



Equalities Committee

13 July 2015

Report from the Chief Executive

For Information

Wards Affected:
ALL

Review of Equalities and HR Policies and Practice

1.0 Summary

1.1 This covering report accompanies the attached Review of Equalities and HR Policies and Practices in Brent (attached as Appendix 1) led by Cllr Michael Pavey, Deputy Leader of the Council and undertaken between October 2014 and January 2015. The report is a wide ranging review of staffing matters and HR policies and practices within the Council. The methodology consisted of scrutinising documents and policies, discussions with managers and staff, and was supported by the Local Government Association and other external experts in order to ensure objectivity and fairness. The review is supported by an Action Plan which sets out the actions that the council will take to implement the findings. The Scrutiny Committee on 30 April considered this item and the Action Plan and its views are detailed below.

1.2 The Equalities Committee will be updated on the Action Plan.

2.0 Recommendation

2.1 Members of the Equalities Committee are invited to comment on the actions detailed in the plan in Appendix 2 to support the implementation of the review's findings in light of the update presented to the meeting.

3.0 Detail

3.1 Overall, the HR policies were found to be sound, but the report acknowledges that people do not necessarily always apply them consistently. As a result the published report details 31 specific recommendations for improvement. The review states that Brent has the highest proportion of black and minority ethnic (BAME) staff amongst London boroughs and the proportion of BAME top earners is in the top quartile of London boroughs.

- 3.2 However, it also acknowledges that there is a real challenge in ensuring that people from BAME backgrounds are represented within the senior management team, a problem that is replicated in organisations across the country. Much of the review focuses on how this challenge will be met including recommendations around developing talent within the council to ensure progression opportunities, implementing a mentoring system to nurture the talent of underrepresented groups and introducing compulsory 'unconscious bias' training for all managers and recruiters.
- 3.3 The plan sits within the Council's broader planning framework and in particular:
- the Corporate Plan
 - the Equality Strategy Action Plan
 - the HR Strategy and Action Plan.
- 3.4 The chief executive has overall responsibility for the successful implementation of the Plan and Members of Corporate Management Team have specific oversight of each of the themes. The Directorate for HR and Administration will provide support to the chief executive and will ensure that monitoring reports are produced within deadlines. The plan will be monitored at officer level through the Corporate Management Team (CMT), the HR Improvement Group (HRIG) and the Diversity Reference Group (DRG). At Member level, progress will be monitored by the General Purposes Committee though there is likely to be some overlap with this Committee..
- 3.5 The Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on 30 April 2015 considered the Review and Action Plan. In response to concerns expressed that staff were not aware of the Council's corporate priorities, it heard that a key priority over the last few years had been to improve planning across the council, with the development of the Borough Plan influencing the work of individual teams and benefitting from a high level of public engagement. The Corporate Plan reflected the Borough Plan and was being turned into aims and objectives for individual teams. The committee heard that equalities data previously recorded by staff had not been transferred across to the Oracle system and staff were being urged to complete the information again, although they were not obliged to provide this information. The committee was informed that the action plan would be delivered within existing resources. Equality had been a high priority for the council prior to the review, as reflected in the work undertaken to work towards the Equalities Standard for Local Government and the Investor In People awards. An additional piece of training for all managers had been prepared regarding unconscious bias and it was proposed that this training would be delivered by 1 June 2015 and the action plan updated to reflect this. The Chair of the Scrutiny Committee felt that there needed to be robust monitoring of the action plan and the committee agreed that an update should be provided on the progress achieved in six months time.

4.0 Financial Implications

- 4.1 None directly arising from this report

5.0 Legal Implications

- 5.1 None directly arising from this report

6.0 Diversity Implications

6.1 The review of Equalities and HR Policies and Practices and the draft action plan, attached as Appendix 1, recommends changes which aim to systematically embed best practice across the Council with regard to equality and diversity to ensure that all staff are treated with dignity and respect.

7.0 Staffing/Accommodation Implications (if appropriate)

7.1 The council aims to encourage, develop and support all staff and grow talent from underrepresented groups. The intention of the review and action plan is to ensure these HR policies are applied consistently across the council.

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