
To: Finance and Corporate Services Scrutiny Board 1

Date: 13th October 2021

Subject: Workforce Diversity & Inclusion

1 Purpose of the Note

The purpose of this note is to provide Finance and Corporate Services Board 1 with an update on progress made in the area of Workforce Diversity & Inclusion across the Council over the past two years.

2 Recommendations

Finance and Corporate Services Board 1 are being asked to comment on the Council's Workforce Diversity & Inclusion progress and make any recommendations for further development.

3 Background and context

- 3.1 Diversity & Inclusion was identified as a key workforce driver for the West Midlands region before the launch of the West Midlands Employers (WMEs) report 'Spotlight on Inclusion – Creating Belonging in Local Government' and prior to the global events which shone an intense spotlight on the issues surrounding the death of George Floyd and the #Black Lives Matter Movement.
- 3.2 The regions focus on equality, diversity and inclusion is one rooted in a desire to ensure wide and authentic representation across the Local Government Sector and across all forms of diversity, to support the strengthening of inclusive services to the wider community.
- 3.3 Coventry's strength lies in its diversity, and in order to be able to effectively meet the needs of our communities it is vital that we have a workforce that is reflective of the people we serve. By creating a culture that values diversity and actively promotes inclusion we hope to build an atmosphere where differences of opinion and outlook are not only respected but sought out and appreciated.

4. Workforce Diversity & Inclusion

Over the past 24 months the Council has made very good progress in the area of workforce diversity & inclusion across the organisation. Set out below are some of our Workforce Diversity & Inclusion achievements to date.

- The launch of the Council's new Workforce Diversity & Inclusion Strategy (see Appendix 1) which included a week of D&I activity to enable the whole workforce to participate took place in June 2021. A number of nationally recognised guest speakers delivered a range of D&I workshops which are now available for viewing on YouTube.
- The September edition of the Council Employee Newsletter was dedicated to Diversity & Inclusion. Electronic copies were made available via the intranet and on the Staff App

whilst paper copies were made available to all frontline employees who do not have access to a laptop via their payslips.

- The commissioning of Unconscious Bias Training (UBT) for both Labour Group Members, OCLT & ELT commenced in September 2021 and will be cascaded across the whole organisation.
- We are investing in Workforce Diversity & Inclusion Lead who will work alongside the Head of People & Culture to drive the equality agenda and implement the actions arising out of the Strategy.
- Recruiting for Workforce Diversity Training has been delivered to 160 recruiting managers across service areas.
- The introduction of D&I as a standing agenda item at management meetings (although this requires further service area support).
- All senior leaders now have a diversity & inclusion objective as part of the appraisal process this year.
- Stonewall have reviewed a number of HR related employment policies to ensure that they are LGBT+ inclusive.
- The Council continues to celebrate the range of events which form part of the Council's Diversity & Inclusion calendar and will celebrate Black History Month during the month of October.
- We have Introduced anonymised recruitment practices to reduce the level of potential unconscious bias within our shortlisting processes.
- We now have Diversity & Inclusion meetings with our Trade Union colleagues every 6 weeks.
- Employee Networks have been re-established and are making a valuable contribution to the Council's D&I agenda
- Workforce D&I meetings take place with Employee Network Chairs every 6 weeks.
- We are making use of Section 158 of the Equalities Act to deliver a development programme called 'Ignite' for those employees who are from a Black, Asian or Minority Ethnic background
- The Council is participating in Santander and Coventry Universities – Graduate Autism Programme which has resulted in the Council providing 5 graduate placements across OD, ICT, Transformation, customer Service and Climate Change & Sustainability.
- A Peer Mentoring programme has been delivered for members of Generation CCC, the EMBRACE employee network and our Disability Employee Network.
- Coventry City Council are to become early adopters of the Race Equality Code 2020 along with Birmingham City Council, The West Midlands Combined Authority, a number of NHS Trust across the Council and the Greater Birmingham Chamber of Commerce. The Race Equality Code 2020 and its Accountability Framework is designed to provide organisations across all sectors and sizes, with the opportunity to address a very specific challenge. It has been developed to deal with race inequality in the boardroom and senior leadership team.
- The Council is becoming recognised as leaders in the area workforce D&I across the region.
- The Council is currently providing 4 months project placements for 11 Coventry University MA/MSc graduates all of whom are from Black, Asian & Minority Ethnic backgrounds.

5. Employee Networks

5.1 Coventry City Council has always supported the concept of Employee Networks and in early 2019 the Council re-established its three existing Employee Networks; the Black, Asian & Minority Ethnic Employee Network (now known as EBRACE), the Disability Employee Network (known as DEN), and the LGBT+ Employee Network (now known as the Pride). In early 2020 two new Employee Networks were formed; Generation CCC (the young people's network) and the Women's Network. Each one of the Employee Networks has their own terms of reference and a sponsor who is a Director. Our Employee Networks

are very proactive and have over 250 members from across the Council. Each network meets with its members on a regular basis and each makes a valuable contribution to the Council's Diversity & Inclusion agenda.

5.2 Our Employee Networks have made a valuable contribution to the Council's new Workforce Diversity & Inclusion Strategy and state that:

"As employee networks we are here to empower people and support colleagues. We provide inclusive open forums for colleagues with similar lived experiences to meet, support and mentor each other, alongside being a voice for under-represented groups to advise and challenge the organisation when developing policies and services".

6. Ignite Talent Development Programme

6.1 One of the Council's key priorities is to have a workforce that is representative of the communities we serve at all levels in order for us to be able to deliver services which meet the needs of all of our communities. Over the past 18 months we have begun to make steady progress with our workforce ambitions and have seen an increase in the number of employees from under-represented groups being appointed to positions across the Council.

However, despite this positive increase, our workforce data shows that employees from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic backgrounds are not represented across our senior leadership teams. As a result, the Council made the decision to take 'Positive Action' by making use of Section 158 of the Equalities Act 2010 to deliver a new talent development programme called 'Ignite' specifically targeted at those employees who are from a Black, Asian or Minority Ethnic background providing a safe space in which to discuss issues relating to their experience. The programme is being delivered by Jenny Garrett OBE and her Associates.

6.2 To coincide with the launch of the Council's new Workforce Diversity and Inclusion Strategy, Jenny Garrett delivered an introductory session for eligible employees in June 2021. This was followed by an extensive marketing campaign to further promote the programme and a competitive assessment and selection process to shortlist the final 13 participants.

6.3 Briefing sessions for line managers and participants took place on 14th September to clarify expectations and reinforce the programme aims, ahead of the official programme launch on 23rd September. The programme will run for 6 months and will also pair participants with Sponsors from the Council's Corporate and Extended Leadership Teams to further aid their development.

7. Employ Autism Project

7.1 To help establish a diverse and inclusive future talent pipeline, the Council has been working in partnership with Coventry University and Ambitious About Autism to deliver the Employ Autism Higher Education Network, an ambitious new employability programme for autistic students and graduates.

7.2 The programme aimed to provide a series of 8-week summer internships to a maximum of 5 students and graduates across different areas of the organisation between mid-July and mid-September. Participating areas for the pilot programme included; Transformation, Customer Services, and Climate Change & Sustainability. Internships were funded by Santander Universities UK, making the scheme zero-cost for the organisation. In preparation for the internships, line managers and buddies were required to attend two compulsory training sessions delivered by the Employ Autism Higher Education Network in

April and May this year. Additional support from the Council's Talent Development Team and Coventry University was also available throughout the programme.

7.3 After a competitive recruitment and selection process, the following number of interns were appointed in each participating service area: 1 x Transformation, 2 x Customer Services, and 2 x Climate Change & Sustainability. Feedback from line managers and interns at the end of programme review was very positive, with many stating that their interns were a real asset to their teams. In addition, both line managers and interns also stated that they have found it beneficial to have more than one intern from the programme per team, as this helped them settle into their roles much quicker. Interns also praised the fact that the scheme specifically targets autistic students, as this has given them access to employment opportunities, they felt they might not otherwise have had.

The university also conducted a formal post-programme review with interns and found their confidence had increased as a result of the programme. They also reported that the interns now felt more confident turning their cameras on for virtual meetings and making comments as a direct result of the positive experience they had on their internships. Interns also stated that they would have liked the placements to be longer, so the university is currently looking at whether the programme can be extended to 12 weeks (dependent on funding) for the next intake in summer 2022. The university are expecting a decision on the future funding for the programme to be made in November 2021, so will communicate this with the Council thereafter.

8. Policy Development

Over the last 24 months the Council has worked with its trade unions to review and agree a number of policies that reflect an increased awareness and understanding of the value of diversity and inclusion with the workforce, including,

- a new '**enabling attendance**' policy that places a much greater emphasis on managing the health and well-being of employees, including employees with disabilities for whom the adoption of 'reasonable adjustments' should enable them to remain active and productive within the workforce.
- a '**domestic abuse**' policy that seeks to support all employees who are victims of domestic abuse or violence but, of course, recognises that women are disproportionately represented amongst their number
- a suite of '**family friendly**' policies that seek to support all employees who have responsibilities as parents or carers, again recognising that women are disproportionately represented amongst those who have caring responsibilities.
- a new policy to support those who identify as '**transgender (trans), non-binary or gender fluid**' to ensure that they are supported to 'be themselves' at work and are protected from discrimination or other unfair treatment.

Grace Haynes
Head of People & Culture
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