



EMPLOYMENT COMMITTEE: 16 SEPTEMBER 2021

DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION UPDATE

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF CORPORATE RESOURCES

Purpose of report

1. The purpose of this report is to inform the Employment Committee on the Council's approach to staff diversity and inclusion, including data on staff demographics.

Policy Framework and Previous Decisions

2. Leicestershire County Council's Equalities Strategy 2020-24 was agreed by the County Council on 8 July 2020. It sets out how the Council aims to ensure that everyone can access high quality services designed to meet their individual needs. The Strategy is refreshed every four years and the process includes public consultation.
3. Diversity and Inclusion is also a key part of Leicestershire County Council's People Strategy 2020 – 2024. This strategy was approved by the Employment Committee on 4 February 2021.
4. Reports on the Gender Pay Gap and the outcomes of an Equal Pay Audit have previously been considered by the Employment Committee at its meeting on 4 February 2021.

Background

5. It is believed that a strong, diverse workforce will bring together different perspectives and ideas. Externally, it is vital that services meet the needs of the diverse communities that live within the county. This report focuses on diversity and inclusion relating to the Council's employment practices.
6. The Council's People Strategy 2020 – 2024 states:

"We know that people perform better when they can be themselves, so we take pride in creating a work environment where people can be open with colleagues and comfortable and confident in being themselves at work."
7. The aim is to attract, develop and retain a diverse workforce which feels welcomed, supported, and reflects the values of the Council. There is a strong commitment to allow the workforce to flourish and ensure that all colleagues feel part of an inclusive approach.

8. Out of the nine protected characteristics set out in the Equalities Act 2010, the Council largely focuses on three. These are namely race, disability, and sexual orientation and they can be evidenced across all areas of the workforce. A corporate Equalities Board provides an internal co-ordination point for this work, supported by departmental equality groups and staff groups for Black, Asian and Multi-Ethnic (BAME) employees, disabled employees, and Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT+) employees. A virtual workers' group for those with caring responsibilities is also in place to help provide additional support where required.

Current staff demographics

9. As of March 2021, the workforce of the Council includes the following characteristics:

• % of workforce that are BAME	15.8%
• % of workforce that are disabled	4.7%
• % of workforce that are LGBT	2.4%

10. Employee declaration rates are also monitored to ensure that the data maintained on the workforce is reliable. The more data available, enables better targeting of resources. As of the end of March 2021, the following declaration rates could be seen:

• % of workforce declaring their ethnicity	85.4%
• % of workforce declaring their disability	83.4%
• % of workforce declaring their sexual orientation	60.2%

11. Data is also collected on the success of recruitment processes in attracting a diverse applicant base. In 2020, the total demographics of job applicants was as follows:

• % of BAME applicants	36.2%
• % of disabled applicants	6.5%
• % of LGBT applicants	6.2%

12. The results of the staff survey undertaken in 2019 detailed:

- 92.9% of respondents believe the Council is committed to equality and diversity,
- 90.8% of respondents feel they are treated with fairness and respect at work.

Skills and knowledge development

13. A key part of the Council's work on diversity and inclusion is to ensure that all members of staff have the appropriate skills and knowledge. As a result, reference is made to equality and diversity issues throughout all forms of learning and development and delivery.
14. Mandatory training on equality and diversity is also provided for all members of staff, with an additional course for posts that require the management of people. Other training is also available which specifically covers equality and diversity topics (e.g., autism awareness, how to undertake equality and human rights impact assessments, LGBT awareness, menopause awareness and unconscious bias). Group sessions

have also been held across the Council on topics where greater discussion and engagement with staff have been beneficial. These 'Big Conversations' have recently covered topics such as how to consider service provision for individuals who are hard of hearing, and sensitive topics such as transgender and race.

External accreditation

15. External accreditation has been provided to the Council on a range of equality and diversity issues. Logos from these awards are displayed on the Council's website and recruitment materials so that potential job applicants are aware of the Council's open and welcoming approach, and the values that are held by the organisation.
16. This accreditation includes Level 2 of the Government's Disability Confident scheme which supports employers to make the most of the talents disabled people can bring to the workplace. At level 2, organisations are recognised as going the extra mile to make sure disabled people get a fair chance. The scheme helps the Council to recruit and retain great people, drawing from the widest possible pool of talent, and demonstrating that all employees are treated fairly. In addition, the Council has also signed the NHS Mindful Employer charter, which recognises employers who are working towards better mental health in the workplace.
17. The Council has consistently been rated as one of Stonewall's Top 100 Employers since 2010 and is currently one of only six councils in England to achieve this status. This benchmarking tool is used by employers to measure their progress on lesbian, gay, bi and trans inclusion in the workplace. The results of a revised Workplace Equality Index submission will be announced in early 2022.
18. The Council has also recently announced that it has become a signatory to an external Race At Work Charter. This Charter has been created by Business in the Community, an established business-led membership organisation dedicated to responsible business, founded by HRH The Prince of Wales. Becoming a signatory to this external Charter is an important part of the Council promoting equality across workplaces, regardless of an individual's ethnicity and race.

Next steps

19. Whilst many positive outcomes can be evidenced in the areas of diversity and inclusion, several actions will still be undertaken to ensure that this focus is continued. These include:
 - analysing the satisfaction rates in the most recent staff survey,
 - continuing the development and representation of Workers' Groups,
 - promoting staff self-declaration rates,
 - promoting the importance of equalities training.
20. Diversity and inclusion will continue to be a key focus for the Council, and its importance is reflected within the recently refreshed People Strategy. The actions above will build upon what is already in place and will also ensure that support is available for those staff where it is required.

Conclusions

21. Staff diversity and inclusion is well managed within the Council, with a range of evidence demonstrating success in this area, including external accreditation. Plans are also in place to ensure that this work and focus continues, with the People Strategy having clear aims around how diversity and inclusion is integrated within recruitment, redeployment, wellbeing and the management of sickness absence.

Recommendations

22. The Committee is asked to note that:
- a. diversity and inclusion is well managed within the Council, having received external accreditation for its actions, and
 - b. the data collated on staff demographics at paragraphs 9-12 and the next steps outlined within the report at paragraph 19 and 20, which aim to further support and promote staff diversity and inclusion.

Background papers

23. None.

Circulation under the Local Issues Alert Procedure

24. None.

Equality and Human Rights Implications

25. None.

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