

REPORT FOR: **CABINET**

Date of Meeting:	21 May 2015
Subject:	Equality Matters – Delivering fair and equitable services
Key Decision:	No
Responsible Officer:	Tom Whiting, Corporate Director of Resources
Portfolio Holder:	Councillor Varsha Parmar, Portfolio Holder for Public Health, Equality and Wellbeing
Exempt:	No
Decision subject to Call-in:	No as the report is for noting
Wards affected:	All Wards
Enclosures:	Appendix 1: Equalities in Employment Action Plan

Section 1 – Summary and Recommendations

Summary:

This report provides an update of the Council's performance against its equalities agenda in the last twelve months (2014/15) as well as summarising the actions taken in response to the recommendations from the investigation commissioned in March 2014 into alleged institutional racism.

Recommendations:

Cabinet is requested to:

1. Note the Council's progress against its equalities agenda as well as the response to the recommendations in the report into allegations of institutional racism.

Reason: (For recommendations)

A greater awareness of the council's work in mainstreaming equalities.

Section 2 – Report

1. Introductory paragraph

- 1.1 In order to ensure equalities is at the heart of its work, the Council has recently incorporated its 'Corporate Equality Objectives' into the Corporate Plan. This not only highlights the administrations commitment to equality of opportunity and equitable services but will ensure we meet the outcomes anticipated through the corporate priorities.
- 1.2 This report provides an update against the Council's work on equalities in general but also highlights the progress made against the recommendations from the report into allegations of institutional racism commissioned in March 2014.

Options considered

- 1.3 The options considered were not to take forward any recommendations from the report into allegations of institutional racism. This option was not chosen because the recommendations were positively received providing the Council an opportunity to further improve our work on equalities.

2 Background

- 2.1 Harrow is one of the most ethnically and religiously diverse boroughs in London with people of many different backgrounds and life experiences living side by side. It is the richness of this diversity, and the positive impact that it has on the borough and the community, that helps make Harrow such a great place to live, work and visit. The borough's diversity is something to value and encourage and this report highlights the Council's commitment to maintaining and building on our strengths by ensuring equality and diversity is integral to everything we do.

- 2.2 At Harrow, we've been focusing on equality as a means of service improvement for a very long time. We continue to be determined to provide the best possible opportunities for the people of Harrow by: ensuring that our workforce is reflective of the Borough's population; that people using our services feel that they are treated with dignity and respect at all times; working hard with businesses to get investment in jobs and local facilities; tackling unemployment; and ensuring the best possible health and care services for our residents.
- 2.3 In the course of 2013/, the Council faced several challenges around race equality which culminated in an accusation that the Council was Institutionally Racist. In March 2014, the Council commissioned an independent review of this accusation undertaken by Dalwardin Babu, OBE, the former Police Borough Commander for Harrow. The report is unequivocal that "there is no evidence that I have seen that supports the allegation that Harrow Council is Institutionally Racist". However, it did put forward a number of recommendations to assist the council in continuing to build on the sound foundations of employee relations and to meet the Council's corporate equality objective of having a workforce that is representative of the communities it serves.
- 2.4 In response to the recommendations, the Policy Team in conjunction with Human Resource Development developed an Action Plan which was agreed by the Corporate Equalities Group on 12 June 2014.
- 2.5 The Corporate Equalities Group is responsible for the co-ordination and management of the equalities agenda across the Council. It is chaired by a Corporate Director and the membership comprises of senior officers representing all Directorates, the Corporate Policy Team, HR, the Unions, the Staff Making a Difference Group as well as representatives from the Voluntary and Community Sector organisations.
- 2.6 The section below summarises the progress made against each of the nine recommendations.

Recommendation 1: Ensure managers and staff have their awareness raised on key faith and cultural events to ensure respect for all faiths and beliefs in order to deliver an effective service to all the communities.

Progress as follows:

- A communications plan to promote and highlight the good work being done in relation to the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) to reduce inequality, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations both internally and externally has been agreed. This includes promoting diversity events such as Black History Month, LGBT History Month, Carers week etc both internally and externally on an ongoing basis.
- Reviewed and updated the Equality and Diversity pages on both the Hub (the internal intranet) and internet to include information on the PSED, legislation and diversity events.

- Introduced mandatory Equality and Diversity training for all new staff to complete within the first eight weeks of employment and a refresher for all existing staff to complete every two years.
- As part of our Learning and Development programme, delivered 34 Equality and Diversity related workshops for managers and frontline staff attended by 478 delegates.
- In June 2014, produced and published guidance on Ramadhan for all managers, staff and members to coincide with the month of Ramadhan.
- Produced and published a Multi-Faith guidance covering the beliefs and practices of the main faiths in Harrow which has been publicised to all managers, frontline staff and Members.

Recommendation 2: Review existing senior appointments panel processes in terms of recruitment agencies and diversity panel, in line with the Supplier Diversity Commitment and the Corporate Procurement Policy.

Progress as follows:

- Invitations to tender for supporting recruitment to interim and permanent senior appointments have been extended to an organisation specialising in diversity.
- We have maintained our commitment to the positive about disabled people initiative which (providing we continue to meet a criterion) allows the Council to use the two tick symbol in our recruitment to encourage people with disabilities to come and work for the Council.
- We are considering other initiatives such as Stonewalls Diversity Champions Programme, mindful employer, investors in diversity which will be presented to the CEG to consider signing up for.

Recommendation 3: Develop a comprehensive leadership and Mentoring programme for BAME staff.

Progress as follows:

- We have commissioned a Leadership Development Programme for staff with managerial and supervisory roles. BAME staff were strongly encouraged to participate and the proportions of BAME staff in the first cohorts was as follows:

	BAME	Unknown	White
Future Leaders	54%	8%	38%
Senior Middle Managers	36%	21%	43%
Frontline Managers	52%	8%	40%

- The proportion of BAME staff on the programme is higher than their representation in the workforce.

Recommendation 4: to review Directorate Equalities Task Group Chairs and consider that all four groups be chaired by tier three management personnel.

Progress as follows:

- The Terms of Reference for Directorate Equality Task Groups (DETGs) has been reviewed and agreed at the Corporate Equalities Group in October 2014.
- Directorates have made good progress with regards to reviewing the membership, meetings and effectiveness of their DETGs.
- The role of DETGs is well publicised in the Corporate Induction to new staff, the Hub and internal communication.

Recommendation 5: Review Dignity at Work and Conduct Procedures findings and commission independent report on disproportionality in BAME staff initiating procedures and / or being subject of Conduct Procedures.

Progress as follows:

- The terms of reference for the review were agreed by the Corporate Equalities Group who also agreed that Harrow Equalities Centre be commissioned to support the review. The findings were reported to the Corporate Equality Group in December 2014 and the Employees Consultative Forum in January 2015.
- The review found that there was no evidence of less favourable treatment of any particular group, and no evidence of direct or indirect discrimination.
- The review did identify a number of issues regarding the application of the procedures across all staff groups and set out recommendations for development aimed at supporting consistency. These were accepted by the Corporate Equality Group and are being implemented.

Recommendation 6: ensure that lessons learnt from findings in Dignity at Work and Conduct Procedures are fed into the organisation and help to improve employee relations.

- See 5. Above

Recommendation 7: Re-launch the BAME workers group with terms of reference for appropriate portfolio holder or Director to co-chair. Provide time for staff to attend.

Progress as follows:

- The staff survey showed that 66% of respondents stated they do not plan to get involved in any support groups – 52% of which cited that they did not think the groups were relevant to them and there was support for a single staff group.
- Established and continue to support the staff Making a Difference Group (MADG), which meets on a regular basis and is also represented at the Corporate Equalities Group (CEG).

Recommendation 8: Harrow Council's procurement and commissioning services can be more explicit in their desire to have staff from commissioned services reflecting the local BAME community.

- The Council's procurement and commissioning services practices fully embrace the principles of the Equality Act 2010 and where required all procurement and commissioning is subject to equality impact assessment, equality objective setting and monitoring as appropriate.

The Council's standard contracts require contractors to assist the Council to comply with its public sector equality duties and to act in a manner compatible with those duties. The contracts also impose specific duties on the contractor to comply with equalities legislation.

Recommendation 9: Harrow Council to develop a specific communications strategy that explains its Public Sector Equality Duty and acts as a myth buster for its staff and the local community.

- See 1. above

Some of the other achievements in the last twelve months include:

- **Our Harrow, Our Story** – As a public body we are required each year to publish equalities data about our service users with regards to service take up, satisfaction and complaints. In order to ensure that the data published is easy to understand and to ensure transparency with regard to progress in addressing inequality and delivering services reflective of the needs of our community, the Council prepared and published equalities information/data in the form of a narrative document 'Our Harrow, Our Story' which is available on our website. The Equality and Human Rights Commission undertook a review of how public services generally complied with the requirement to publish data and singled out Harrow Council as the best practice exemplar for the transparency and ease of access to the data that we provided.
- **Corporate Equality Objectives** – To ensure equality is at the heart of the Council's business, the Council's Equality Objectives have been incorporated into the Corporate Plan, which not only support the Council's

priorities but performance against these will be measured through the Council's performance framework, and reported to Cabinet regularly.

- **Multi-Faith Quiet Room** – In June 2014, the staff Making a Difference Group (MADG) has set up and opened Harrow Council's first Multi-Faith Quiet room. The venue is extremely well utilised with great feedback from staff.
- **Personal Budgets** - Final results from the Adults Social Care Outcomes Framework (ASCOF) for 13/14 confirmed that Harrow (47.1%) is the national leader for cash Personal Budgets. The 2014/15 indicator has been split into two separate results showing service users and carers separately. We set challenging targets of 60% against the service user outcome and 100% for carers and are pleased to report that both of these targets have been achieved. We believe that this should maintain our position nationally.
- **Harrow on the Hill Station** - Transport for London and Harrow Council have completed a feasibility study into options for providing step free access between the public highway and the railway platforms at Harrow on the Hill station. Funding options are now being investigated.
- **Accessibility Forum** - Harrow Council is a founding member of the West London Sub-regional Accessibility Forum launched last year. The purpose of the Forums is to provide a strategic level channel of communication between Transport for London and disabled and older people in London on all matters affecting their mobility and use of public transport. To meet this objective the Forum will help TfL, the Boroughs and transport operators to understand the needs and priorities of disabled and older Londoners and visitors to London, provide a sounding board for consultation and discussion of new transport proposals, projects and schemes, provide a channel for action on agreed priorities and developments and promote mobility solutions across London.

Although significant progress has been made against the above recommendations, we are mindful that there is always room for improvement with regards to equality of opportunity. We therefore have an annual rolling equalities action plan (**Appendix 1**) to address the findings from the Annual Equalities in Employment Report. This year, the action plan also includes the outstanding actions we are still working towards from the action plan agreed in response to the recommendations from the review.

3. Environmental Implications

- 3.1 There are no environmental implications as a result of the recommendations in the report.

4. Risk Management Implications

- 4.1 Incorporating the Corporate Equality Objectives within the Council's Corporate Plan and measuring our performance against these in the Council's performance framework will mitigate the risk of delivering adverse service, and ensure services are meeting the needs of our diverse community.

5. Legal Implications

- 5.1 The steps outlined in this report assist the council in complying with the public sector equality duty in the Equality Act.

6. Financial Implications

- 6.1 Any cost relating to any equalities work or the Corporate Equality Objectives is contained within existing budgets.

7. Consultation

- 7.1 This report has been consulted upon with the Corporate Equalities Group, the Corporate Strategic Board and the staff Making a Difference Group.

8. Equalities implications / Public Sector Equality Duty

- 8.1 There are no adverse equalities implications to the Council in making this decision. The Council's 'Equality Objectives' will address inequality, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations and help the Council to comply with the statutory requirements of the Public Sector Equality Duty introduced by the Equality Act 2010.

9. Council Priorities

- 9.1 The Council's 'Equality Objectives' support all the Council's Corporate Priorities and are incorporated within the Corporate Plan.

Section 3 - Statutory Officer Clearance

Name: Steve Tingle	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	on behalf of the Chief Financial Officer
Date: 6 May 2015		
Name: Jessica Farmer	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	on behalf of the Monitoring Officer
Date: 6 May 2015		

Ward Councillors notified:	NO, as it impacts on all Wards
EqIA carried out:	NO
EqIA cleared by:	

Section 6 - Contact Details and Background Papers

Contact: Mohammed Ilyas, Policy Officer, Strategic Commissioning,
 Email: mohammed.ilyas@harrow.gov.uk
 Tel: 020 8424 1322, ext. 2322

Background Papers: None

Call-In Waived by the Chairman of Overview and Scrutiny Committee	NOT APPLICABLE <i>[Call-in does not apply, as the recommendation is for noting only]</i>
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