

# OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MINUTES

## 19 APRIL 2016

<b>Chair:</b>	† Councillor Jerry Miles	
<b>Councillors:</b>	* Ghazanfar Ali * Richard Almond Jeff Anderson * Michael Borio * Susan Hall (4)	* Paul Osborn (Vice-Chair in the Chair) * Primesh Patel * Aneka Shah-Levy (1) * Stephen Wright (1)
<b>Voting Co-opted:</b>	(Voluntary Aided)  Mrs J Rammelt Reverend P Reece	(Parent Governors)  Vacancy Vacancy
<b>Non-voting Co-opted:</b>	Harrow Youth Parliament Representative	
<b>In attendance: (Councillors)</b>	Simon Brown Graham Henson	Minute 147 Minute 146

- \* Denotes Member present
- (1) and (4) Denote category of Reserve Members
- † Denotes apologies received

### RECOMMENDED ITEMS

#### 145. Equalities Vision and Objectives

The Committee received a report which set out a summary of the recommendations agreed by the Corporate Equalities Group arising from the

Equalities review undertaken to develop a Vision for the Council for Equalities and revise the Corporate Equality Objectives which were a requirement of the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) introduced by the Equality Act 2010.

An officer presented the report and made the following points:

- a revised set of Corporate Equality Objectives had been developed subsequent to consultation and discussion on a review commissioned by the Corporate Equalities Group in order to be clear on the focus and priorities for equalities and how it would be delivered;
- following feedback on the Corporate Equality Objectives, the options in the vision had been shortlisted to two and the objectives narrowed down to three in order to focus on a few priorities and do them well in order to make a real difference;
- there had been a change in emphasis from identification of work that was taking place in accordance with the vision to analysis of data and identification of where improvements could be made;
- a review of staff representation groups had resulted in a reduction to one group, the Making a Difference Group.

The following questions were made by Members and responded to accordingly:

- How did the percentage data from the staff survey that 20% of gay men and 38% lesbians strongly disagreed/disagreed that Harrow demonstrated through its actions that it was committed to being an equal opportunities employer compare with responses from other protected groups and staff generally? 77.23% of staff had not answered the question about sexual orientation in the latest staff survey, how many people did that equate to?

The percentage response from gay men and lesbians had been disproportionately high against other protected characteristics. With regard to the actual numbers the percentages in the staff survey equated to, the officers would seek the information. The annual equality monitoring report was based on different data.

- Why was the decision taken to reduce the staff representation groups to one? What was the attendance at the Making a Difference Group?

The consultation feedback was that the groups did not represent the intended staff, did not add value and a single group was sought. The Making a Difference Group had done some excellent work and was open to all staff. There were about 100 staff on the database and over 250 staff had attended a recent International Women's Day Event. There had been good feedback from community organisations.

An Equality event was planned for 11 May with the objective to reach out and engage. Initiatives to respond to recognised need had included special safe places for LGTB staff.

- Is the low proportion of Harrow Council employees aged less than 25 and the number of them leaving comparable with other boroughs? Can barriers, for example driving vehicle age restrictions, presented by insurance requirements for under 25 be removed?

Information on comparisons with other boroughs would be sought from Human Resources. The officer was not aware of the issue with regard to insurance for young people.

- With regard to the low number of staff who had answered the question around sexual orientation, was the objective a better response or a better attitude?

The staff survey was anonymous whereas staff were aware that the staff reporting exercise was not so the figures were different. It was challenging to show staff why the data was required and to do so successfully required staff to feel that the Council was more inclusive and that the information was of value.

- The Corporate Equality Objectives Action Plan referred to an action plan that specified the actions required to deliver each priority but it was not attached.

The action plan would be sent to members of the Committee.

- The Council was seeking to achieve a top 200 place in the workplace index in 2016. What was the current position?

The Council was currently 399 for its first submission out of 419 so it was a positive target,

- Was it a legal requirement to have a Corporate Equality Group?

It was not a legal requirement but was a sensible part of the governance framework in holding services to account

- Feedback from frontline staff that they sometimes felt uncomfortable in requesting information on protected characteristics from service users was reported. What was the information and in what circumstances? How was the Council aware of which groups do not use a service?

In order to ensure that services were inclusive, staff needed to be confident and inform service users that the information on protected characteristics was required to tailor services to their needs. To identify if certain communities do not use services, such as to see who used a service and compare with the local demographics. Knowledge of the protected characteristics of complainants could provide the ability to make small changes to address the situation.

- What were the reasons for the lack of staff who had declared their ethnicity as BAME on pay band 6? Was data available on the number of applications by BAME staff, the numbers shortlisted and those interviewed?

The Annual Equality Employment report indicated that this situation arose across London. It could be the result of a number of things and needed to be recognised in the objectives. The data for applications had been published.

The Committee thanked the officer for his hard work and attendance.

**Resolved to RECOMMEND:** (to Cabinet)

That the comments of the Committee on the Equalities Vision and Objectives be noted.