



## **MINUTES OF THE EQUALITIES COMMITTEE**

### **Monday 12 October 2015 at 6.00 pm**

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

Also Present: Councillors Long, Mahmood and Southwood

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

None declared.

#### **2. Minutes of the previous meeting**

RESOLVED:-

that the minutes of the previous meeting held on 13 July 2015 be approved as an accurate record of the meeting.

#### **3. Matters arising**

Members of the Committee noted that the Terms of Reference had been adopted by Full Council at its meeting on 7 September 2015. The agreed Terms of Reference now featured in the Council's Constitution.

#### **4. Deputations**

None.

#### **5. Progress update on Councillor Pavey's review action plan on Equalities**

Members of the Committee noted the progress update. Councillor Pavey stated that much had been implemented and achieved since the last meeting of the Committee but there were areas of slippage. Councillor Pavey invited Mildred Philips, Director of Human Resources, to focus her summary on the areas of slippage.

Mildred Philips, highlighted that slippage had occurred under the "to ensure there is a creative approach to the development of talent & leadership" objective. She explained that a leadership and development provider had been appointed and the programme agreed by the Council's Corporate Management Team. The content, currently in development, would be signed off by the Corporate Management Team in October. Members of the Committee noted that the programme would be aimed at two groups of staff. Those currently at P01-5 and those at P05-8 grades. In response to questions from Committee Members, Mildred Philips stated there were currently approximately 900 staff at these grades. She stated that staff consultation had taken place about the focus of the programme. Staff had felt overwhelmingly that a programme targeted solely at black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) staff

wasn't welcome but that a programme tailor made for Brent would be more productive. The programme would be a rolling ILM programme of leadership and development lasting around 9 months per cohort.

Carolyn Downs, Chief Executive, stated that managers would be asked to nominate participants but that staff could also self nominate. In response to questions from Committee Members, Carolyn Downs stated that study time would be available for participants. Mildred Philips stated that a communications plan to encourage participants and managers to put forward nominations would be devised. Carolyn Downs stated that staff members at the grades indicated were the future leaders of the organisations. She stated that the Council could obviously not guarantee roles for members of each cohort but that the ILM accreditation may help staff members secure promotion elsewhere.

Members of the Committee noted that the HR Review and Annual Workforce Equalities Report 2014/15 included a reverse mentoring initiative; Councillor Pavey stated that such an initiative had been pivotal to the intention of the review. It was agreed that the detail and structure of any mentoring scheme would be drafted and finalised in agreement with the Cabinet Member for Equalities.

RESOLVED:

- (i) that feedback from the Committee be included the report to CMT;
- (ii) that the detail and structure of any mentoring scheme be drafted and finalised in agreement with the Lead Member for Equalities.

**6. Update from Acting Director HR: Achieving Excellence in Employment Policies**

Mildred Philips, Acting Director of Human Resources, stated that the progress update on Councillor Pavey's Review action plan on equalities could be considered as the update on achieving excellence in employment policies.

RESOLVED:

that the update be noted.

**7. Accessibility improvements to the Civic Centre**

Councillor Pavey welcomed Russell Burnaby, Performance Manager, Regeneration and Growth, to the meeting.

Russell Burnaby stated that the associated report set out the access related work undertaken within the civic centre since its opening in 2013 to further improve the level of accessibility to the building based on practical usage and feedback from residents, relevant groups and users of the building.

Russell Burnaby stated that further improvements could be made within the building. These were 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 would be shared with the Equalities Team or other recommended body before progression to ensure improvements achieve the desired objective.

With permission of the Chair, Councillor Long addressed the Committee. She stated that although improvements had been made some areas required further attention:

- The lack of microphones at public meetings, and Brent Connects meetings;
- Yellow paint on steps on the approach to the civic centre;
- Doors in toilet cubicles (difficult to open from inside).

Councillor Long stated that Councillors were unclear about how to report faults in the building.

Councillor Mahmood added that the citizenship ceremony the previous week had been conducted without microphones.

With permission of the Chair, Councillor Southwood addressed the meeting. She stated that she recognised that some improvement had been made but felt uncomfortable that such a discussion was taking place. She stated that such a modern and award winning building, built so recently, should not require such significant further improvement. She stated that navigation around the building, especially for staff or visitors with visual impairments remained difficult.

RESOLVED:

- (i) that a further update on civic centre improvements be scheduled for the next Committee meeting;
- (ii) that Members be sent information about reporting building faults to the helpdesk.

## **8. Council's Equality Impact Assessment process**

Mildred Philips, Director of Human Resources, stated that at its last meeting on 13 July 2015, the Committee had agreed that a discussion paper on the Equality Impact Assessment process currently in place within the Council be presented to the October meeting.

Andreyana Ivanova, Head of Equality, stated that the current report outlined the equality impact assessment (also known as equality analysis) process that the council had put in place to ensure its decision-making was fair, robust and transparent.

Members of the Committee expressed concern at the current process.

RESOLVED:

that the Cabinet Member for Equalities, Chief Executive, Head of HR and Head of Equality meet to discuss the process.

**9. Equality Framework for Local Government**

Members of the Committee were reminded that the London Borough of Brent had asked the Local Government Association (LGA) to conduct an Equality Peer Challenge against the Excellent level of the Equality Framework for Local Government.

Members noted the report summarising the peer team's findings.

Members of the Committee noted that the Challenge Team had commented that a staff survey had not been completed for several years. Councillor Pavey stated that the HR Review had recommended a staff survey be carried out. Carolyn Downs, Chief Executive, stated that plans would be drawn up to carry out a staff survey as soon as possible.

RESOLVED:

that plans for the staff survey be considered by the Committee at its next meeting.

**10. Date of next meeting**

Noted next meeting on 11 January 2016.

**11. Any other urgent business**

No urgent business but it was :

AGREED:

that a report on complaints against the Council be considered by the Committee at its next meeting, identifying those with an equalities impact.

The meeting closed at 8.05 pm

M PAVEY  
Chair