accommodation Implications (if appropriate)**

- 7.1 There are no staffing/accommodation implications.

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## **Equality Peer Challenge London Borough of Brent**

**June 30 - July 2 2015**



## 1. Background

The London Borough of Brent (LBB) asked the Local Government Association (LGA) to conduct an Equality Peer Challenge against the Excellent level of the Equality Framework for Local Government. This report is a summary of the peer team's findings. The Peer Challenge is designed to validate a council's own self-assessment by considering documentary evidence and carrying out a series of interviews and focus groups with employees and other stakeholders.

The basis for the Peer Challenge is a benchmark against five areas of performance. They are:

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

The Peer Challenge is not an inspection, rather it offers an external assessment by critical friends who have experience of delivering an equality/diversity agenda in their own councils.

Peers were:

Councillor Marie Pye- LB Waltham Forest
Mike O'Hanlon – LB Redbridge
Kay Banfield – Kent Fire and Rescue Service
Sally Atueyi – Rochdale Borough Council
Gill Elliott – Local Government Association

The team appreciates the welcome and hospitality provided by the Council and would like to thank everybody that they met during the process for their time and contributions.

Following the Challenge, the peer team's decision was that the Council was very close to reaching the Excellent level of the EFLG. The team's view was that the Council, by addressing the Peer

Team's recommendations, could expect to be awarded Excellent within a relatively short time frame.

The team made five key recommendations on areas which it feels the Council needs to progress further before it can be reconsidered for the Excellent level award. These were:

1. Corporate Management Team to report on progress on the Equality Strategy Action plan after the first six months.
2. Effectively address the building accessibility issues of the new Civic Centre
3. Implement the recommendations in the latest Annual Workforce Equalities Report
4. Evaluate the effectiveness of the new Equality Committee
5. Progress the recommendations in the HR Review action plan

The team are confident that the Council will achieve these recommendations and it will be very happy to make a return visit to confirm this has been done, with a view to validating the Excellent status.

The peer team found much that was impressive in the way the Council is mainstreaming equality in all of its activities. The Leader provides a clear vision and strong leadership and he is well supported in this by the Deputy Leader and the rest of the Cabinet. The Chief Executive and her corporate management team are also fully committed to equality and diversity and their leadership has ensured that equality has been mainstreamed within the Council's service delivery and its workforce development.

The peer team were able to see the progress that the Council has made on the equality agenda in recent years. It has strengthened its approach to equality analysis and is using this knowledge to influence key budget decisions. Equality analysis is also guiding the design development and delivery of services and mitigating adverse impact for the most vulnerable in the borough where possible.

The Council has made considerable efforts to gain an in-depth knowledge of the communities within the borough and to ensure that data and other information informs all it does. It understands which

residents are most affected by poverty, welfare reform and poor health. In recent years it has maintained its support for the community and voluntary sector via grants. It has also maintained Council Tax support for the most vulnerable people in the borough.

The Council has made a conscious effort to improve community engagement. The Residents' Attitude Survey 2014 is a good example of this. Its results have informed the Brent Borough Plan 2015-2019 and key budget decisions. Community relations in the borough are good. 84% of people surveyed said that it was a place where people from different backgrounds can get on well. The community and voluntary sector have good and longstanding relationships with the Council and there were some excellent examples of Service user groups being involved in designing services and procurement decisions.

The peer team's decision not to award Excellent was made for two key reasons. One related to the new Civic Centre and the significant outstanding remedial action recommended by the Access Audit completed in 2014. At the present time only a third of the recommended actions in the audit have been completed, but there is a plan that is being implemented to agreed timelines. The peer team felt that to be considered Excellent the Council needed to expedite and complete the majority of the recommended actions in the report and to identify a mechanism to ensure that disability access is maintained at the highest level in all council buildings.

The second reason was that the team felt that the Council needed more time to progress a number of other important initiatives. The major review of the Council's HR policies and practices was only completed by the Local Government Association in late 2014, following a ruling against the Council of race discrimination by an employment tribunal. The review was very positive and, though few, the recommendations were welcome. The peer team considers that many of the recommendations in the HR Review Action Plan are key equality measures. There is clearly a will within the Council to deliver on these actions and several measures are already in place. There has been slippage on a few initiatives since January and the Council recognises the importance of maintaining momentum.

The very recent establishment of a new Member Equalities Committee is hugely positive. One of its responsibilities is to oversee implementation of the HR Review Action Plan. The peer team felt that it was important for the effectiveness of this committee to be evaluated as it would be overseeing the HR Review, and the recommendations of this equality peer challenge.

The other two key recommendations made by the peer team concern the action plans of the Equality Strategy 2015-16 and the Annual Workforce Equalities Report 2014-15. The peer team felt it was important for the measures contained in these action plans to be further progressed and for some outcomes to be visible before the Excellent level award was made.

The peer team feel that these recommendations will have a significant impact on the Council and will greatly strengthen its reputation for equality and diversity. It will be pleased to return at a time of the Council's choosing to review progress with a view to being able to award the Excellent level of the Framework.

### **3. Detailed findings**

#### **3.1 Knowing your communities**

##### **Strengths**

The Council has an in depth knowledge about its changing communities. It has a good evidence base, which is easily accessible to staff in the form of ward and service user profiles. Ward profiles use Census data and information from other sources to provide good quality and regular analysis of the Borough make up. Service User profiles also use data from a range of sources and indicate variations in key service outcomes for different equality groups. There is also a wide range of information available to the public on the Brent Data section of the Council website, which includes all of these profiles.

The Council uses data well to identify key issues and set organisational priorities and equality objectives. For example, evidence about the changes to the ethnicity of Looked After Children and the increase in white British, Somali and Eastern European children was used to target services for children at risk of coming into

the care system. Good use has also been made of data that is shared with partners. Examples include community safety work relating to gangs and violence against women.

There is a structured approach to ensuring that data is communicated to all parts of the Council. Staff workshops were run in 2014 to discuss the issues raised by the service profiles and how they should inform service development and delivery. This approach has now been incorporated into the mandatory corporate induction process.

There is good evidence of how equalities data is being used to inform service planning. An example of this is the South Kilburn Regeneration project, where information from both the Census at ward level, and the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA), coupled with the detailed needs assessment of each of the households affected by the project by Brent Housing Partnership, was brought together to create the blueprint for an ambitious and sustainable community development plan providing for the aspirations of existing and future residents' education, health and social needs provision. There has been an ongoing dialogue with the community throughout the history of this project through an on-site neighbourhood housing office and the formal involvement of the Tenants Steering Group to provide information on issues of concern to the community.

**Areas for consideration:**

Representatives from the community and voluntary sector said they would value a regular bulletin from the Council of “what’s new” as they often have limited resources to analyse data and information from their own resources. This feedback is despite the fact that there is a single web page with all relevant information available for voluntary sector on the council website.

There is scope for better information sharing between services, partners and contractors. In some cases contractors are engaging with specific communities and their knowledge and expertise could be better captured and utilised more within the council. An example of this is Veolia, the Waste contractor, and the intelligence it is gaining from its engagement with the Nepalese community.

### **3.2 Leadership, partnership and organisational commitment**

#### **Strengths:**

The Leader has a clear vision for the Borough based on fairness, growth and resilience. Community stakeholders said that in the past three years they had seen a “new energy” within the Council towards equality issues. They attributed this change of culture to the Leader. He was also praised for having a very visible presence within the community and voluntary sector. Cabinet Members are also committed to and leading the equality agenda. The Deputy Leader in particular has been instrumental in taking the Council forward. There has been a positive response to equality measures from the leader of the Opposition. New arrangements for Member training and development look comprehensive and include equality and diversity.

The culture change that is evident in the Council around equality is also a testament to the strong leadership of the Chief Executive, her corporate management team and the directors.

The refreshed Equality Analysis process which was introduced in 2014 has strengthened equality analysis within the Council and ensured that it is more embedded into business processes. The launch of the process was supported by a communications and training programme to support staff and build understanding of the importance of equality analysis. Members clearly value the use of equality analysis and gave positive examples of how they have used it to take key budget decisions including deciding which services should not be included in cuts. Cumulative analysis of budget proposals has influenced budget decisions by demonstrating how proposals taken together would adversely affect protected groups.

A new Member Equalities Committee has very recently been formally constituted to oversee the implementation of the HR Review Action Plan and the EFLG peer challenge recommendations. This is a very positive development for the Council going forward.

The previous Scrutiny Committee had a strong equality focus. Just one example is that in 2014 it published a report on preventing violence against Women and Girls (VAWG). Actions from the report

have already produced positive outcomes such as taking action to protect young girls identified at risk of forced marriage.

It is evident that the priorities of the Borough Plan 2015-19 were informed by engagement with partners and other stakeholders. A “golden thread” relating to equalities is clear from the Borough Plan through to the Council’s Corporate Plan, service plans and the Equality Strategy.

The Council’s Diversity Reference Group is chaired by the Chief Executive and attended by operational directors from all departments. This is a serious commitment. Departmental equality groups (DEGs) are playing a positive role in equalities-related work. They form a link between the Diversity Reference Group and the departments. One of their key activities is to audit equality analyses for their department. This has led to greater ownership within departments and more rigorous analyses. DEGs are supported by the Equality Team. The Equality Team is a valuable resource for the organisation and it is good to see that it is being maintained despite budget cuts and restructuring within the organisation.

#### **Areas for consideration:**

The Council and its partners are very ambitious for the Borough. The challenge for the Council will be to continue to deliver on its equality related targets at a time of financial austerity and major organisational changes. There is a new interim Head of HR and a new Chief Executive will also be in post later in the year. Going forward, there will be significant budget cuts to manage, whilst working to a new Borough Plan whose implementation is still in its infancy and with a new Corporate Plan 2015-19 and crucially a new Equality Strategy and Action Plan 2015-16. In light of the significant and imminent changes in leadership, it is important that the momentum is continued in order that the significant organisational energy already directed towards equality results in the outcomes envisaged.

Equality analysis processes require a focus on both mitigating negative impact and making improvements to policies to positively improve their impact on equality. There was little evidence of this within published EAs and consideration needs to be given as to how to ensure that those working on EIAs look at both areas more



consistently. The Council may also wish to consider adopting carers as an additional protected group when undertaking their equality analysis.

Whilst the previous Scrutiny Committee is to be commended on their work relating to equality there is now an almost completely new committee and unfortunately the review team were unable to meet any of the new members due to availability. It is essential that this new committee maintains the excellent focus on equality that the previous one demonstrated.

Although there is a new and comprehensive process for assessing reasonable adjustments for officers there is not an equivalent process for councillors. The role and position of a councillor is different to an employee and whilst councillors praised the authority for providing reasonable adjustments, a simple and transparent system for reasonable adjustments would be beneficial.

### **3.3 Involving your communities**

#### **Strengths:**

The Council clearly has many ways of involving residents, the community and the voluntary sector in the way services are designed, developed and delivered. Examples of really good outcomes include the Harlesden Town Regeneration, the South Kilburn Regeneration Project and the Dementia Research project. The Residents' Attitude Survey in 2014 has given the Council a good insight into the key priorities for customers. The results were also part of the Consultation for the Brent Borough Plan 2015-19. The Plan outlines some new and creative ways that residents will be able to engage with the Council including a new volunteering scheme.

There have been notable improvements in the last 3 years in community engagement by all levels of the organisation with community and voluntary groups and contracted service providers. Consultation forums include Brent Connects, Brent Youth Parliament the Brent Multi Faith Forum and the Voluntary Sector Liaison Forum. Prior to setting the budget for 2015/16 a large scale public consultation was undertaken with residents, the community and

voluntary sector, and local businesses to understand where they felt council spending should be focussed.

Communities from across all protected characteristics are involved in decision making. Members of Bheard, the Adult Social Care user forum have been trained by the Council as peer consultants to visit care homes to talk to staff and residents. They have also been involved in writing specifications, assessing tenders and interviewing on appointment panels. Members of Bheard took part in the appointment of a new Involvement and Engagement Officer.

A greater range of groups is participating in engagement with the Council e.g. Younger residents are targeted by the Brent Housing Partnership through "Our Say", a magazine aimed at young people including young tenants. Saafi, a community based Somali organisation, is involved in signposting Somali residents to Council and other services.

#### **Areas for consideration:**

A common theme from community groups and other stakeholders is that the Council could be better at ensuring that feedback is always given so that those providing input feel valued. This could be via some kind of post consultation exercise or other communication just to "close the consultation loop"

Several people peers spoke to within the community said that the Council could be better at avoiding the use of corporate or technical language which can create a barrier to meaningful dialogue with the community. This was particularly pertinent to those meetings that had taken place away from council premises. However, community groups expressed a view that they had seen a marked improvement in the Council's community engagement in recent years.

### **3.4 Responsive services and customer care**

#### **Strengths:**

The New Civic Centre is a tremendous asset to the Council, the community and the local area. The building and surrounding hotel and retail developments have regenerated the area and provided an

impressive community space. The building has clearly succeeded in its aspirations to be transparent to the community.

Improved equality analysis is influencing service development and improvements. The Single Customer Records system has enabled the Council to know who is or is not using its services and what their needs are. The system is populated from a range of key services so the information captured about customers is richer and more detailed and accessible from a single point. The 2014 Residents survey indicated increasing satisfaction with Council Services including those with protected characteristics.

The Council has a good understanding of those residents who are affected by welfare reform and has worked with the Department for Work and Pensions to respond to residents' issues. Council Tax support and the Discretionary Housing Support Payments Fund continue to provide support for the most vulnerable in the Borough.

There is clear evidence of the inclusion of equalities requirements within specifications for procured services. Residents and service users are often involved in procurement decisions. Members of some service user forums have received accredited training to become peer consultants. They have reviewed services including care homes, and recommendations from peer consultants have led to improvements at the care homes visited.

There were good examples of some responsive and innovative services:

- The Council's domestic violence initiative is responding to changing population patterns within the borough. There has been a growth in domestic violence within the Eastern European communities and in response to this, special Eastern European domestic violence advocates have been appointed. The council has also worked with the Polish Church and shops and appointed Polish community beacons.
- Brent Housing Partnership's (BHP) Academy was launched in April 2015 to give every BHP resident the opportunity to get involved in a training and development programme to equip

them to stand for election to the BHP Board and for other opportunities for involvement with BHP. This has helped BHP with their search for resident Board Members and has given residents the opportunity to develop their skills. Recently they have also co-opted a young person onto their Board to provide the perspective of young people under the age of 25 years.

- The Council's flexible child-minding service offers families access to affordable childcare at short notice, overnight and at weekends. This provides vital support to parents working irregular hours or shift work, or who are juggling other commitments such as job interviews.

### **Areas for consideration**

One of the peer team's key recommendations is for the Council to address access barriers for disabled people in the Civic Centre and take senior level ownership of the project. The actions were identified by an access audit in 2014 that was commissioned by the Council. The peer team heard several personal accounts of difficulties disabled people had getting into and around the building. The process of parking for disabled people is another issue that might need further consideration.

The Somali community is a significantly increased population in the borough. A greater focus could be given to the specific and unique challenges that affect the community, through encouraging the employment of Somali people in key services and agencies to both gain an understanding of the nuanced needs of the community and to build increased trust, confidence and their continued engagement.

## **3.5 A skilled and committed workforce**

### **Strengths**

The Council as a whole has a very diverse workforce which broadly reflects the ethnic diversity of the community. This has been the case for many years, regardless of reorganisation and restructuring. Senior grades are split almost 50/50 on gender and the number of staff declaring as disabled has increased despite the decreasing workforce.

The Council's Apprenticeship programme has been very successful and has so far recruited over 80 apprentices. Over 80% of these are from a BAME background and the Council is committed to reserving 20% of vacancies for looked after children

New robust guidance on reasonable adjustments has been published on the Council's website. It was developed with the help of disabled staff who attended staff focus groups relating to disability.

The HR Review and Annual Workforce Equalities Report 2014/15 are both evidence based, clear and focussed. The HR Review had strong leadership and significant engagement with staff and partners. It has proposed some innovative initiatives including reverse mentoring, a local graduate scheme and unconscious bias training. The Council has made a good start on implementation as 36% of actions from the HR review have been delivered

### **Areas for consideration**

The ethnicity of the workforce does not reflect some specific communities in the borough, although Brent benchmarks well with the rest of London. BAME staff are concentrated in low grades and there are relatively few at senior level despite this being a priority for several years. The HR Review Action Plan contains a number of measures to address these issues. Timely implementation will be important as well as on-going review and making changes to any measures that may prove less effective in delivering the outcomes the Council wants.

The data and information presented in the Annual Workforce Equalities Report would be enhanced by increasing the categories of BAME employees to reflect other ethnicities or nationalities such as Somalis, Chinese, Arabs and other relevant groups.

It will be important for the Council to monitor the satisfaction and effectiveness of the new reasonable adjustments guidance across all departments. Further training might be needed to ensure that managers understand their responsibilities.

There was a very low completion of the disability section on application forms (8%). We understand that this was because of an error in the reporting function of the database. The Council has since been provided with an accurate report by the provider. It is now in the process of incorporating this into the final version of the Annual Workforce Equalities Report

There has been no staff survey completed for several years. The HR Review has recommended a staff survey be carried out and we understand this is due to take place in the autumn of 2015. It will be important to disaggregate the results by protected characteristics. Response rates to staff surveys are often high because they are anonymous, so it should be possible to differentiate views across a range of ethnicities and other characteristics and across departments and grades.

The HR Review was very ambitious in its timescales and 27% of actions have slipped. Progressing this review is one of the peer team's key recommendations.

#### **4. Signposting to good practice elsewhere**

The peer team think that the Council could improve its engagement with disabled people. Disability Rights UK has produced guidance for local authorities on inclusive communities and involving disabled people.

<http://www.disabilityrightsuk.org/sites/default/files/pdf/1%20%20InclusivecommunitiesLAguidance.pdf>

As the Council takes forward its initiatives to increasing the representativeness of BAME people at senior levels it might find it useful to contact **Bristol City Council** which has had some excellent recruitment and selection initiatives to address the representativeness of its workforce.

The report "Race at the Top"- which gives a comprehensive picture of Black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) representation in leadership in UK business may also be of interest.

<http://raceforopportunity.bitc.org.uk/research-insight/research-articles/race-top-0#sthash.lu8E4MYG.dpuf>

The peer team suggests that the new Scrutiny Committee may find it helpful to consider the report 'Equal to the Task', which was produced by the Centre for Public Scrutiny. It looks at how equality can be built into scrutiny. Although this report is now a few years old it is still highly relevant.

<http://www.cfps.org.uk/publications?item=201&filter=health&offset=50>

For follow-up support relating to this report and details of other LGA support that is available, please contact:

Heather Wills

Principal Adviser London, South East (Buckinghamshire, Hampshire and Isle of Wight, Kent, West Sussex)

Email: [heather.wills@local.gov.uk](mailto:heather.wills@local.gov.uk)

Tel: 07770 701188

For queries relating to this report please contact:

Gill Elliott, Peer Support Adviser

Local Government Association

Tel No – 07747 753263

Email [gill.elliott@local.gov.uk](mailto:gill.elliott@local.gov.uk)

**Local Government House**

**Smith Square**

**London SW1P 3HZ**

**Telephone 020 7664 3000**

**Facsimile 020 764 3030**

**E-mail [info@local.gov.uk](mailto:info@local.gov.uk)**

**[www.local.gov.uk](http://www.local.gov.uk)**

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