

Subject: Equality & Inclusion Strategy Progress Update
Date of Meeting: 21 January 2019
Report of: Executive Director for Neighbourhoods,
Communities & Housing
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Ward(s) affected: (All Wards);

FOR GENERAL RELEASE

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND POLICY CONTEXT

- 1.1 Brighton & Hove City Council's Equality & Inclusion Strategy was agreed by Council in January 2017. The Strategy seeks to address priorities from the Corporate Plan 2015- 19 and recommendations of the 2016 Fairness Commission and Equality Framework for Local Government (EFLG) peer assessment.
- 1.2 The Strategy outlines the council's equality and inclusion aim to promote, facilitate and deliver equality within the council and in the wider city. The Strategy enables the council to meet its legal obligations under the Equality Act 2010 to set a minimum of one measurable equality objective.
- 1.3 Our central objective is: *To achieve excellence in our equality practice, as measured by the Equality Framework for Local Government, by 2020.*
- 1.4 Five areas of focus are defined within the Strategy to help the council meet this objective, based on the strands assessed in the EFLG. Each area outlines the council's aspirations for equality and inclusion, alongside actions to support progress towards these aspirations.
- 1.5 Our areas of focus are:
 - Open and equitable services
 - Inclusive employer
 - Services that understand our diverse population
 - Strong and fair leadership
 - Effective partnership working to reduce inequality
- 1.6 When NICE Committee members agreed the Strategy and recommended it to Council, they instructed officers to provide an annual update to this committee.
- 1.7 Considerable progress has been made across the council in relation to equality and inclusion, with some practices embedded as 'business as usual' activity. However, there is still more that the council should do to ensure it is a leading Local Authority in relation to equality and inclusion practice.
- 1.8 This report represents the half way point between the EFLG peer assessment in 2016 and upcoming assessment in 2020. This has provided an opportunity to

take stock of progress and identify our priorities for the remainder of this period, whilst continuing our established and embedded activities.

- 1.9 This report provides a high level overview of progress since 2016 in each area of the Strategy. It also highlights what we believe some of the priorities should be for the remainder of the EFLG period to achieve our central objective above.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 2.1 That committee members note the contents of this report - updates against the Equality & Inclusion Strategy objective and key priorities for 2019- 20.

3. CONTEXT/ BACKGROUND INFORMATION

3.1 Open and Equitable Services:

The council has made significant progress in how it collects and uses information to support services to be open and equitable. An increased amount of monitoring data is collected and a standardised approach to data collection has been widely adopted. This has allowed us to have a better understanding of the demographic profile of service users and those who engage with the council. Officers (such as staff based in the Council's Customer Feedback Team) are able to share learning and findings gathered from feedback directly with services to enable them to make improvements and address barriers to access where possible.

- 3.2 Equality information informs Directorate level strategic planning and is embedded in the quarterly performance management process. This is supported by services having a consistent and embedded process for undertaking Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs) and being overseen by DMTs and members of ELT. EIAs inform planning and delivery at programme level which support change management processes.

- 3.3 In 2017, the council developed 'Our Customer Promise' which aimed to promote better communication between customers and services. This clarified the standards that customers should expect from engaging with services across the council and how feedback should be responded to.

4. Inclusive Employer

Initially driven by the Workforce Equality Action Plan (WEAP), progress has been made both in relation to the data the council collects and analyses on our existing workforce and throughout recruitment processes. This has supported a better understanding of our staff demographic profile and highlighted areas of under-representation. This crucial foundation work has provided clarity over our baseline data and informed a positive action approach to address under-representation, particularly of Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) and Disabled staff.

- 4.1 A key area of work has centred on recruitment processes and practices. The use of positive action statements, reviewing job criteria, simplifying our application process, and improving recruitment training and guidance for managers have all been designed to attract and recruit more diverse talent to our workforce.

- 4.2 Having a workforce that does not reflect the diversity of the local community, is not just a feature of the council but one that is shared across other public sector employers within the city. In view of this, the council has worked in partnership with four public sector employers to fund and recruit a City Workforce Equality & Diversity Manager whose remit is to work with each partner to develop and implement a programme of work to address areas of under-representation. The Manager was appointed in October 2018.
- 4.3 Another key area of focus has been on supporting cultural change through implementing an improved performance management framework across the council. This ensures that staff are assessed both on achieving their objectives and on their behaviour. In March 2017, the council's new Behaviour Framework was launched to the top four tiers of management and, in April 2018, it was rolled out to all remaining managers. The roll out was supported by the launch of a new e-learning module to support managers to use the framework effectively when carrying out 1:1 meetings and PDP reviews with staff.
- 4.4 In 2018, the council also launched 'Our People Promise' - five commitments by the council to its staff designed to support them so they can do their jobs well, and ensure they are valued at work. One of the commitments is to be 'a fair and inclusive place to work'. To keep this promise, the council has been undertaking a range of activities to develop a more diverse workforce and create a workplace culture in which everyone is treated with dignity and respect. Key to this work has been the re-commissioning of external consultancy, Global HPO, to review the council's progress in relation to race and diversity. This follows a similar review completed in 2013. The findings from that review will be used to co-create an action plan with staff from across the council to address the concerns identified.
- 4.5 In 2018, the staff learning and development offer was extended. In addition to bespoke learning and development opportunities being rolled out for particular staff groups and teams (e.g. 'Mental health awareness – practical skills for managers', 'Challenging inappropriate behaviours', and training on developing EIAs). Introductory unconscious bias workshops were also added to the corporate offer, with approximately 1700 staff participating.

5. Services that understand our diverse population

The council has invested in and developed long standing relationships with city, community and voluntary sector partners, supported by the Third Sector Investment Programme. This has enabled impactful work to happen in different neighbourhoods and communities across the city.

- 5.1 The council has commissioned many engagement projects, alongside the Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG), that have informed service reviews and developments. The Citywide Needs Assessment (NA) programme and Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) process (which was approved for a further two years in March 2018), provide a comprehensive analysis of the current and future needs of local people. These sources of information – each developed with a range of city partners - are used to inform the commissioning of services that will improve outcomes for residents and reduce inequality. NAs have also led to some collaborative, progressive, and action-focused work in specific areas of

equality such as work from the Trans NA, International Migrant NA, and in relation to Advocacy and Self-Harm.

- 5.2 The council has also built and developed stronger links with key communities, and the faith sector. A Faith Covenant was signed in November 2018 between the Council and faith communities, marking a significant step forward in how we work and engage with the faith sector. Considerable progress was also made in relation to working with Brighton's D/deaf community (leading to the development of BSL Charter and Action Plan in 2017). This approach has led to improved relationships with groups who were not likely to engage with the council previously. By understanding more about our communities, we can more effectively support services to address their needs and recognise their value.

6. Strong and fair leadership

Despite changes in leadership over the EFLG period, there has been some sustained work in some areas of equality and inclusion where Brighton & Hove City Council is seen as exemplary (e.g. its focus on the Violence against Women and Girls, and on countering extremism and radicalisation). This work has been championed and supported by members of ELT and Councillors which has driven forward the respective agendas.

- 6.1 Our ELT are represented throughout council equalities governance structures and chair Directorate Equality Groups (DEGs). This supports an awareness and accountability of any equality and inclusion plans and issues across ELT.
- 6.2 Annual budget EIA processes are also an embedded practice. These directly inform council budget setting. In addition, each member of ELT champions one of the council's four Workers Forums (LGBT, Womens', Disabled Workers' and Carers, and BME).

7. Effective partnership working to reduce inequality

We are proud of the strong partnerships we have developed with organisations across the city, with the community and voluntary sector, and directly with communities and neighbourhoods. This has led to sustained programmes of work that support equality and inclusion and supported capacity building across the city. Neighbourhood Action Plans and Local Action Teams have supported communities to develop their own solutions to local issues, and helped the council to develop an understanding of different communities' needs and any barriers to inclusion.

- 7.1 The council's work as part of the Equality and Inclusion Partnership (EquIP) has enabled some collaborative cross-sector working and joined up responses to city-wide equality issues, such as a joint statement showing support for trans communities across the city, an upcoming city-wide Unity campaign to enhance community cohesion, as well as the City Workforce Equality and Diversity Manager post mentioned above.
- 7.2 We also support and partner with some key forums, such as the Racial Harassment Forum, LGBT Community Safety Forum, Deaf Services Liaison

Forum, and Learning Disability Partnership, which has strengthened our relationships with communities.

- 7.3 We are galvanising links with the commercial sector who are increasingly showing an interest in partnering on equality initiatives and campaigns - extending our reach further, promoting our good practice, and potentially tapping into new audiences.

8. Key Priorities 2019- 20

We will focus on the following five priority areas in 2019- 20.

- 8.1 Co-create and implement, with staff at all levels, an action plan to address the findings from the race and diversity review (undertaken by Global HPO). It is anticipated that an action plan will be developed at the end of January 2019.
- 8.2 Refine our approach to community engagement and development, enabled by the Third Sector Investment Programme, to bring our services closer to the communities they work with, particularly focussing on service-users from BME backgrounds.
- 8.3 Develop a new communications and engagement strategy for equality and inclusion (both internally with our workforce and externally with our communities), championed by council leaders.
- 8.4 Strengthen our relationships with partner organisations across Brighton & Hove to support cross-sector collaboration, knowledge sharing, and capacity building.
- 8.5 Redesign the council's equalities governance structure to improve the internal communication of equality plans and issues, and be more effective in informing strategic decision making at all levels.

9 ANALYSIS & CONSIDERATION OF ANY ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 9.1 There are no alternatives: the council is required by law (Equality Act 2010) to produce a minimum of one equality objective and to report on progress against it. The Equality & Inclusion Strategy defines and describes our objective and this report along with the public reporting describe above, fulfil our legal duties.

10 COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT & CONSULTATION

- 10.1 There was a period of consultation to inform the Equality & Inclusion Strategy. Engagement will continue through the annual public update and also as appropriate to the delivery of the individual components of the strategy.

11. CONCLUSION

- 11.1 The Equality & Inclusion Strategy enables the council to articulate its equality objective and aspirations, meet its legal duties, and address areas for

development identified in the 2016 EFLG external review in preparation for reassessment in 2020.

- 11.2 This report gives an overview of the progress so far and outlines the key priority areas for 2019- 20.

12. FINANCIAL & OTHER IMPLICATIONS:

Financial Implications:

There are no direct financial implications arising from the recommendation made in this report.

Finance Officer Consulted: Michael Bentley

Date: 13/12/18

Legal Implications:

There are no direct legal implications arising from the recommendation made in this report.

Lawyer Consulted: Victoria Simpson

Date: 19/12/2018

Equalities Implications:

All equality implications are addressed within the body of this report.

Sustainability Implications:

There are no direct sustainability implications arising from the recommendation made in this report.

Any Other Significant Implications:

There are no other significant implications.

Background Documents

Equality & Inclusion Strategy:

<https://www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/sites/brighton-hove.gov.uk/files/BHCC%20Equality%20and%20Inclusion%20Strategy%20FINAL.pdf>

Workforce Equality Action Plan Committee Paper July 2013 (following race and diversity review from Global HPO in 2013):

[https://present.brighton-hove.gov.uk/Published/C00000689/M00004685/A100034668/\\$20130701110755_004462_0017271_WorkforceEqualitiesActionPlanCoverPRReportfinalversion.docA.ps.pdf](https://present.brighton-hove.gov.uk/Published/C00000689/M00004685/A100034668/$20130701110755_004462_0017271_WorkforceEqualitiesActionPlanCoverPRReportfinalversion.docA.ps.pdf)