

**Manchester City Council
Report for Information**

Report to: Resources and Governance Scrutiny Committee – 12 October 2021

Subject: Equalities Strategy Implementation Update

Report of: Director of Human Resources and Organisation Development

Summary

Manchester is a diverse and vibrant City and our workforce should reflect and celebrate that diversity at all levels of the organisation.

This report provides members with an update on progress to date to increase diversity, ensure we are an inclusive employer and to challenge discrimination.

Recommendations

Committee is asked to:

1. Note the progress to date
 2. Consider the latest version of the Workforce Equality Strategy
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Wards Affected: All

Environmental Impact Assessment - the impact of the issues addressed in this report on achieving the zero-carbon target for the city

Our Manchester Strategy outcomes	Summary of how this report aligns to the OMS
A thriving and sustainable city: supporting a diverse and distinctive economy that creates jobs and opportunities	The public sector is a major employer in Manchester so if we can recruit more from Manchester residents it will contribute to this outcome. The city council should reflect the communities of Manchester fully and at all levels.
A highly skilled city: world class and home-grown talent sustaining the city's economic success	Employees who work for the city council and live in Manchester will receive skills development.

A progressive and equitable city: making a positive contribution by unlocking the potential of our communities	Employees who work for the city council and live in Manchester will make a positive contribution to the city. When the City Council is fully reflective of the communities we serve, we will be an exemplar of a progressive and equitable employer.
A liveable and low carbon city: a destination of choice to live, visit, work	Not directly relevant
A connected city: world class infrastructure and connectivity to drive growth	Employees who work for the city council and live in Manchester will have their technological skills improved, reducing digital deprivation

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Background documents (available for public inspection):

Workforce Equalities Strategy report to Resources and Governance Overview Scrutiny November 2020

1.0 Background

In 2019 an external review of race issues in the workforce of the Council was commissioned. This review was finalised in November 2019. The commission aimed to understand the extent to which our organisational culture and values, reinforced by our policy approach and behaviours, support inclusive employment practices and recognise and respect differences.

The findings of the review were published in 2020 and in order to make progress with pace a working group was established to take the recommendations forward. Over a 12-week period a group of c90 employees from across the organisation met and considerable progress was made to implement the recommendations and an update is provided in this report.

In addition, the working group recommended the development of an overarching Workforce Equality Strategy and work to develop this strategy has continued over the last 12 months.

2.0 Update on activity over the last 12 months:

The actions from the race review were grouped into 5 broad headings and an update on each is provided below:

1. Monitoring:

Action: Understanding the reasons why there are gaps in the data, how we can get better coverage and better reporting to track progress and set targets:

Update:

Work to understand why there were gaps in our workforce equality data identified several reasons including a level of distrust amongst some groups and individuals around how the data would be used or whether it was identifiable and instances where equality data had not been collected at the point of appointment (e.g. when temporary staff were appointed to permanent contracts). In addition, our systems did not have the latest equalities classifications for meaningful reporting or target setting.

The following activity has been undertaken since the last committee:

- The recruitment applicant tracking system has been updated with the correct equalities classifications and equalities data is now collected for all applicants at each stage of the recruitment process so we can identify and target any specific issues, e.g., low/no applications from certain groups.
- SAP has been updated with the correct equalities classifications and the process of resurveying all staff is currently underway. The top 400 managers were asked to input their data over the summer and the remainder of online staff are currently being asked to do the same. This will be followed up in November/December with the resurvey of all offline staff.
- By January all staff should have updated their information and meaningful targets can then be set both corporately and at a directorate level.

2. Developing black, Asian and minority ethnic staff:

Action: Developing interventions to increase diversity including development programmes for black, Asian and minority ethnic staff, review of recruitment panels and race awareness for staff:

Update:

- The first cohort of the black, Asian and minority ethnic staff development programme was launched earlier this year and provided 12 staff with the opportunity to get experience of working at a senior level, access to senior leaders and working on strategic pieces of work. To date 2 participants on the programme have moved into more senior roles. The second cohort is due to start in January 2022.
- The LeadHERship programme aimed at black, Asian and minority ethnic women was launched in Sept this year with 23 staff taking part in an intensive programme of training and development around leadership skills and navigating gender biases in the workplace.
- The roll out of an Inclusive Leadership Programme is underway, aimed at Grade 10+ (c400 staff) with a focus on unconscious bias, structural discrimination and empowering managers to take ownership to tackle discriminatory behaviours and provide inclusive spaces.
- A “Let’s talk about race” programme has been developed which will be mandatory for all staff and will be rolled out over the next 12 months. Themes of these sessions include exploring unconscious bias, structural racism and white privilege through a mixture of online videos where individuals talk about their lived experience and followed up with facilitated group discussions.
- It is now a requirement for all panels to be diverse and in order to facilitate this staff can volunteer to be part of a recruitment panel, in some instances as a development opportunity, and will receive support and training. In addition, all managers who sit on a panel need to have had equalities training.

3. Engagement and Communications:

Action: Increasing visibility of black, Asian and minority ethnic staff within all Corporate and Directorate communications to raise awareness and build confidence.

Update:

- All communications and engagement have been reviewed to be more diverse and reflective of the workforce through a mixture of celebrating a range of community and religious occasions, but also through staff stories which are included each week.
- In addition, the tone and content of our communications and engagement has been reviewed to ensure it is accessible to our whole workforce.

4. HR Policies:

Action: HR policies to be reviewed through the lens of race equality to ensure they promote equality and address issues identified through the race review.

Update:

- HR/OD have started work on a review of all workforce policies which will be brought forward over the coming 18 months. In October a new Disciplinary, Employee Dispute Resolution and 3rd Party Abuse and Harassment Policy will be brought before Personnel Committee.
- In terms of the proposed disciplinary and employee dispute resolution policies:
 - Both policies will now state there is a zero-tolerance approach to any form of discrimination within the organisation.
 - The disciplinary policy in addition makes clear that any form of discriminatory behaviour will be deemed as gross misconduct.
 - Any cases which include any form of alleged discriminatory behaviour (either through disciplinary or employee dispute resolution) must be investigated/heard by a senior officer and they must have attended the inclusive leadership training.
- The 3rd Party Abuse and Harassment policy is new and sets out the Council's approach to tackling incidents of 3rd party abuse against employees, including harassment, discrimination and bullying. 'Third party' abuse and harassment refer to someone that employees interact with as part of their role but who are not employed by the Council. The policy and guidance also provide advice to managers on how to support staff who encounter such abuse.
- The Special Leave policy guidance has been updated and requires managers to consider cultural reasons why staff may need to take extended leave (e.g. family funeral in a distant country, religious observance etc.).
- In order to support the implementation of these policies the HR casework team have been through considerable training over the last 12 months to both support and challenge managers through cases which involve any form of discrimination.
- In addition, issues around disparity of disciplinary cases involving black, Asian and minority ethnic staff have been addressed and are now proportionate with the workforce composition.

5. Leadership

Action: Supporting Leaders and managers to understand and create racial equality and better understand the lived experience of our black, Asian and minority ethnic staff:

Update:

- As set out earlier in this report it is now a requirement of all staff, including senior leaders, to attend the Let's Talk about Race sessions. In addition, all leaders (G10+) will attend the Inclusive Leadership sessions and to date 100 managers have attended including SMT.
- Race and equalities generally are now a standing item on the Senior Management Team, Senior Leaders Group and at Directorate Management teams.
- The workforce assurance dashboard now includes equality monitoring and goes to SMT and Directorate Management Teams.

- All Strategic Directors are met with on a quarterly basis to be taken through their equalities data and to look at casework involving/alleging discrimination.
- A new equality, diversity and inclusion objective is being included in senior leaders' annual appraisal which will monitor how senior officers are personally driving the agenda within their service areas.

3.0 Developing a revised Workforce Equalities Strategy:

- 3.1 As work progressed with the race working group, it became apparent an overarching workforce equality strategy was required and an early draft of the strategy was brought before the committee last November. Since then, work has continued with the new version which is included within the slides that accompany this report.
- 3.2 Key to the development of the strategy has been ongoing engagement with groups across the Council. In order to get a breadth of views, there has been ongoing engagement and dialogue with the staff network groups, the trade unions, meetings with elected members with a lead for equalities and thematic sessions with the wider workforce and members on specific issues.
- 3.3 Through engagement, deeper understanding of the issues and challenges faced by staff and informed by learning both from work on the race review, the strategy has evolved and is now set against 6 broad strands:

Strand 1: Attract, recruit and select in a way that is inclusive and drives diversity at all levels

Reflecting our communities at *all* levels is key to the new strategy. We are aware that we are not yet where we need to be, particularly in terms of our black, Asian and minority ethnic and disabled staff and this is most stark at a senior level. It is therefore imperative that we can attract talent from our communities. Earlier this year a new Talent and Diversity team was established within HR/OD focused on developing our existing workforce and creating pathways into employment from our communities, schools, colleges and universities. Work to date has included:

- Reaching out to community groups to gain trust and increase applications
- Reviewing our approach to apprenticeships and graduates so they are more attractive to diverse communities.
- Supporting the development of internal development programmes

A wholescale review of recruitment will begin this month which will review and change our approach to attracting candidates, ensuring the application process is not a barrier to any specific groups and making assessment methods accessible and relevant.

Strand 2: Educate, develop and build talent within our workforce.

Ensuring all our staff understand equality, diversity and inclusion is key to building an inclusive workplace.

It is essential our entire workforce understands equality and diversity if we are to truly create an inclusive workplace. As set out earlier in this report there are two mandatory programmes, the Inclusive Leadership programme aimed at G10+ and the 'Let's talk about Race' programme which will be mandatory for all staff.

In addition, equalities and inclusion will form part of the revised induction programme for all new staff and will be discussed as part of the About You conversation.

A new behaviour is being developed and will become part of the Our Manchester Behaviours and Our Manchester Experience.

Strand 3: Strengthen the visibility and voice of our staff networks, equality champions and allies.

Our staff networks, equality champions and allies have been key to the development of this strategy and creating space for them to raise issues, bring ideas forward and hold us to account is vital in order to maintain trust and provide rigour.

To ensure this, the City Solicitor supported by the Deputy Director HR/OD has created a group which will include the chairs of the staff network groups and a senior member of each directorate who will have lead responsibility for equalities for their area. The group will monitor progress against the strategy and local action plans in services and this group will report into SMT.

The work to improve diversity within communications, as set out earlier in this report, will also continue.

Strand 4: Be clear there is zero tolerance to any form of discrimination.

It is vital that all staff are clear that no form of discrimination is acceptable either from colleagues or from the public. In order to reinforce this:

- All workforce policies will have our zero-tolerance statement within them
- Any discriminatory behaviour from staff will be deemed gross misconduct
- The new 3rd Party Abuse and Harassment policy provides additional protection and support for our staff and empowers managers to act when abuse occurs
- All discrimination cases will continue to be monitored by HR and the relevant strategic director to ensure consistency of approach.

Strand 5: Set and monitor targets across a range of measures:

In order to set meaningful targets, the entire workforce is being resurveyed on their equality information. This is currently underway for online staff and will be completed for offline staff by the end of this year so by January a new set of measures will be introduced at both a corporate and directorate level and will be monitored annually as part of the business planning process.

Strand 6: Create policies and processes that feel fair to everyone:

A review of all workforce policies is currently underway. In addition to this it is vital we review our processes and “the way we do things” to remove any unintentional bias. However, this is about more than removing barriers, it’s about creating inclusive processes that recognise and welcome diversity. Work within this strand will include:

- Root and branch review of the recruitment process (including the policy)
- Development of a new workplace adaptations hub which will be a one stop shop for staff who require adaptations to do their role and will provide advice for managers
- Becoming an accredited Age Friendly employer
- Development of a range of new policies and guidance including support for trans staff and their managers (“tell us once”), greater support for women going through the menopause and for staff who experiencing domestic abuse.

4.0 Conclusion:

- 4.1 The City Council continues a journey to achieving equality, diversity and inclusion for its workforce. The work to implement the recommendations from the race review is ongoing and there has been a great deal of progress over the last 12 months. In addition, the development of the Workforce Equality Strategy provides the framework for these actions and those across all protected characteristics can be tracked and scrutinised.
- 4.2 Members are asked to comment on the progress to date and the Workforce Equality Strategy.