

Report for: Cabinet

Date of Meeting:	21 st October 2021
Subject:	Race Equality in Harrow Council
Key Decision:	Yes
Responsible Officer:	Sean Harriss, Chief Executive
Portfolio Holder:	Councillor Krishna Suresh - Portfolio Holder for Equality and Public Health
Exempt:	No
Decision subject to Call-in:	Yes
Wards affected:	All
Enclosures:	Appendix A – Race Equality in Harrow Council Appendix B – Zero Tolerance Statement Appendix C – Race Equality in Harrow Council Equality Impact Assessment Appendix D – Q2 Corporate Risk Register 2021-22

Section 1 – Summary and Recommendations

The Race Equality in Harrow Council report sets out the council’s strategic vision for race equality (see Appendix A). The report launches a series of new corporate objectives designed to ensure that the council’s policies and practices are fair and equitable for all staff in the workplace, beginning with a focus on race and ethnicity.

Recommendations:

Cabinet is requested to:

1. Consider and agree the council’s strategic approach on race equality in Harrow and the Race Equality Action Plan at Appendix A and delegate authority to the Chief Executive, following consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Equality and Public Health, to implement the plan.
2. To approve the Zero Tolerance Statement attached at Appendix B.

Reason: (for recommendations)

In light of the murder of George Floyd, the Black Lives Matter protests, and the disproportionate impact of Covid-19 on those from Black, Asian, and Multi- Ethnic backgrounds, the council recognised the need to do more to improve the experiences and outcomes for staff. This report sets out the council’s ambitions on race equality in Harrow council and responds to the recommendations set out in the Independent Race Review conducted by Professor Patrick Vernon in April 2021.

Section 2 – Report

Introduction

The report sets out the council’s strategic vision around race equality, launching a series of new corporate objectives for the organisation, which will ensure our policies and practices are fair and equitable for all staff in order to promote a workforce that is inclusive and accessible for everyone.

Over the past year, the council has examined its role as an employer, actively engaging with staff to understand their experiences and the challenges they face and looked closely at our workforce data to examine gaps, bottlenecks and glass ceilings in the organisations. This evidence has given the organisation ground-breaking insight, which for the first time, has helped shape a strategy around race equality that is rooted in evidence and produced in collaboration with staff.

While this report focuses primarily on race and ethnicity, the strategic approach that has been undertaken acts as a framework that will underpin the council’s

forthcoming *Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy*, which will be produced early next year.

Options considered

Following the murder of George Floyd, the Black Lives Matter protests, and the disproportionate impact of Covid-19 on those from Black, Asian, and Multi-Ethnic backgrounds, the council recognised that it could do more to improve the experiences and outcomes for our staff.

Furthermore, analysis of the council's workforce data shows that the council's Black, Asian and Multi-Ethnic staff do not fairly represent Harrow's resident population and there is a visible lack of leadership diversity within some parts of the organisation, especially in leadership, management and senior tiers of the organisation. Additionally, Black, Asian, and Multi-Ethnic staff generally concentrated in lower grades.

In addition to this, findings from the Independent Race Review undertaken by Professor Patrick Vernon in April 2021 and the Race Survey conducted by FW Business show a significant amount of concerns from staff around the following key themes:

- Psychological safety
- Racism in the workplace
- Challenges with management behaviour
- Lack of career opportunities for Black, Asian and Multi-Ethnic staff
- Impact of racism on health and well-being
- Race and sexism
- Institutional and structural racism

A number of recommendations were made as a result of the Independent Race Review. The report responds to these recommendations and sets out the council's strategic vision around race equality, launching a series of new corporate objectives for the organisation for Black, Asian and Multi-ethnic staff and will form the framework that underpins our wider strategic work on equality, diversity, and inclusion.

Doing nothing would result in increasing staff dissatisfaction and potential Employee Relations / Industrial Relations conflict e.g. grievance and tribunal claims and resource pressures if we fail to attract, develop, and retain talented people due to inequality in recruitment and the workplace.

Background

Harrow is one of the most ethnically and religiously diverse boroughs in the country, with many people of different backgrounds and life experiences living side by side. However, in light of the murder of George Floyd, the Black Lives Matter protests, and the disproportionate impact of Covid-19 on those from Black, Asian, and Multi-Ethnic backgrounds, we have recognised that the council can do more to improve the experiences and outcomes for our staff.

Over the past twelve months, the council has been reviewing the approach taken towards equality, diversity, and inclusion to develop one that truly reflects the needs and ambitions of our staff. Work on race equality has been underpinned by the strategic principles that guide the council's corporate work on equality, diversity, and inclusion.

To ensure this work has the integrity that it needs, the council undertook an exercise in collating qualitative data to understand the challenges faced by staff in the workplace. In doing so, we commissioned an Independent Race Review by Professor Patrick Vernon in September 2020 (see background papers), who conducted a series of face-to-face interviews and focus groups with staff employed by Harrow Council, including senior management and operational staff and other stakeholders including temporary staff and contractors.

The council also commissioned an independent Staff Survey on Race, which was externally conducted by Karl Murray of FW Business in December 2020 (this forms part of the Race Review, which can be found in the background papers) This survey sought to capture both qualitative and quantitative information on staff experiences and practices and gave insight into the challenges that staff faced daily, as well as improvements they would like to see.

Quantitative research involved analysing the council's most recent workforce data and developing a new ethnicity pay report; both of these reports have given greater insight into the profile of staff, including trends, gaps and bottlenecks within pay bands, which have been critical in helping create objectives that are realistic, tangible and stretching.

Current situation

Following the publication of the Independent Race Review in April, over 230 staff were engaged with to undertake a process of co-production, to design the approach to tackling racial inequality in Harrow and as a result, producing the council's first ever, Race Equality Action Plan.

Because one size does not fit all, ongoing discussions are also taking place with directorates to ensure this strategic plan is deliverable. The Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Team are working with directorates to develop ambitious, directorate level actions and targets that will feed into the council's overarching strategic objectives.

Why a change is needed

Following the murder of George Floyd, the Black Lives Matter protests, and the disproportionate impact of Covid-19 on those from Black, Asian, and Multi-Ethnic backgrounds, the council has recognised that it can do more to improve the experiences and outcomes for our staff.

According to the council's most recent ethnicity pay data (which can be found in the background papers), the council's Black, Asian and Multi-Ethnic staff do not fairly represent Harrow's resident population. Although Harrow Council is a diverse employer, the lack of leadership diversity within some parts of the organisation is visible, with a lack of representation in leadership, management and senior tiers within the organisation, and a bottle neck between junior and managerial grades with Black, Asian, and Multi-Ethnic staff generally concentrated in lower grades.

In terms of staff experiences of race, the Independent Race Review led by Professor Patrick Vernon and the Race Survey undertaken by FW Business, showed that 74% of staff had either experienced or witnessed racism in some form within the council. 64% of staff could not definitively say that the council was not structurally racist, compared to 59% of staff who could not definitively say that the council was not institutionally racist. One of the key findings of the Review was the psychological trauma felt by staff affected by bullying and harassment. Crucially, in terms of training and development, 56% of staff were keen to gain relevant experience, 51% wanted access to opportunities, and 44% welcomed the idea of having a training needs analysis and action plan.

This report proposes a series of strategic solutions in response to these findings, and more critically to the recommendations from the Race Review, which centre around:

- Creating safe spaces
- Changing the organisation's culture and behaviour through leadership, training, and development
- Recruitment and Retention

Ward Councillors' comments

As this proposal affects all wards, Ward Councillors' comments were not sought.

Performance Issues

The Race Equality Action Plan will have a positive impact on the council's priority, *tackling racial disproportionality, inequality and disadvantage*. A new series of objectives are being launched that will feed into the council's Balanced Scorecard.

Environmental Implications

There are no environmental implications.

Data Protection Implications

There are no data protection implications.

Risk Management Implications

The Race Equality Action Plan aims to improve the culture and create a fairer and inclusive organisation which is able to fully develop and realise the potential of the whole workforce. Significant progress has already been made in the development of the Race Equality Action Plan to implement the outcomes of the Independent Race Review conducted by Professor Patrick Vernon the issues must also be fully addressed as well as recognised and this factor maintains the risk at an amber level below which could result in:

- (a) continuing issues of inequality for staff
- (b) result in increasing staff dissatisfaction and potential Employee Relations / Industrial Relations conflict e.g. grievance and tribunal claims
- (c) resource pressures if we fail to attract, develop and retain talented people due to inequalities in recruitment and the workplace.

Risks included on corporate or directorate risk register? **Yes**

Separate risk register in place? **No**

The relevant risks contained in the register are attached/summarised below.
Yes

The following key risks should be taken into account when agreeing the recommendations in this report:

Risk Description	Mitigations	RAG Status at Q2
Systemic issues of inequality and disproportionality experienced by Black, Asian and Multi-ethnic staff are not recognised and addressed by the Council	<p>Mitigations In-Place</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Please see full range of mitigations already in-place as outlined at Appendix D <p>Mitigations In-Progress</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fully Implement recommendations of the Independent Race Review by Patrick Vernon (by April 22) • Report to Cabinet on implementation of the Vernon Report (by Oct 21) 	Amber

Procurement Implications

The positive changes that will be delivered through the endorsement of the recommendation are to improve EDI in Harrow Council. However, the Zero Tolerance Statement will also be issued to all existing and all new third party suppliers to ensure they understand and conform to the highest standards we set ourselves and all our partners.

Legal Implications

No legal implications arise as a result of this report and action plan.

Financial Implications

The 2021/22 budget invested £100k into Equalities, Diversity, and Inclusion to create a specialist EDI function that has been developing a new strategic approach. The EDI team will work collaboratively with other teams in HROD and across directorates to deliver some of the new initiatives planned on race equality.

A further one-off reserve of £250k has been earmarked for supplementary activity to take forward this agenda.

Equalities implications / Public Sector Equality Duty

Decision makers should have due regard to the public sector equality duty in making their decisions. The equalities duties are continuing duties they are not duties to secure a particular outcome. The equalities impact will be revisited on each of the proposals as they are developed. Consideration of the duties should precede the decision. It is important that Cabinet has regard to the statutory grounds in the light of all available material such as consultation responses from staff. The statutory grounds of the public sector equality duty are found at section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 and are as follows:

A public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to:

- (a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;
- (b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
- (c) Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

Having due regard to the need to advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it involves having due regard, in particular, to the need to:

- (a) remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by persons who share a relevant protected characteristic that are connected to that characteristic;
- (b) take steps to meet the needs of persons who share a relevant protected characteristic that are different from the needs of persons who do not share it;
- (c) Encourage persons who share a relevant protected characteristic to participate in public life or in any other activity in which participation by such persons is disproportionately low.

The steps involved in meeting the needs of disabled persons that are different from the needs of persons who are not disabled include, in particular, steps to take account of disabled persons' disabilities.

Having due regard to the need to foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it involves having due regard, in particular, to the need to:

- (a) Tackle prejudice, and
- (b) Promote understanding.

Compliance with the duties in this section may involve treating some persons more favourably than others; but that is not to be taken as permitting conduct that would otherwise be prohibited by or under this Act.

The relevant protected characteristics are:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender reassignment
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Race
- Religion or belief
- Sex
- Sexual orientation
- Marriage and Civil partnership

The council recognises that the journey to eradicate discrimination against all protected groups must start somewhere, and one size does not fit all. Therefore, we are taking a phased approach towards making the council a truly inclusive employer, to promote a workforce that is inclusive and accessible for everyone, regardless of their background.

Following the murder of George Floyd, the Black Lives Matter protests, and the disproportionate impact of Covid-19 on those from Black, Asian, and Multi-Ethnic backgrounds, the council recognised that it could do more to improve the experiences and outcomes for our staff.

Furthermore, data has shown that the council's Black, Asian and Multi-Ethnic staff do not fairly represent Harrow's resident population and there is a visible lack of leadership diversity within some parts of the organisation, especially in leadership, management and senior tiers of the organisation. Additionally, Black, Asian, and Multi-Ethnic staff generally concentrated in lower grades.

The report sets out the council's strategic vision around race equality, launching a series of new corporate objectives for the organisation for Black, Asian and Multi-ethnic staff and will form the framework that underpins our wider strategic work on equality, diversity, and inclusion.

Based on the data available it is not anticipated that the Race Equality Action Plan will have a negative impact on council staff, or result in any direct or indirect discrimination of any group that shares protected characteristics. Instead, it is expected that the strategic approach undertaken as part of the Race Equality Action Plan will have a positive ripple impact on all other protected groups.

The council has integrated questions around equality, diversity and inclusion in our forthcoming Pulse Survey and expects to add similar questions in the Annual Staff Survey to capture the experiences of staff from all backgrounds.

The evidence will help to shape and inform work around equality, diversity and inclusion more broadly going forward.

An Equality Impact Assessment is attached at Appendix C.

Council Priorities

Please identify how the decision sought delivers these priorities.

1. **Tackling poverty and inequality**

Section 3 - Statutory Officer Clearance

Statutory Officer: Dawn Calvert

Signed by the Chief Financial Officer

Date: 11/10/21

Statutory Officer: Jessica Farmer

Signed on behalf of the Monitoring Officer

Date: 11/10/21

Chief Officer: Sean Harriss

Signed by the Chief Executive

Date: 11/10/21

Head of Procurement: Nimesh Mehta

Signed by the Head of Procurement

Date: 08/10/21

Head of Internal Audit: Neale Burnes

Signed on behalf of the Head of Internal Audit

Date: 11/10/21

Mandatory Checks

Ward Councillors notified: YES

EqIA carried out: YES

EqIA cleared by: Shumaila Dar, Head of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

Section 4 - Contact Details and Background Papers

Contact: Shumaila Dar, Head of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion, shumaila.dar@harrow.gov.uk

Background Papers:

1. Independent Race Report
2. Pay gap data

Call-in waived by the Chair of Overview and Scrutiny Committee

NO