

**REPORT  
FOR:**

**EMPLOYEES' CONSULTATIVE  
FORUM**

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**Date of Meeting:** 23<sup>rd</sup> February 2016

**Subject:** **INFORMATION REPORT**  
Part 2 of Annual Equality in Employment  
Report for 1 April 2014 - 31 March 2015

**Responsible Officer:** Jon Turner  
Divisional Director, Human Resources &  
Organisational Development

**Exempt:** No

**Enclosures:** Appendix 1 - Equalities Data

## **Section 1 – Summary**

This report sets out the key issues identified from the analysis of the 2014/15 equalities in employment data, previously presented to ECF in November 2015 and the Forum is requested to consider and comment on the priorities that are recommended to be addressed in the Corporate Equality Action Plan.

**FOR INFORMATION**

## **Section 2 – Report**

### **INTRODUCTION**

2.1 This report sets out the key issues identified from the analysis of the equalities employment data 2014/15 that was previously submitted to the Employees' Consultative Forum in November 2015, in accordance with the Council's statutory duty under the Equalities Act 2010.

2.2 The issues identified and detailed largely reflect those from the 2014/15 data and a number also reflect patterns highlighted over previous years.

2.3 The Corporate Equalities Group (CEG) will consider recommendations to be included in the Corporate Equality Action Plan, arising from the priorities identified from the analysis of the data.

2.4 In determining how to further progress actions, particularly in the context of limited resources, and the major changes currently taking place within Harrow Council, there is a need to be pragmatic about what can be achieved. Therefore, the report identifies three priorities for action, reflecting the key issues identified.

2.5 This year's recruitment data (2014/15) is the first reported under the new Pertemps recruitment contract

### **CONTEXT**

2.6 In agreeing strategies and actions to address these priorities, consideration of the context within which the work is and will be undertaken is important.

2.7 The extensive changes being implemented and planned across all services, the need to achieve further budget reductions, a reducing workforce, the changing role of local government and the different types of working arrangements now being utilised, will all have a significant impact both on the Council's workforce profile and our ability to address the issues identified from the data. Transformation and alternative service delivery models will potentially have the greatest impact on the Council's workforce profile, and in terms of equalities, the influence of other actions the Council may take may be limited. The number of directly employed staff has reduced by over 5% since last year's report (whole Council 5.8% reduction, excluding schools 6.8% reduction). The recent reorganisation of the senior management structure has also impacted on the equalities profile at a senior level.

2.8 In addition, the action being taken to mitigate potential redundancies i.e. recruitment freezes and the redeployment of displaced staff, will mean recruitment of directly employed staff, particularly new staff to the Council, will remain at a relatively low level. Therefore any recruitment initiatives will have a much reduced impact on the overall profile of the directly employed workforce. However, it is important the Council seeks to recruit a more representative workforce for those areas recruiting externally. It is also important that existing staff, particularly BAME staff and staff with disabilities are supported to progress and develop within the organisation. The CEG will consider recommendations to be included in the Corporate Action Plan.

## **ANALYSIS OF EMPLOYMENT DATA – KEY ISSUES IDENTIFIED**

### **WORKFORCE PROFILE/ RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION**

#### **RACE**

##### **i. Representation of BAME Employees in the Workforce**

The Council has an objective to develop a workforce that reflects the diverse communities it serves. This year's data highlights that, as in previous years, the representation of BAME employees in the workforce (40.18%) does not yet match BAME representation in the local community (57.75%).

However, there has been a steady incremental increase in the proportion of BAME employees in the workforce over a number of years and the proportion of BAME employees in the workforce increased by 5.49% in this year's report compared to the previous year.

The proportion of BAME appointments exceeds the current proportion of BAME staff in the workforce, excluding schools, and the data also shows a lower representation of BAME employees leaving the Council's employment, compared to their representation in the workforce. Additionally, the proportion of white staff leaving on grounds of voluntary redundancy is greater than their representation in the workforce. If these trends continue, this would contribute to a continuing increase in the proportion of BAME employees in the workforce over a period of time.

##### **ii. Low proportion of BAME appointments compared to applications**

The proportion of BAME applicants exceeds their profile in the community; however, appointments of BAME applicants do not. Appointments of BAME applicants do, however, exceed the current proportion of BAME staff in the workforce, excluding schools, and therefore gradual progress is being achieved.

The significant improvement we saw last year in the drop off in the proportion of BAME applicants between interview and appointment stage has been sustained and is considerably less than it had been in previous years (this year 59.65% - 57.06%, last year 47.54% - 45.81%, but year ending 31 March 2013 it was 52.50% - 38.30%).

The drop off in the proportion of BAME applicants between application and interview stage remains pronounced at 68.42% – 59.65% (last year 57.93% - 47.54%).

Relying on recruitment alone to redress the imbalance in the representation of BAME employees in the workforce is unlikely to produce significant change, as levels of external recruitment remain relatively low, with a high proportion of post being filled internally by redeployees i.e. staff at risk of redundancy.

##### **iii. Lack of BAME representation at senior levels in the organisation**

Across the Council, the proportion of BAME employees is greatest in the lower paybands and reduces at higher paybands. When the snapshot of the workforce was taken on 31 March 2015, there were no employees who had declared their ethnicity as BAME at payband 6 (Director level and above).

Representation of BAME staff on the leadership programme continues to exceed the representation in the workforce. However, focussing on recruitment and support to improve the representation of BAME staff at senior levels is one of the priorities that CEG will be asked to consider including in the Action Plan.

## **GENDER**

### **i. High proportion of women part time workers**

Women comprise almost all of the workforce working part time (92.26%). There tends to be a higher proportion within schools as a consequence of school opening hours and term time only employees.

## **DISABILITY**

### **i. Under representation of employees with disabilities in the workforce**

The proportion of employees across the whole Council (including schools) who declared they had a disability dropped to 1.44% (a reduction of 0.15% on the previous year) and was again, below the Council's target of 3%. A total of only 70 employees, across the whole Council, declared a disability. The proportion of employees excluding those in schools who declared they had a disability was 2.94% (60 employees).

The overall proportion of employees leaving the Council who have declared a disability is slightly lower than the representation in the workforce.

However, based on the results of the Staff Survey which took place in 2014, there are a higher proportion of staff with disabilities across the workforce who are choosing not to declare their disability (See Workforce Data below)

### **ii. Low proportion of appointments from applicants with disabilities, compared to applications**

Only 2.57% of applications received were from applicants with disabilities, a drop from 3.42% in last year's report. However, the proportion of applicants with disabilities who were shortlisted and appointed were both higher than the proportion of applications received from applicants with disabilities.

There was a slight increase in the proportion of applicants with disabilities who were appointed compared to the proportion at the shortlisting stage. This may indicate that the Council's commitment to offer an interview to all applicants with disabilities who meet the minimum criteria in accordance with the 'two tick' symbol, is having an effect.

As in previous years the numbers involved are very small e.g. only 6 applicants with disabilities were appointed, so care should be taken when interpreting the data.

Applicants and employees assess and classify themselves as to whether they have a disability and/or whether they wish it to be recorded. The Council application form references the definition of disability as contained in the Equality Act 2010, but it is clear that different individuals may have different views about what constitutes disability. The SAP system, where current employees can record whether they are disabled, does not provide any definition.

### **iii. Representation of disabled employees at senior levels in the organisation**

The representation of employees who have declared a disability remains low at all levels of the organisation.

As with BAME staff, focussing on recruitment and support to enable staff with disabilities to progress is one of the priorities that CEG will be asked to consider including in the Action Plan.

## **AGE**

### **i. Under representation of employees aged under 25 years in the Workforce**

Over 55% of the workforce across the whole Council is aged 45 years and over, and over 63% excluding schools. The proportion of over 65s employed has increased slightly year on year.

The proportion of Harrow Council employees aged under 25 years remains low at 3.83%, however, this year, there has been a slight increase from the previous year.

The data shows that the proportion of employees leaving the Council aged under 25 years, is higher than their representation in the workforce. It is important that the reasons for this pattern are understood to address any issues and support improved retention.

### **ii. Low level of recruitment of young people**

The Council attracted 11.4% of its applications from young people aged under 25 years and 12.27% of Council appointments were of candidates aged under 25 years (very different from last year when only 5.16% of appointments were candidates aged under 25 years). This exceeds the representation of under 25 year olds in the workforce (1.37%), but is still at a low level to impact on the aging workforce.

Addressing this aging workforce is one of the highest priorities of the Council's resourcing strategy in order to secure a workforce to meet the future needs of the Council. This is in addition to the Administration's commitment to support apprenticeships; so focussing on the recruitment, support and retention of young people is one of the priorities that CEG will be asked to consider including in the Action Plan.

## **EMPLOYMENT PROCEDURES**

### **i. Disproportionate representation of BAME employees in Disciplinary Procedures and initiating Grievance Procedure**

This year the proportion of BAME employees involved in the Disciplinary Procedure was 37.21% compared to their representation in the workforce at 40.18%, an improvement compared to last year when they were over represented in disciplinary cases i.e. (46.51% of cases involved BAME employees compared to their representation in the workforce at only 34.69%). This will continue to be monitored.

The number of disciplinary cases is very small given the size of the workforce.

BAME staff are over represented in performance and sickness absence cases (62%) compared to representation in the workforce (40.18%). This is completely different to the previous year where the cases predominantly involved White employees (61.22%).

Whilst the data shows that proportionately, BAME employees are more likely to be dismissed under the Performance and Sickness Absence Procedures than white staff, care should be taken when interpreting the data as the numbers are so low they are not meaningful.

This year, again, the proportion of cases under the Grievance Procedure taken out by BAME employees (47.62%) was higher than the representation in the workforce (40.18%), however, the difference is much less than last year (68.18% of cases involving BAME employees compared to 34.69% BAME employees in workforce) .

The overrepresentation in disciplinary cases was highlighted as a major concern in the 2012/13 Annual Equalities in Employment Report and, as a consequence, an independent review was undertaken of all performance, sickness absence and grievance cases. The review, which was commissioned through the CEG concluded that, based on the case information, there was no evidence of direct or indirect discrimination. However, a number of recommendations were made regarding the consistency in application of procedures across the workforce.

## **WORKFORCE DATA**

### **i. Accuracy and completeness of workforce profile data**

The previously high percentage of “Unknowns” on the Protected Characteristics of Religion or Belief and Sexual Orientation increased again this year (83.74% and 84.39%), which means that a full Corporate picture cannot be established and it is not possible to carry out meaningful analysis.

Under reporting of equalities data continues to be an issue for the Council, specifically in relation to certain protected characteristics i.e. disability, sexual orientation and religion or belief.

In the staff survey (non-schools) in June 2014, 6.5% of those who responded (94 employees), declared they had a disability. This year’s data shows that only 1.44% (70 employees) across the whole Council declared a disability. Information from the staff survey indicated that in a significant proportion of cases, staff did not believe there was any reason to disclose their social identity information and therefore choose not to. In addition, it may be, in some cases at least, that employees are reluctant to declare their equalities profile because they believe it may affect how they are treated at work.

In order for the Council to monitor performance on equalities and meet the individual needs of the workforce as part of the development of an inclusive culture, it is essential a full picture of the workforce is established. The Council wants to enable and encourage staff to declare against all protected characteristics, and create a climate in which staff feel comfortable to disclose this information.

Achieving a more comprehensive profile of the workforce by encouraging staff to declare their protected characteristics has been identified as one of the key priorities for CEG to consider including in the Action Plan.

## **TRAINING**

A broad range of training and development activity has continued over the past year, to develop understanding on equalities and support the development of all staff, including those from underrepresented groups.

New joiners continue to complete the mandatory 'Equality Matters' module within 8 weeks of starting and existing staff undertake a refresher every 2 years. In addition, the 'Equitable and Fair Recruitment and Selection' Programme which includes "unconscious bias" and Disability Awareness training continues to support the development of an inclusive approach.

Proportionately more BAME staff are undertaking all three Leadership programmes, for future leaders, middle managers and first line managers, than the representation in the workforce, developing their skills to progress within the organisation.

In addition, most directorates carry out their own specific training to meet their particular needs e.g. dementia training, which is not recorded centrally. However, in future it is anticipated that all training will be recorded centrally on the new learning management system "Learning POD (Place of Development)".

## **THE CORPORATE EQUALITY ACTION PLAN**

Recommendations to address the key issues highlighted by the analysis of the data will be considered by the Corporate Equalities Group for inclusion in the Corporate Equality Action Plan.

## **CONSULTATION**

This report and the comments of the Forum will be considered at the Corporate Equalities Group, which includes representation from external partners including Harrow Association of Disabled people, Age Concern and Harrow Equalities Centre, recognised trade unions and employees from the Making A Difference Group.

## **MONITORING AND REVIEW**

Equalities in employment monitoring information and delivery of the Equalities Action plan will be monitored by the Corporate Equalities Group.

## **SUMMARY**

The priorities that have been identified are:

- Achieving a more comprehensive profile of the workforce by improving the reporting and recording of protected characteristics, particularly disability.
- Improving the proportion of BAME and disabled staff at senior paybands, and continue to work on leadership development to improve opportunities for BAME and other under-represented staff groups
- Improving the recruitment, support and retention of young people

The Corporate Equalities Group will be recommend to consider actions relating to these priorities for inclusion within the Equality Action Plan

## **Section 3 – Further Information**

None.

## Section 4 – Financial Implications

There are no direct financial implications arising from this report. Any expenditure related to the delivery of actions agreed by the Corporate Equality Group e.g. training will be funded from existing budget provision.

## Section 5 - Equalities implications

This information report sets out actions to improve the Council's performance on equalities in employment.

## Section 6 – Corporate Priorities

The Council's vision:

### Working Together to Make a Difference for Harrow

The Council wants to be a modern, efficient Council, able to meet the challenges ahead. It aims to protect frontline services by delivering support functions in the most cost effective way, including collaborating with other local authorities on shared services and in doing so contribute to the effective delivery of all the Council's priorities.

- Making a difference for the vulnerable
- Making a difference for communities
- Making a difference for local businesses
- Making a difference for families

The report relates to employment of Council employees and as such supports delivery of all corporate priorities.

Name: Sharon Daniels



on behalf of the Chief  
Financial Officer

Date: 15 February 2016

## Section 7 - Contact Details and Background Papers

**Contact:** Tish Tunnacliffe, Snr HR Case Management and Policy Adviser  
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**Background Papers:** Appended