

**20 January 2021**

**Agenda Item: 5**

**REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR – CUSTOMERS, GOVERNANCE AND EMPLOYEES**

**UPDATE REPORT ON ACTIONS TO SUPPORT THE COUNCIL'S BLACK WORKFORCE**

**Purpose of the Report**

1. To provide further information to Elected Members on the progress made in delivering the actions identified in the Equalities (Support for Black Workers) Action Plan and to agree continuing work in this area.

**Information**

2. A report was considered at Personnel Committee on 8 July 2020 which served to update Members in relation to the Race at Work Charter and to seek approval for the additional actions identified to better understand the issues being raised and to provide support for Black employees. The developing action plan (Appendix 1) was agreed at September's Committee as it was recognised that a plan was required to help the Council to tackle racism and discrimination as a means of measuring progress and maintaining accountability for the identified actions.
3. Discussions have continued with the Council's self-managed Black Workers Network throughout the Covid pandemic and in the Corporate Equalities Group to identify what is required to provide appropriate support to Black colleagues. It remains important to record the identified actions in one place so the relevant parties can be held accountable for progress being made and to provide a platform to measure the impact of the various activities.
4. Progress has been made to recruit to the refreshed Equalities Officer post and over 19 completed applications have been received. Shortlisting is underway with a view to interviews taking place in early January. A further verbal update on progress will be provided to the January Committee when it is expected an appointment will have been made. As previously reported, the selection process will involve colleagues from the self-managed groups, Corporate Equalities Group and the recognised trade unions to ensure the successful candidate is tested on the full range of equality issues which the Council seeks to make progress on.

5. Since the last update in September 2020, a number of actions have been completed or instigated. These include the involvement of the Council in the Integrated Care System Partnership virtual celebration of Black History Month in October. Councillor Gordon Wheeler, as the Council's Equality Champion provided a video clip as part of the event's introduction. Over 300 colleagues from across the partnership joined the event and a recording of the two hour celebration was placed on the Council's Anti-Racism Hub. Work will begin early in the New Year to plan events to mark Black Inclusion Week in May and Windrush Day in June.
6. A Question and Answer session was held with the Chief Executive, the Corporate Director for Adult Social Care and Health and the Service Director Customers, Governance and Employees on 19 November 2020. Some of the themes which came out of the discussion included:
  - **Organisational culture** – to ensure that the Council develops and maintains a working environment free from racism, bias and discrimination. As well as making the Council a good place to work, we know that people perform better when they feel their employer has “got their back”.
  - **Continued dialogue** – with strong black voices working alongside senior leaders who, together, openly value diversity, and who encourage and enable discussion, and challenge.
  - **Challenging inappropriate behaviour** – where everyone who works for the Council feels able to challenge racism and all other forms of discrimination, and strong action when things have gone too far.
  - **Management and leadership development** – to ensure managers have the confidence and skills for constructive dialogue and for sensitive and difficult conversations.
  - **Recruitment and career development** – to identify and remove the barriers, which black colleagues face in advancing their careers, and to ensure we support colleagues to fulfil their potential.
  - **The importance of training and development** – to offer training which is open to all, with strong encouragement to engage, and which covers unconscious bias, treating people fairly, and equality and diversity.
  - **Communication and visibility of issues and responses** – to respond to issues in a proactive way, reinforcing an open and communicative culture. Making assertive statements, condemning acts of racism and other forms of discrimination, when they happen. Enabling all colleagues to contribute their ideas and suggestions. Working harder to communicate the support which is already in place.
  - **The role and importance of elected members** – working with County Councillors, so they are engaged regularly in dialogue about our plans and commitment to tackle racism. To support the Council's newly appointed Members' Equality Champion, Councillor Gordon Wheeler.
  - **Measuring success** – to set out our ambitions, with clear targets underpinned by accessible data, so that we understand the evidence and can measure progress and improvement. To ensure that our performance is scrutinised in public, through the Personnel Committee.
  - **Knowing our evidence base** – to base decisions on current data and evidence and to ensure the County's Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) reflects race and diversity and can inform the delivery of services.
7. The session was considered thought-provoking and has been the subject of a personal message from Anthony May. The engagement was positively received, and it is intended to hold further sessions over the coming months.

8. The Corporate Leadership Team have signed an Anti-Racism Pledge (appendix 2) committing to a series of actions which support the delivery of the Council's obligations to the Race at Work Charter. The signing of the pledge has been the subject of the Chief Executive's blog and an intranet News Item to raise awareness and to give its importance visibility across the whole workforce.
9. A version of the pledge is being used as an underpinning document for our Anti-Racism Allies programme which will roll-out the first full week of January 2021. To support colleagues signing up to be an ally, we have commissioned Active Bystander training which will prepare our employees to challenge discriminatory behaviour when they encounter it. In addition, the unconscious bias training has been refreshed and continues to be reviewed to ensure it meets expectations. This training is mandatory for all managers who are involved in recruitment.
10. The Council, as a large employer and community leader, will continue to challenge racism and discrimination in our Council and communities, and support black colleagues in our many service areas and their daily lives where they face discrimination and prejudice. Whilst we have had long standing policies and procedures to address racism and other forms of discrimination, it is timely to review our position and work with staff support networks and trades union colleagues to identify additional actions to promote discussion, raise awareness and identify how we can further improve.
11. The attached action plan agreed by Personnel Committee in September is extensive and ambitious and we will continue to add to it over time as new ideas and initiatives are generated to ensure it retains its currency and meets the objectives it is intended to achieve. Colleagues have willingly shared their experiences and it has become evident that further work must continue to raise and maintain the profile of all of the various equality strands across the whole of the Council's workforce and Nottinghamshire communities. The action plan is an addendum to the Council's overarching Equalities Action Plan which has some specific actions identified regarding each of the specific areas but also more general actions around inclusivity and accessibility.

### **Other Options Considered**

12. The Council has a legal obligation under the Public Sector Equality Duty to publish information regarding the makeup of its workforce. The action plan draws together a suite of priority areas requiring further work and which seek to build on progress made to date by further improving the diversity of its workforce. No other options were considered as effective in meeting this ambition.

### **Reasons for Recommendations**

13. The Council has a duty to all its employees and the citizens of Nottinghamshire to create and maintain a working environment free from harassment and discrimination, to support and enable people to develop their careers and to provide inclusive and accessible employment opportunities for all. The draft action plan provides a framework to enable progress to be monitored and which will be added to over time. The current situation makes this a timely and important set of initiatives which will assist the Council to recruit and retain people from a diverse range of backgrounds and ensure we have the relevant knowledge, skills and experience to meet future challenges.

## **Statutory and Policy Implications**

14. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of crime and disorder, data protection and information governance finance, human resources, human rights, the NHS Constitution (public health services), the public sector equality duty, safeguarding of children and adults at risk, service users, smarter working, sustainability and the environment and where such implications are material they are described below. Appropriate consultation has been undertaken and advice sought on these issues as required.

## **Data Protection and Information Governance**

15. There are no data protection or GDPR issues arising from this report as all the information contained is generic and cannot be attributed to individual employees.

## **Financial Implications**

16. There is no additional funding required arising from the recommendation in this report as any costs for additional development and learning opportunities will be met from the existing HR, Workforce and Organisational Development service budgets.

## **Human Resources Implications**

17. The Council continues to aspire to be an Employer of Choice for all and therefore it is important to take the necessary actions to ensure people feel they will be treated fairly and any type of harassment, discrimination or bias is challenged and eradicated. It is important for our workforce to be aware of the commitment senior leaders have given and to consider how they can at a service and individual level contribute to making the Council a fair and inclusive place to work. Consideration is being given as to how this can be embedded in the annual appraisal system and in support and supervision sessions.

## **Public Sector Equality Duty Implications**

18. Previous reports have identified that signing the Race at Work Charter, provides evidence of how the Council is meeting its obligations under the Public Sector Equality Duty which requires public bodies to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct prohibited by the Equality Act 2010;
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not; and
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

19. The Council is now a signatory of the Race at Work Charter and the additional actions set out in the attached action plan will further support the Council in meeting and going beyond its statutory obligations.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

It is recommended that Elected Members:

- 1) Approve any additional actions identified for inclusion in the Equalities (Support for Black Employees) Action Plan.
- 2) Receive an update on further progress made towards meeting the identified actions at Committee on 30 June 2021.

**Marjorie Toward**  
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**Chief Executives Department**

**For any enquiries about this report please contact:**

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### **Constitutional Comments (KK 16/12/20)**

20. The recommendations fall within the remit of Personnel Committee by virtue of its terms of reference.

### **Financial Comments (SES 18/12/20)**

21. There are no specific financial implications arising directly from this report.

### **HR Comments (JP 23/12/20)**

22. These are set out in the body of the report and reflect ongoing dialogue with the staff support groups, particularly the Black Workers Network, and recognised Trades Unions.

### **Background Papers and Published Documents**

Except for previously published documents, which will be available elsewhere, the documents listed here will be available for inspection in accordance with Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972.

- None

### **Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected**

- All