

Report for: **Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

Date of Meeting: 14 September 2021

Subject: Race Equality in Harrow Council

Responsible Officer: Sean Harriss, Chief Executive

Scrutiny Lead Member area: Resources - Councillors Dan Anderson and Kanti Rabadia

Exempt: No

Wards affected: All

Enclosures: Appendix A – Race Equality in Harrow Council
Appendix B – Independent Race Report
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:

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee is asked to:

1. Consider and endorse the council's strategic approach on race equality in Harrow and the Race Equality Action Plan.
2. Forward the report to Cabinet for consideration and response.

Section 2 – Report

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, we have examined our 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 us ground-breaking insight into our organisation, which for the first time, has helped us shape a strategy around race equality that is rooted in evidence and produced in collaboration with staff.

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. Our work on race equality has been underpinned by the strategic principles that guide our 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 Dr Patrick Vernon in September 2020 (see Appendix B), 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.

We also commissioned an independent Staff Survey on Race, which was externally conducted by Karl Murray of FW Business in December 2020. This survey sought to capture both qualitative and quantitative information on staff experiences and practices and gave us an insight into the challenges that staff faced daily, as well as improvements they would like to see.

Our quantitative research involved analysing our most recent workforce data and producing our first ever ethnicity pay gap report; both of these reports have given us greater insight into the profile of our staff, including trends, gaps and bottlenecks within pay bands, which have been critical in helping us create objectives that are realistic, tangible and stretching.

Current situation

Following the publication of the Independent Race Review in April, we have engaged with over 230 staff to undertake a process of co-production, to design our 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, we are also having ongoing discussions with directorates to ensure this strategic plan is deliverable. We are currently 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 our most recent ethnicity pay gap data, 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 Dr 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

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.

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 Impact

There is no environmental impact.

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. We have made significant progress to date in the development of the Race Equality Action Plan to implement the outcomes of the Independent Race Review conducted by Patrick Vernon. However, the issues must also be addressed as well as recognised and this factor maintains the risk at an Amber C3 level in Q2.

Failure to implement the Race Equality Action Plan could:

- (a) result in increasing staff dissatisfaction and potential ER / IR conflict e.g. grievance and tribunal claims
- (b) resource pressures if we fail to attract, develop and retain talented people due to inequalities in recruitment and the workplace.

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 staff of black heritage 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

Equalities implications / Public Sector Equality Duty

Was an Equality Impact Assessment carried out? **Yes**

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 the committee has regard to the statutory grounds in the light of all available material such as consultation responses. 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.

- We recognise 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 we do not anticipate 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.
- We expect to integrate questions around equality, diversity and inclusion in our forthcoming Pulse Survey and Annual Staff Survey to capture the experiences of staff from all backgrounds. The evidence will help to shape and inform our work going forward.

Council Priorities

Please identify how the decision sought delivers these priorities.

1. Tackling racial disproportionality, inequality and disadvantage.

Section 3 - Statutory Officer Clearance

Statutory Officer:

Signed by the Chief Financial Officer

Dawn Calvert

Date: 08/09/21

Statutory Officer:

Signed by the Monitoring Officer

Hugh Peart

Date: 08/09/21

Chief Officer:

Signed by the Chief Executive

Sean Harriss

Date: 08/09/21

Mandatory Checks

Ward Councillors notified: Yes

Section 4 - Contact Details and Background Papers

Contact: Shumailla Dar, Head of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion
Tel: 07874 891502

Background Papers:

Appendix A – Race Equality in Harrow

Appendix B – Independent Race Review

Appendix C – Race Equality in Harrow Equality Impact Assessment

Appendix D – Q2 Corporate Risk Register 2021-22