

Scrutiny reports for City Executive Board – Thursday 14 July 2016

6. Scrutiny Committee Reports (Pages 3 - 62)

Scrutiny reports have been submitted on the following items:-

- Report of the Equality and Diversity Review Group
- Apprentices
- Private Sector Housing Policy (post-consultation)
- Fusion Lifestyle's 2016/17 Annual Service Plan
- Grant Allocations – Monitoring Report
- Review of the Lord Mayor's Deposit Guarantee Scheme.

This page is intentionally left blank

To: City Executive Board

Date: 14 July 2016

Report of: Scrutiny Committee

Title of Report: Report of the Equality and Diversity Review Group

Summary and Recommendations

Purpose of report: To present the report of the Equality and Diversity Review Group

Scrutiny Lead Member: Councillor Tom Hayes, Chair of the Review Group

Executive lead member: Councillor Susan Brown, Board Member Customer and Corporate Services

Recommendation of the Scrutiny Committee to the City Executive Board:

That the City Executive Board states whether it agrees or disagrees with the twenty one recommendations set out in the attached report.

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Report of the Equality and Diversity Review Group

Appendix 2 – Equality and diversity project scope

Appendix 3 – Figures 1-9 (large)

1. The Scrutiny Committee established the Equality and Diversity Review Group during the 2015/16 Council year and endorsed its report, with some amendments, at its meeting on 4 July 2016.
2. The inclusion of recommendation 20 was agreed by a majority of the Scrutiny Committee but was not agreed by a minority of the Scrutiny Committee.
3. The report is attached for consideration by the Board.

Name and contact details of author:-

Andrew Brown on behalf of the Scrutiny Committee

Scrutiny Officer

Law and Governance

Tel: 01865 252230 e-mail: abrown2@oxford.gov.uk

This page is intentionally left blank

Equality and diversity in the Oxford City Council workforce

Report of the Equality and Diversity Review Group

Commissioned by Oxford City Council's Scrutiny
Committee

June 2016

Contents

Foreword.....	2
Summary of recommendations.....	4
Introduction.....	6
Background.....	6
Terms of reference.....	6
Methods of investigation.....	7
Profile of the Council workforce.....	7
Ethnicity.....	7
Gender.....	12
Sexual orientation.....	16
Disability.....	17
Age.....	18
Barriers to recruitment and career progression.....	19
Reducing barriers.....	20
Preventing and addressing discrimination.....	23
Being inclusive of LGBT employees.....	25
Conclusion.....	28

Foreword

Equality and diversity aren't just nice things to have in a workplace. They matter because a person's sexuality, gender, ethnicity, and disability matter to them. When our Council gets diversity right and looks more like the communities we serve, our Council gets more things right and delivers the best possible value for money for local taxpayers.

Britain is a more equal society, if we look at the strides forward our historically most discriminated against communities have taken in the last twenty years. For some communities, here and around the country, the speed and scale of social change has felt like a sharp break with the intolerance of the past. For others, the wins they've racked up can feel smaller.

This review delves deep into the latest data to find out how our Council is reflecting these changes across all Oxford's communities. As importantly, this review looks at whether more could be done to make our Council more inclusive and diverse. Like the social progress we've seen here in Oxford and across the country, the situation is the same: A lot has changed, but there's more to do to complete the longer march to equality.

The data shows that the LGBT workforce is very small and unwilling to disclose their sexuality. The Council has the largest ever BME workforce, but the workforce is clustered in the lower wage jobs and almost non-existent in senior roles. Women are under-represented in senior leadership roles.

The Council's workforce has been changing to look more like the diverse communities that it serves. Good policies currently in place have helped to bring this about and tackle discrimination. However, further improvements are possible, and we offer concrete accounts of the gaps that need filling and our thinking on the measures that can best fill them.

Reaching potential employees from diverse backgrounds involves a gear-shift. The Council shouldn't be putting out job adverts on the channels we prefer; we should be putting out job adverts on all the channels and in all the forms most easily accessed by the communities we want to work for the city.

Monitoring matters. In the case of the issues discussed here, monitoring matters even more than an employee's natural desire to feel protective about personal information. The Council doesn't ask for such personal information because it's nosy or box-ticking to comply with regulations. Information matters because it helps to make things better, and the Council could make that plainer to staff.

Clearly the Council needs to build confidence in the monitoring that it does. Otherwise employees will go on declining to disclose and the Council will keep on facing under-reporting.

In particular, the Council can take practical steps to build a workplace that's friendlier to transgender employees, and how we gather together personal information on employees is central to that.

I want to thank the councillors on this review panel and the council officers – in particular Scrutiny Officer Andrew Brown – for their time, commitment, and energy in developing this review.

Special thanks go to the Trade Unions who campaign for dignity and respect in Oxford City Council's workplace, and whose contributions on behalf of LGBT, black, women, and disabled members were fundamental to the scoping, investigating, and writing of this review.

I trust the review will meet with the backing of the Scrutiny Committee and the City Executive Board, and hope that it forms the basis for promoting equality and diversity within the Council workforce.

Councillor Tom Hayes
Chair of the Equality and Diversity Review Group

Summary of recommendations

- 1. That the Council undertakes comprehensive accessibility audits of its employment practices, premises, public-facing information (for instance, on the website) and externally available application forms, at appropriate intervals. Consideration should be given to how frequently these audits should take place at each workplace premises and to the setting of maximum intervals between audits.*
- 2. That the Council reviews recruitment branding to better target any vacancies at under-represented groups and young people, including utilising settings or channels that are less traditional to local government but more inclusive.*
- 3. That the Council continues to promote itself as an inclusive employer through outreach activities including continuing to hold open recruitment sessions in community settings, reaching out in schools through the Business in the Community partnership, and attending job fairs and community meetings.*
- 4. That the Council investigates opportunities to advertise multiple vacancies in community settings at low cost, which could include making use of community newspaper social media platforms, as well as community newspapers and, as long as those running them are willing, community centres.*
- 5. That the Council makes use of its assets to promote itself as an inclusive employer, including Streetscene vehicles.*
- 6. That the Council reviews its Talent Management Framework and researches whether the inclusion of a more targeted talent management programme would appeal to under-represented groups, as well as what such a programme would include.*
- 7. That the Council emphasises the value it attaches to the ability to speak a second language by including this skill in the desirable criteria for selected customer-facing job vacancies, such as Tenancy Management Officers and Customer Service Officers.*
- 8. That the Council undertakes a workforce skills audit with the purpose of identifying priority competencies and hidden talents that aren't currently being utilised but would benefit to the organisation, including the ability to speak a second language.*
- 9. That the Council considers the feasibility of having staff who are known to speak a second language 'on call' to communicate with customers who speak little or no English, and whether these staff could be rewarded with a small pay supplement.*
- 10. That all Council employees are reminded of the Council's Fair Employment Statement and employment policies at least annually. These documents should also be prominent and easily accessible on the Council's Intranet.*
- 11. That all Council employees are at least annually made aware of their responsibility to challenge discriminatory language and behaviour in the workplace, wherever that may be, as matter of course.*

12. That unconscious bias training is provided to the Council's most frequent recruiting managers and HR Business Partners. Ideally this would be followed up with annual refresher courses in order to maintain awareness and compliance with good practice.

13. That the Council identifies one or more Diversity Champions at senior levels who would help to embed equality in the workplace. These Diversity Champions could lead on communicating the importance of diversity and monitoring within the organisation and co-ordinate a calendar of activities in support of celebrations such as Black History Month, Pride, etc.

14. That the Council identifies an elected member to oversee and externally represent the Council's equality and diversity work.

15. That the Council seeks to obtain better value from its status as a Stonewall Diversity Champion and, failing that, considers whether the small membership fee would be better invested in other means of tackling discrimination.

16. That the Council continues to ask employees to review and complete their personal details, including sensitive information such as their sexual orientation, on at least an annual basis, as well as continuing to target identified data gaps. Explanation should be provided as to why sensitive personal information is held by the organisation and the wider benefits of doing so.

17. That the Council sets targets for increasing disclosure rates to reduce data gaps for sexual orientation, disability and ethnicity over a fixed period of time (e.g. eighteen months).

18. That the Council maintains a watching brief on good practice in workforce equalities monitoring and continues to keep its own monitoring arrangements under review, including how questions are asked and the language used as well as the continued inclusion of a 'prefer not to say' option.

19. That consideration is given to whether the sensitive personal data of applicants and employees requested and held by the Council should be more inclusive of transgender people. For example, the Council should consider consulting with appropriate individuals and Trade Unions on adding an appropriately worded gender identity field to its monitoring forms, with the clear purpose of building equality and identifying discrimination.

20. That the Council adopts gender-neutral terms on forms as part of its ongoing work to be as inclusive as possible, for instance, giving consideration to adding the title Mx in addition to the more established gendered titles such as Mr, Mrs, Miss and Ms.

21. That consideration is given to whether there is merit in phasing out the use of titles on Council forms and databases over the medium term.

Introduction

1. The Equality and Diversity Review Group is a cross-party working group established by Oxford City Council's Scrutiny Committee during the 2015/16 Council year. The Review Group was asked to look at whether more can reasonably be done to promote equality and diversity within the Council's workforce. The members of the Review Group are Councillors Hayes (Chair), Altaf-Khan, Taylor and Thomas.

Background

2. Oxford is an ethnically and culturally diverse city, with the third highest minority ethnic population in the South East of England. Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) and other European communities across Oxford account for 28% of the population and 36% of residents are of non-white British ethnic origin¹.
3. Oxford City Council is an employer committed to increasing the diversity of its workforce and providing an inclusive work environment with equality of opportunity for all employees.
4. Unlike many local authorities, the Council has retained a large manual workforce within its Direct Services operation, which accounts for approximately half of the total Council workforce.
5. The Council produces [Annual Workplace Equalities Reports](#) which include statistics and commentary on the diversity of the Council workforce as well as recruitment activity, the gender pay gap and disciplinary and grievance cases. These reports show that groups with protected characteristics (under the Equality Act 2010) tend to be under-represented on the Council workforce.
6. The Council has targets in place for increasing employment amongst BME groups and disabled people, and regularly monitors the following 'Corporate Health' indicators (results as of March 2016):
 - The percentage of employees with a disability - 8.2% (target 10%);
 - The percentage of black and minority ethnic employees - 7.6% (target 9%).
7. The Scrutiny Committee has previously focused on the employment of black and minority ethnic (BME) groups on the Council's workforce and in 2014 made five recommendations aimed at increasing the number of employees from BME groups. At that time BME employees made up 6.9% of the workforce but following a number of initiatives (including some improvements recommended by the Scrutiny Committee), this figure increased to 7.8% in December 2015. While this figure is the highest ever recorded, the figure remains low compared with the population of the city.

Terms of reference

¹ [Annual Workplace Equalities Report 2014-15, Oxford City Council, 2015](#)

8. The Review Group considered the annual workforce equalities report for 2014/15, and took advice from Council Officers when scoping this review and agreed that it's key lines of enquiry would be:
 - *What barriers are faced by under-represented groups in recruitment and career progression at the City Council?*
 - *How does the Council prevent and address discrimination, including specifically discrimination against LGBT employees?*

Methods of investigation

9. The Equality and Diversity Review Group met four times from October 2015 to April 2016. The Review Group's findings and recommendations have been informed by evidence provided by Council Officers and Trade Union representatives, as well as workforce equalities data, a literature review and desk research. All meetings were held in private to ensure a full and frank debate.

Profile of the Council workforce

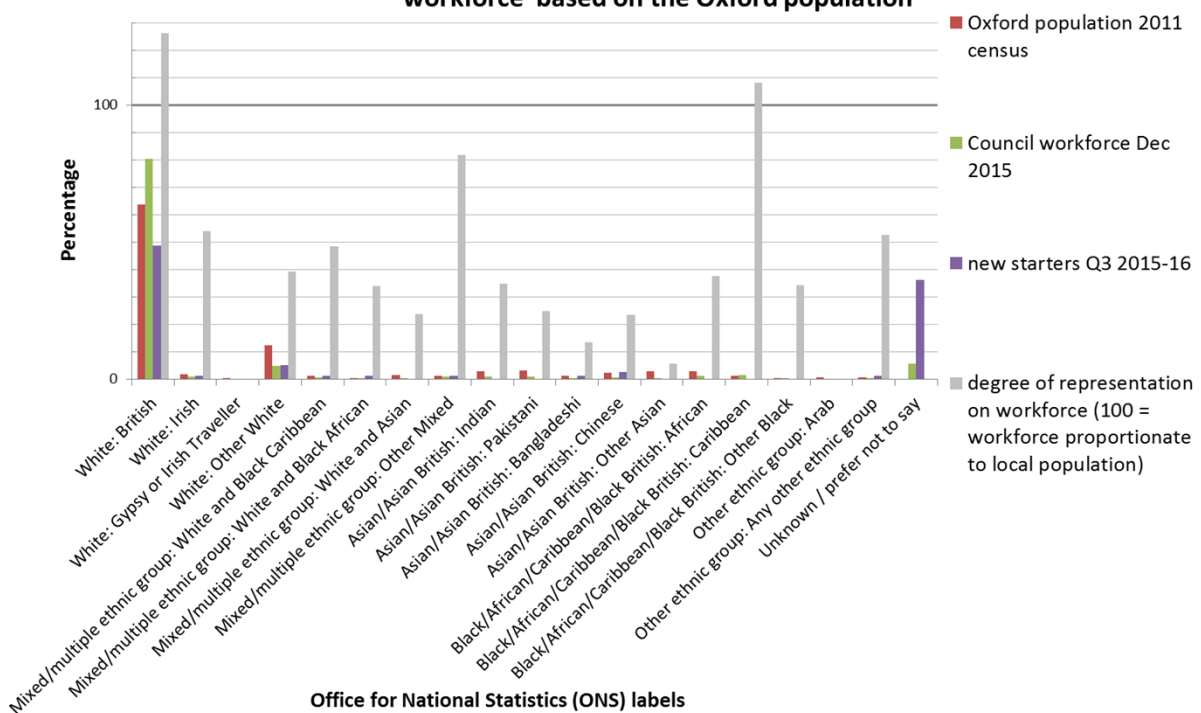
10. The Review Group looked in detail at the workforce equalities data held by the Council. This section provides statistics and commentary on the composition and profile of the Council workforce in terms of ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, disability and age (the Review Group did not look at religion). The equalities data is presented in a series of charts which are included below. Larger versions of figures 1-9 are also included in Appendix 3.

Ethnicity

11. The Review Group dug deeper into the data presented in the workforce equality reports by examining gender and ethnicity data at service area level and at each pay grade. The Review Group also compared workforce equalities data from December 2015 with census data from 2011, which is not a perfect comparator but provides a reasonable picture of the population served by the Council. This enabled the Review Group to make a number of observations about the ethnic profile of the Council workforce and identify where under-representations of different groups are most prevalent.
12. Figure 1 presents a comparison of workforce ethnicity data with census data for Oxford, excluding some 4,000 short-term international migrants who are not usually resident in the City. The grey bars show the degree of representation that different ethnic groups have on the Council workforce as a proportion of the size of these groups in the local population. These grey bars would all be at 100% if the ethnic composition of the Council workforce exactly mirrored the profile of Oxford. However, the Review Group identified a number of reasons why this would not be expected to be the case, as explained in paragraphs 15-18.
13. The Review Group found that all groups with significant local populations are under-represented on the Council workforce with the exception of the *White British* group, which is particularly over-represented, and the *Black Caribbean* Group, which is slightly over-represented. The *Other Mixed* group is the only other ethnic group that has something approaching the level of representation that could be expected based on the profile of the local population.

14. Of the remaining ethnic groups, the *Asian / Asian British* groups appear to be particularly under-represented on the Council workforce. For example the number of *Pakistani* employees is about one quarter what could be expected based on the number Oxford residents who identify as being of Pakistani origin. The proportion of *Bangladeshi* employees is lower still. No employees describe their ethnic origin as *Arab* but this is one of the smallest ethnic groups in the local population, with fewer than 1000 Arabs resident in Oxford. There is also a small but not insignificant number of staff (5.6%) who have declined to provide their ethnic origin. It is therefore likely that the figures for at least some of the BME groups are slightly understated.

Figure 1: The degree of representation of different ethnic groups on the Council workforce based on the Oxford population



15. The Review Group note that it would be unrealistic to expect the profile of the Council workforce to fully reflect the profile of the area it serves (one of the most diverse populations in the region) for a number of reasons.

16. Firstly, the diversity of the local population has increased quite considerably in recent years. Population growth in Oxford between 2001 and 2011 was entirely attributable to the increase in residents who were born outside the UK. By 2011 Oxford had 43,000 foreign-born residents making up 28% of the population. The recruitment of many longer-serving employees will have pre-dated these demographic changes and many positions on the Council workforce won't have become available in that time. Population turnover in the City is relatively high at 25% and significantly higher than the employment turnover rate on the Council workforce, which is about 10%.

17. The Oxford population contains groups of people that positively influence the diversity of the City but are not necessarily part of the workforce or seeking employment at the Council. For example, full-time students account for 24% of Oxford's adult population and approximately one third of these students were born outside the UK².
18. Another factor is that the Council does not exclusively employ people who live in the City. The Council is a regional employer with employees who commute to work from as far away as Cheshire, Lincolnshire and Norfolk. The Council's employment catchment area is therefore less diverse in terms of ethnicity than the City it serves. One distinct reason why a large proportion (53.9%³) of Council employees commute is the lack of affordable housing in the City.
19. Conscious that over half of Council employees live outside the City boundaries, the Review Group compared workforce ethnicity data with the census information for Oxfordshire, which includes but has a less ethnically diverse population than Oxford. Figure 2 shows that the ethnic profile of the Council workforce is more consistent with the profile of Oxfordshire than it is with Oxford. In this comparison a number of groups remain under-represented on the Council workforce but to a lesser extent than when compared with the population of the City.
20. The Review Group looked at the ethnicity of new starters who joined the Council workforce in the 3 months to December 2015. This was a particularly large cohort of new starters due to high recruitment in Community Services. The new starter figures also include electoral staff who are employed on a one-off temporary basis during elections. The ethnic origin of about one third of new starters is unknown but these data gaps may be explained by the inclusion of electoral staff. Either way, Figure 2 shows that the proportion of new starters is higher than the proportion of existing employees for a number of ethnic groups, including some of the most-under-represented groups, such as the *Chinese* and *Bangladeshi* groups. This would appear to indicate that the workforce is gradually becoming more diverse.
21. Figure 3 provides a breakdown of ethnic groupings by pay grade. The Review Group found that the majority of BME employees are clustered around grades 4-6 and none are higher in the organisation than range 9. Clearly a focus of the Council's ongoing work must be finding ways to ensure the BME workforce are not clustered in the lowest wage jobs and almost non-existent in senior roles. There are also obvious discrepancies between the different BME groupings in terms of pay grade. The *White – all other* grouping has some representation up to and including Service Head level but there are very few if any employees from any minority groups in the most senior positions.

² [Students in Oxford, Oxford City Council](#)

³ [Annual Workplace Equalities Report 2014-15, Oxford City Council, 2015](#)

Figure 2: Minority ethnic groups on the Council workforce compared with the Oxford and Oxfordshire populations

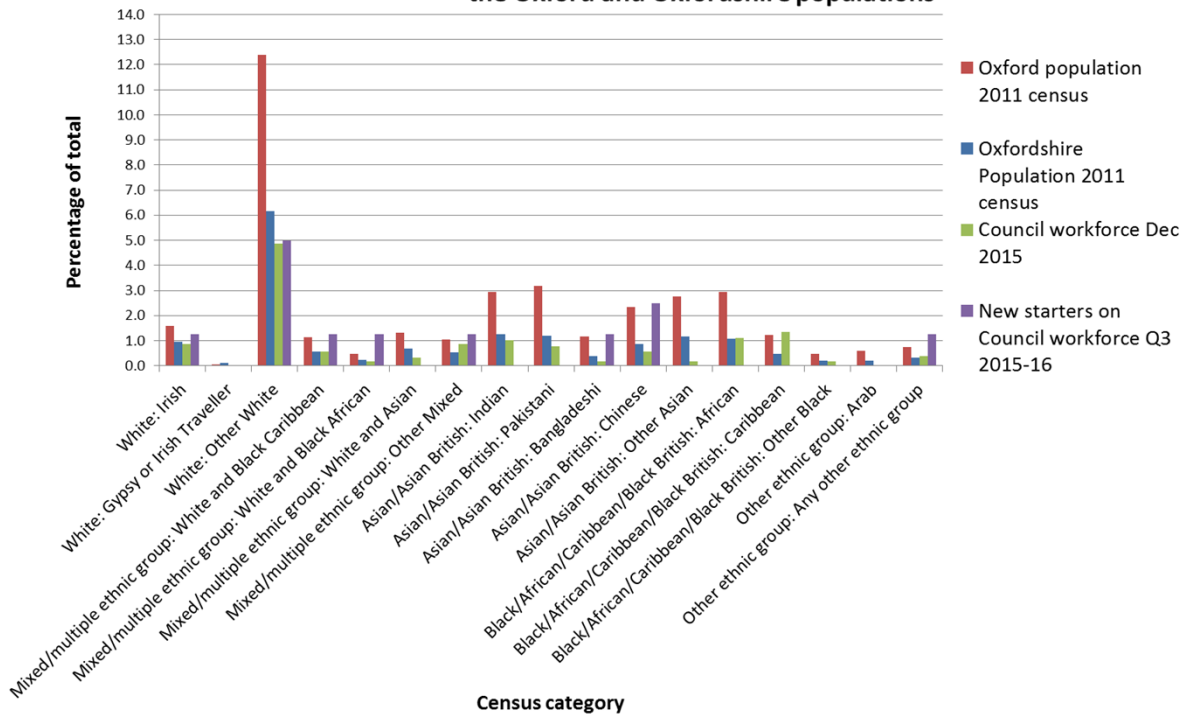
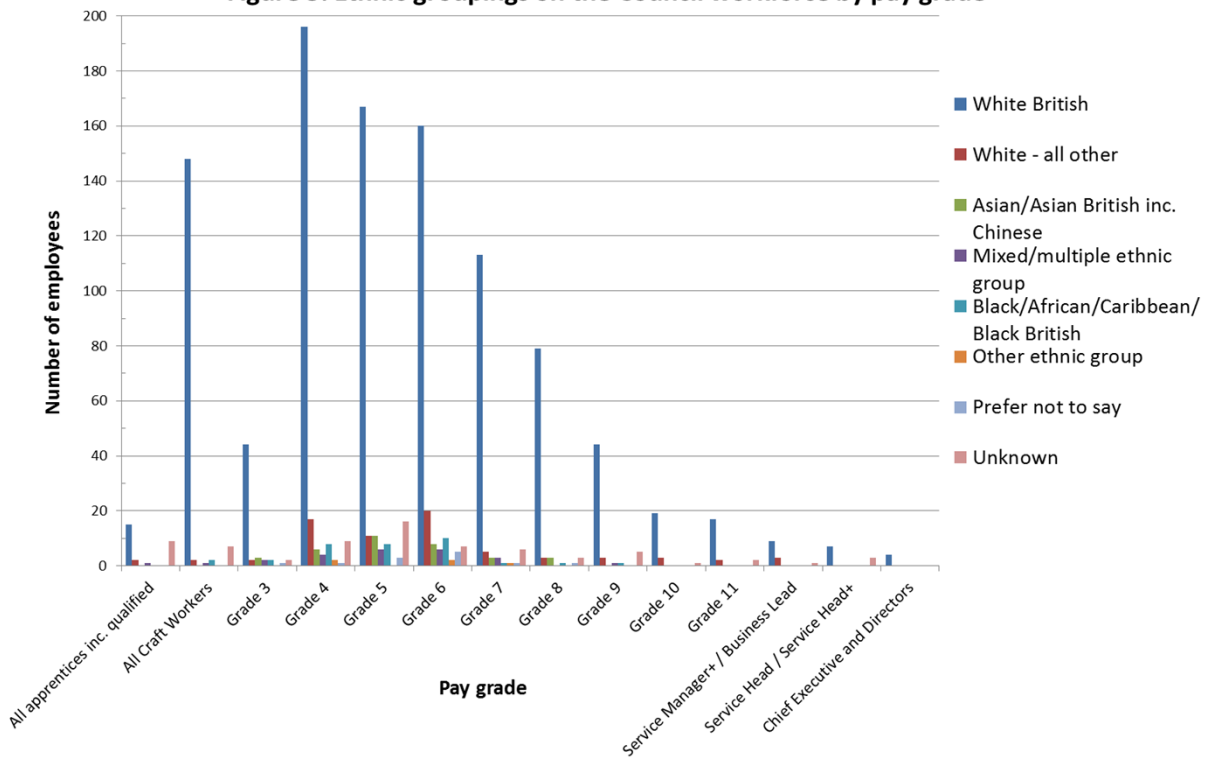
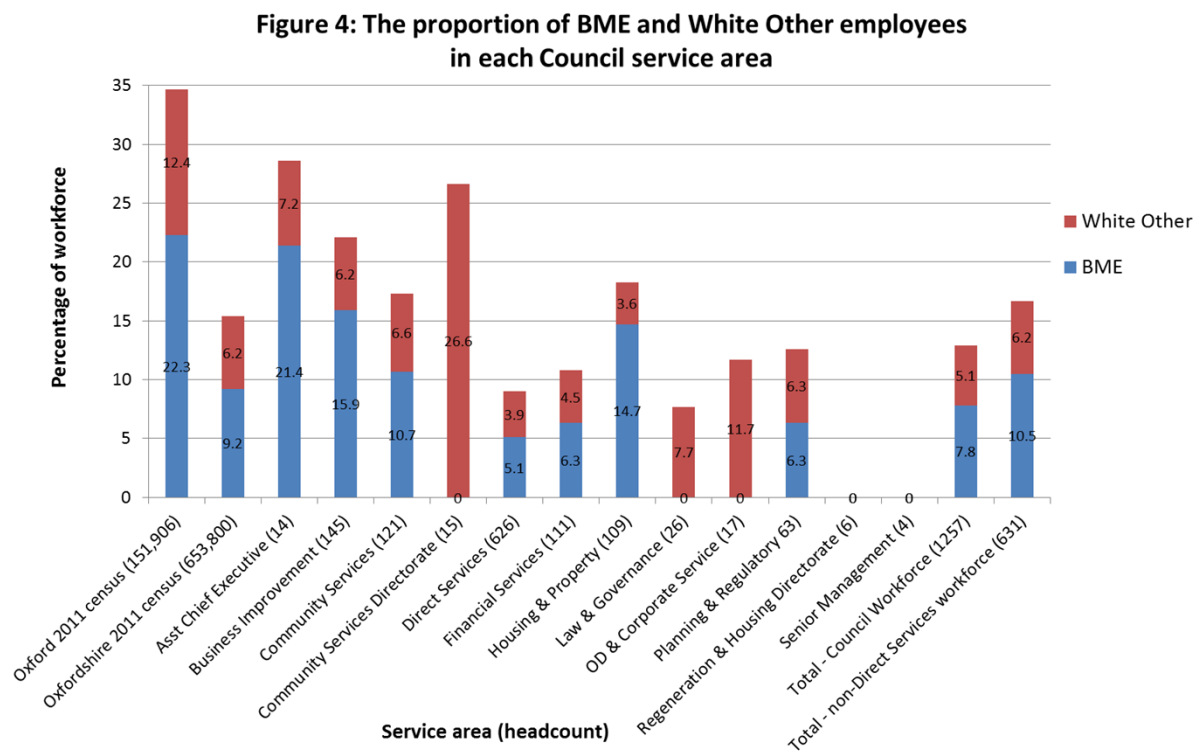


Figure 3: Ethnic groupings on the Council workforce by pay grade



22. The Review Group also looked at ethnicity data across the different Council services and Figure 4 provides a breakdown of BME and *White Other* employment by service area. The Review Group observed that no service area has a workforce that is as ethnically diverse as the population of Oxford. The most ethnically diverse service area is Assistant Chief Executive but this service only has fourteen employees. Of the larger service areas Business Improvement (which includes IT and Customer Services) is the most diverse, with 22.1% of employees identified as being non-*White British*. This compares with figures of 34.7% for Oxford and 15.4% for Oxfordshire. In contrast, the proportion of non-*White British* employees in Direct Services, which accounts for approximately half of the Council workforce, is a lot lower at 9%.

23. Figure 4 shows that the total Council workforce is less diverse than the populations of both Oxford and Oxfordshire. Excluding Direct Services, the proportions of BME and *White Other* employees are consistent with the population of Oxfordshire. It should also be noted that the numbers of non-*White British* employees on the Council workforce are likely to be slightly under-stated because there are some data gaps and a small of employees have selected their ethnic origin as *Prefer not to say*.



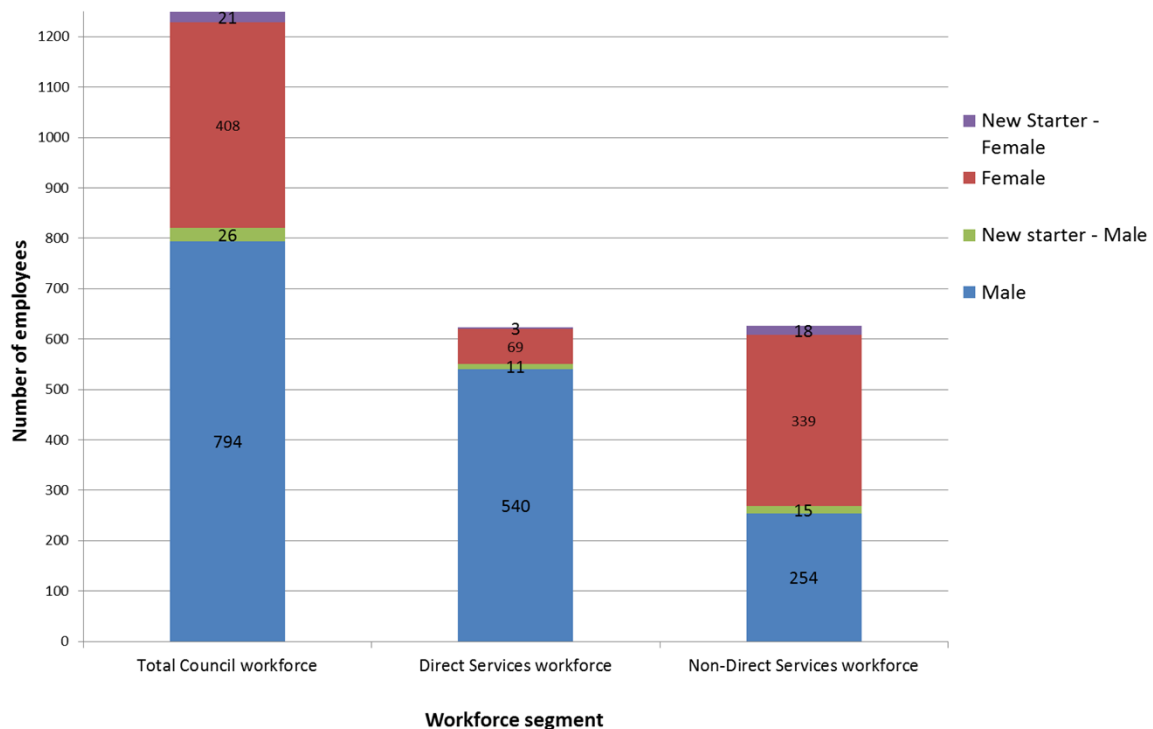
24. The Review Group believe that recent increases in the ethnic diversity of the Council workforce are encouraging but that further progress is needed towards achieving a workforce that better reflects the diversity of the population that it serves. The Review Group recognise that progress may be slow and uneven in the short term and that, for the reasons discussed in earlier paragraphs, it would

be unrealistic to expect the ethnic composition of the Council workforce to fully reflect the ethnic profile of the City any time soon.

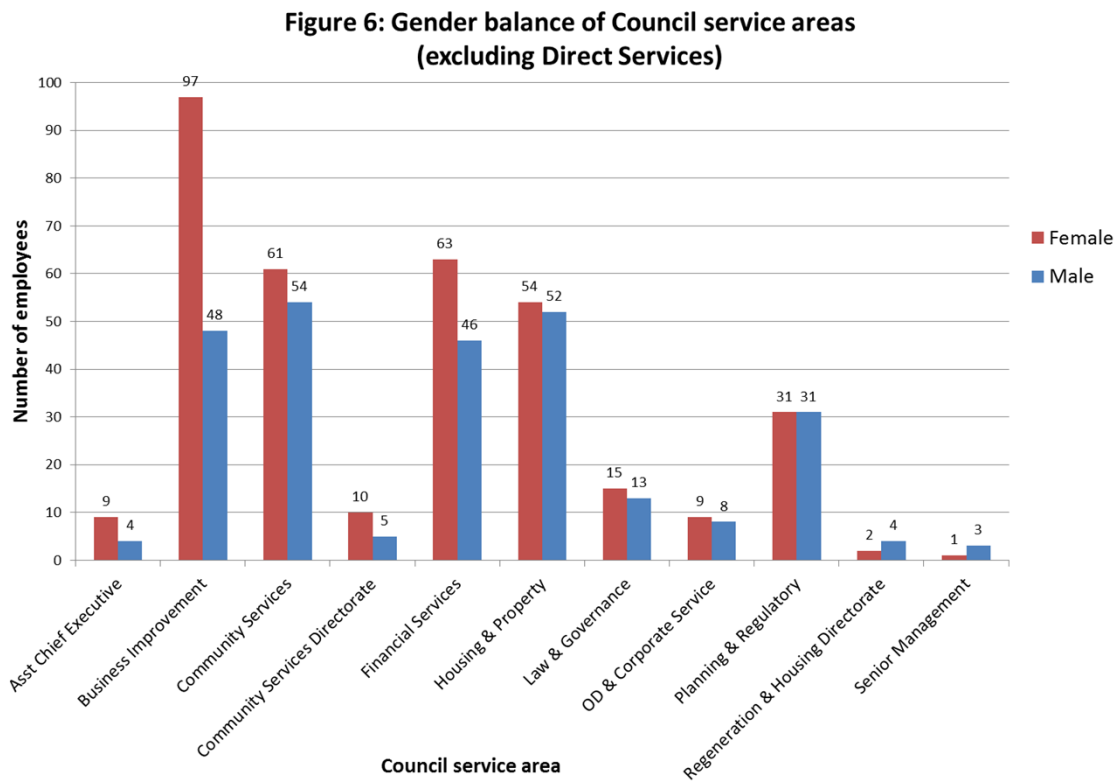
Gender

25. The Review Group examined workforce gender data including the gender balance of each service area and at different pay grades, and make a number of observations about the gender profile of the Council workforce.
26. Figure 5 provides a breakdown of male and female employees on the Council workforce as a whole, as well as in the Direct Services workforce and the non-Direct Services workforce. In total just over one third (34%) of all Council employees are female. Within this overall figure, Direct Services has a very low proportion of female workers at 12% and this significantly skews the overall figure. Excluding this largely manual workforce, females are actually in the majority, accounting for 57% of the remaining employees. This is considered to be in line with national patterns of employment within local government.
27. The Review Group note that the Council has had some successes in increasing female employment in Direct Services. For example, a number of women are now employed as drivers of heavy goods vehicles (HGVs). The proportion of female new starters in Direct Services (22%) is slightly higher than the proportion of females in Direct Services as a whole (12%), which may signify a slight shifting in the gender balance of this service area. However, it is expected that there is little scope to alter the gender balance of the workforce in higher employment areas such as street cleaning in the foreseeable future.

Figure 5: Gender composition of the Council workforce



28. Figure 6 presents a breakdown of male and female employment in the remaining service areas. It shows that most service areas have a fairly even gender profile or in some cases a majority of female employees. Business Improvement has the highest proportion of female workers at 67%. Male employees are in the majority in two service areas, Senior Management Team and Regeneration and Housing Directorate, both of which have very small numbers of employees.

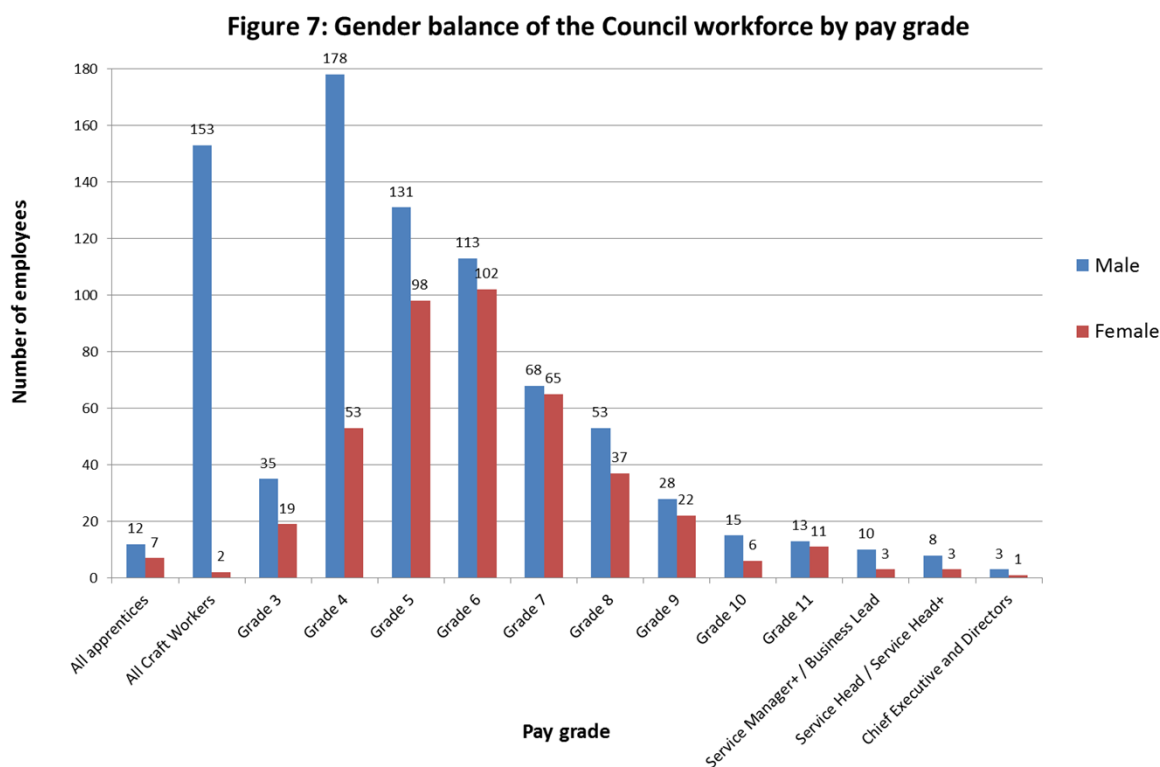


29. The gender profile of new starters is broadly consistent with existing patterns of employment in the different service areas, with a notable high proportion of female new starters in Business Improvement and a notably high proportion of male new starters in Direct Services, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Male and Female new starters by service area

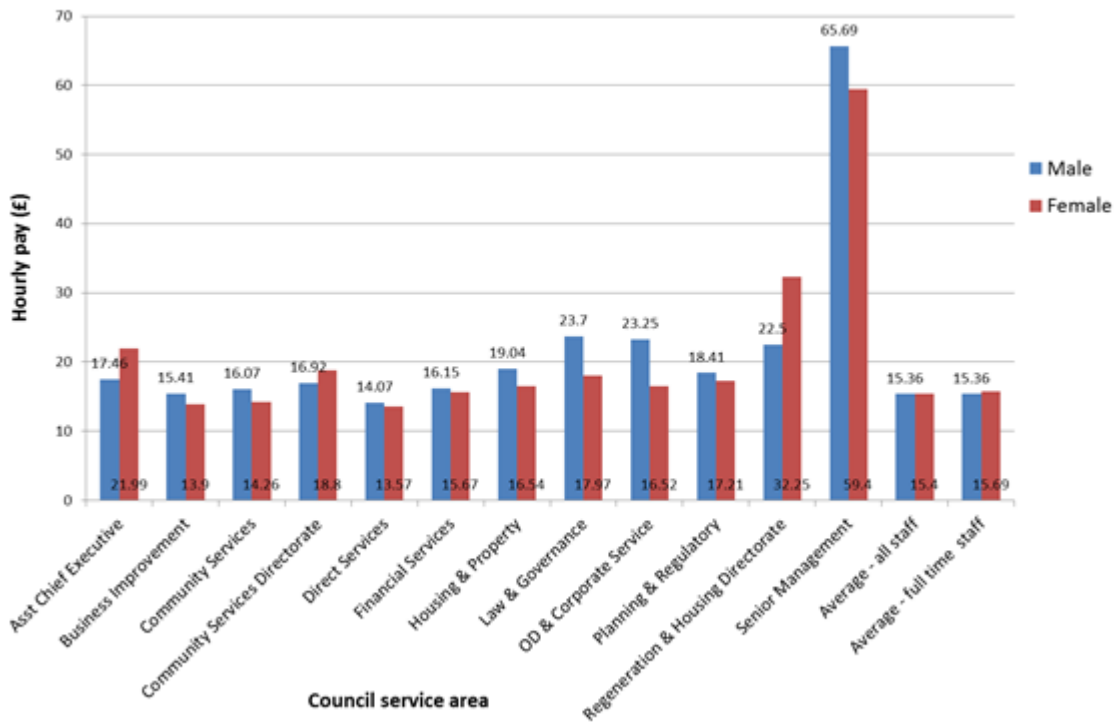
Service Area	Gender	Employee Count
Asst Chief Executive	Female	1
Business Improvement	Female	7
Business Improvement	Male	2
Community Services	Female	4
Community Services	Male	6
Direct Services	Female	3
Direct Services	Male	11
Electoral Staff (2012)	Female	18
Electoral Staff (2012)	Male	15
Financial Services	Female	2
Financial Services	Male	2
Planning & Regulatory	Female	2

30. The numbers of male and female employees at each pay grade is set out in Figure 7. This shows that males outnumber females at every Council pay grade and most notably at the lower Council pay grades (3 and 4) and Craft Worker pay grades, which are Direct Services pay grades linked to productivity. Only one quarter of employees at the lowest two Council pay grades are female, which reflects the large number of Direct Services staff employed at these pay grades. Similarly, one quarter of employees in senior management positions (Service Manager and above) are female. The mid-ranking Council pay grades (5-9) tend to have a more even gender balance.



31. The Review Group looked at the average hourly pay for males and females within each service area, as well as for the workforce overall. This information is presented in Figure 8, which shows that average hourly pay is higher for men than for women in most service areas. The three exceptions are relatively small teams that have women in senior positions and no more than fifteen employees. High male employment in the lowest paying service area, Direct Services, would appear to even out the average pay rates of men and women at an aggregate level. The net effect of male and female employment patterns is that overall, hourly pay rates for males and females are almost identical. Among full time employees there is a small negative gender pay gap, with average hourly pay for females (£15.69) about 2% higher than it is for males (£15.36).

Figure 8: Average hourly pay by gender and service area



32. Table 2 and Table 3 show the numbers of male and female new starters at each pay grade. Most new starters were recruited at pay grades 3-8. A small number of new starters joined at higher pay grades, including a female at Service Manager level. This was the highest post recruited to during the three month period of October to December 2015.

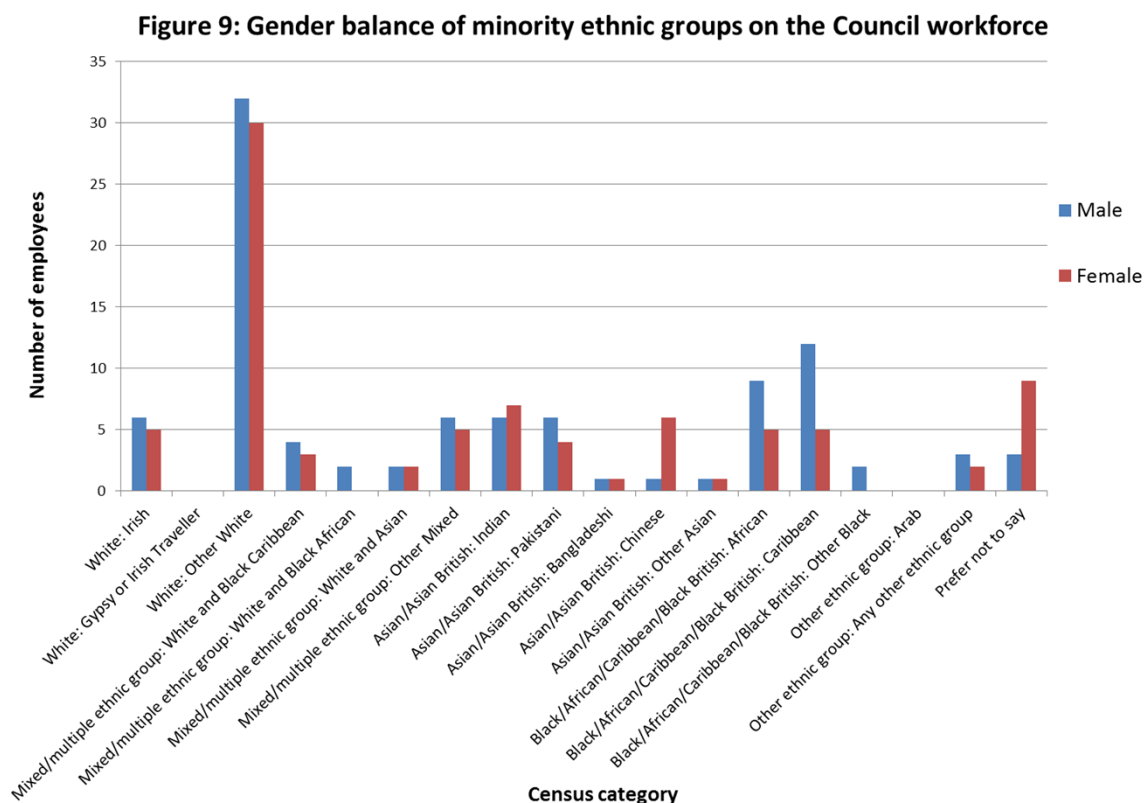
Table 2: Female new starters by pay grade

Gender	Grade	Employee Count
Female	Grade 03	6
Female	Grade 04	4
Female	Grade 05	3
Female	Grade 06	4
Female	Grade 07	2
Female	Grade 09	1
Female	Service Head	1

Table 3: Male new starters by pay grade

Gender	Grade	Employee Count
Male	Craft Worker Band B	2
Male	Craft Worker Band D	1
Male	Grade 03	3
Male	Grade 04	5
Male	Grade 05	5
Male	Grade 06	5
Male	Grade 08	3
Male	Grade 10	1
Male	Not Defined	1

33. The Review Group requested statistics to see the gender of breakdown of minority ethnic groups on the Council workforce and this data is presented in Figure 9. It shows that there are more males than females in most minority groups, most notably in the *Black* groups. There are more females than men in two ethnic groups; the *Indian* and *Chinese* groups. However, there are also more females in the *Prefer not to say* category, so overall the numbers of male and female employees are likely to be fairly even in most groups.



Sexual orientation

34. The Review Group found that the numbers of Council employees who have declared their sexual orientation to be something other than *Heterosexual/straight* are very low, at around 1% of the total workforce, as shown in Table 4. This number is likely to be understated because there are significant data gaps, with 40% of the workforce either *Unknown* or *Prefer not to say*.

35. The relatively high number of *Prefer not to say* responses may reflect employees taking the view that this is private information their employer does not need that does not affect their job. However, assuming that there is not a problem in disclosing sexual orientation may mean the Council misses a problem, namely that LGBT employees do not feel comfortable being out in their workplace. Assuming that there is not a problem in disclosing sexual orientation may in effect exacerbate any problem that did exist.

36. Of the 60% of employees who have provided their sexual orientation, 98% responded that they are *Heterosexual/straight*. Given the small numbers of non-heterosexual returns, the Review Group did not see much value in analysing this data by service area or pay grade and would encourage efforts to obtain a more complete dataset.

Table 4: Sexual orientation of the Council workforce

Sexual Orientation	Employee Count
Bisexual	1
Gay man	6
Gay woman/lesbian	5
Heterosexual/straight	736
Prefer not to say	70
Unknown	439

37. Amongst new starters, the number of unknowns is the same as the number of new electoral staff. This could be a coincidence or it could be that new electoral staff had not been asked to declare their sexual orientation while all other new starters declared their sexual orientation to be *Heterosexual/straight*. Either way, the new starter sexual orientation returns shown in Table 5 are broadly consistent with (and do little to alter) the profile of the Council workforce as a whole.

Table 5: Sexual orientation of new starters

Sexual Orientation	Employee Count
Heterosexual/straight	47
Unknown	33

38. Without more complete data it is very difficult to know the extent to which LGBT groups are actually under-represented on the Council workforce, although the available data would suggest that they are.

Disability

39. Table 6 shows that as of the end of January 2016, 103 Council employees had declared a disability, which equates to 8.2% of the workforce, against a target of 10%. The Council cannot require staff to declare a disability and the actual figure is thought to be slightly higher as the data gaps include staff known to have a registered disability who are being supported at work.

40. The proportion of employees declaring a disability is lower than the 12% of people who said they suffered from a limiting long-term illness or disability in the 2011 Oxford census⁴. Disability is strongly related to age so this population figure will include disabled people who are retired, as well as 3,100 people aged 16-74 who are economically inactive due to being permanently sick or disabled.

41. Relatively few employees have declined to specify whether they have a disability but it may be that amongst the *Not known* group includes people who do not wish to provide this information to their employer or do not see the value in doing so.

⁴ [Disability, Oxford City Council, 2016](#)

Table 6: Disability data for the Council workforce

Disability Type: People	Employee Count
Declined to specify	9
Disabled	103
Not disabled	1072
Not known	73

42. Amongst the new starter cohort the proportion of staff declaring a disability is lower at only 5%. The new starter figures shown in Table 7 include temporary electoral staff but even excluding these staff the proportion of new starters declaring a disability is not high enough to positively impact performance against target. Indeed, the proportion of employees declaring a disability fell from 8.45% in December 2015 to 8.2% in January 2016. Performance against this measure will be affected by small numbers of disabled staff leaving the organisation, or by a lower rate of new starters declaring a disability. It should therefore be expected that this figure may go up or down slightly in the short term but the Review Group would expect that over a longer period the trend should be for a steady increase in the number of employees declaring a disability.

Table 7: Disability data for new starters

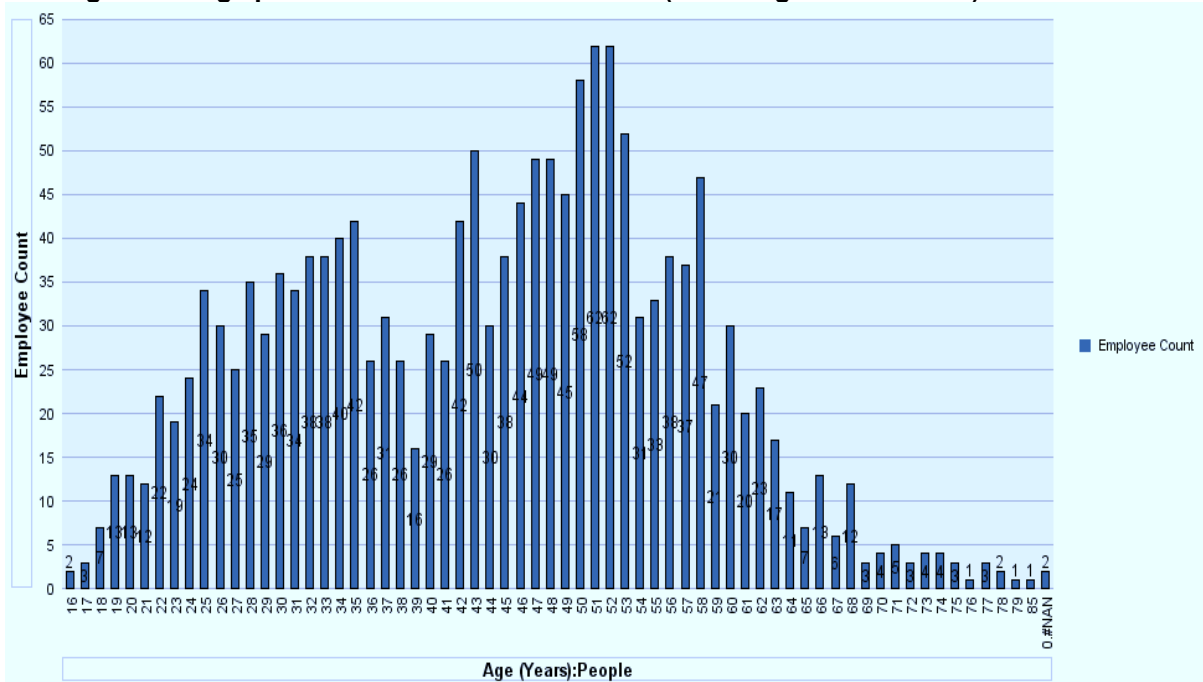
Consider Disabled?	Employee Count
No	75
Not Known	1
Yes	4

Age

43. Figure 10 shows the age profile of the Council workforce, which ranges from 16 to 85. The age profile peaks in the early 50s age group, with the most common ages of Council employees being 51 and 52. The 10 most common ages all range from 43 to 58, which includes the tail end of the baby boomer generation.
44. This data includes some 373 electoral staff, which may explain some of the 33 staff aged 70+. However, the default retirement age has been phased out, so most people can now remain in work for as long as they want to⁵.
45. There are reasonable numbers of employees in the mid-twenties to mid-thirties age groups but employment numbers then dip significantly, with relatively few employees aged 36-41. This may reflect the challenges around the unaffordability of housing in the city and the fact that many young professionals tend to house-share in their twenties and early thirties but are ultimately unable to buy a home and settle in the area long-term.
46. The Review Group heard that the aging workforce presents a number of challenges to the organisation. These include the need to recruit from younger age groups and potentially the need to support larger numbers of employees with disabilities as working lives, including manual working lives, are extended.

⁵ [Retirement age, Gov.uk, 5 February 2016](#)

Figure 10: Age profile of the Council workforce (including electoral staff)



Barriers to recruitment and career progression

- 47. The Review Group identified a number of barriers that are potentially faced by under-represented groups in recruitment and career progression at the Council. These include relatively low rates of staff turnover in parts of the organisation, recruitment processes, access to qualifications, skills and experience, and possibly the culture of the organisation and how the Council is perceived by different groups. Some under-represented groups will face other more-specific barriers. For example, women are more likely than men to take career breaks in order to raise children and disabled people are more likely to face barriers to do with accessibility.
- 48. The Council has a relatively high workforce turnover at 10% per year, which equates to some 20-30 new recruits joining the workforce in a typical quarter. This is not necessarily high enough to keep pace with demographic changes in a city with a 25% annual population turnover, particularly given that half of new recruits come from areas outside the city that are generally less diverse. Despite this, the Review Group heard that the proportion of job applications received from BME applicants is at its highest ever level at around 22%. The conversion rate drops off during the recruitment process and the proportion of new starters from BME groups is significantly lower only around 14%. The reasons for this are unknown but there are likely to be several factors. The Review Group heard that some BME applicants are not credible applicants, for example because they do not have a visa to work in the UK. Skill sets including language skills and interview performance may also be factors.
- 49. Some positions at all levels in the organisation will be held by long-serving employees and will become available very infrequently, such as when the post-

holder retires or dies. Many of these employees will have been recruited prior to recent demographic changes. This factor is known as 'dead man's shoes' and it is a barrier to the recruitment and career progression of people who are looking to be appointed to these roles. High turnover rates among younger employees would indicate that they are willing to leave the organisation to pursue their careers elsewhere if opportunities do not become available, particularly given the very high cost of living in the city.

50. Opportunities for under-represented groups to reach the highest levels of the organisation are particularly limited due to the very small number of these posts and the fact that they become available infrequently. When higher-paid roles do become vacant, successful applicants are likely to be recruited from within the local government sector, where BME groups are generally under-represented. The profile of the Council's senior management team would therefore not be expected to change significantly in the short to medium term. Ethnic groups that are newer to the population will take time to gain the equivalent skills and experience necessary to be successfully recruited to these types of roles. Indeed, the Review Group heard that over one third of applicants for the lowest paid range 3 positions are qualified to degree level or higher, so a lack of qualifications is likely to be a barrier at various levels of the organisation.
51. Some roles that the Council recruits such as Lawyers and Chartered Surveyors require professional qualifications that are not always inclusive and accessible to under-represented groups. The Council has little or no control over access to qualifications yet the pool of professionals it recruits from will in many cases be less diverse than the population it serves.
52. Similarly, the Council has little influence on young people's career choices, which are much more likely to be influenced by information provided by parents and social media. Many lower-paid roles on the Council workforce such as manual roles in Direct Services may be seen as traditionally jobs for white working class men. These roles, which make up a significant proportion of the Council workforce, may not be desirable to under-represented groups such as women and ethnic minorities. Questions around what routes into employment people in different communities want and whether the Council is seen as an attractive employer need to be better understood. While the Council has had some success at recruiting female HGV drivers, there is little scope to significantly alter the gender balance of the Direct Services workforce in the medium term.

Reducing barriers

53. The Council has already sought to ensure that the profile of its workforce better represents the local community. The Council pays an Oxford Living Wage, is a Mindful Employer and has employment policies and practices in place that are aimed at achieving equality of opportunity for all. The Council is legally able to use positive action in certain circumstances to help people with protected characteristics to overcome their disadvantage⁶ and has done so in a variety of ways. It also has specific targets in place for the employment of BME and people with disabilities. The Review Group support this positive action.

⁶ [Discrimination at work - positive action, Citizens Advice, 2016](#)

54. The Council has taken a number of steps to make its recruitment processes more flexible and accessible to different under-represented groups. Improvements include reviews of job descriptions and the placement of job adverts, the provision of online advice and guidance to applicants and basing recruitment decisions on more than just an interview. Feedback is now offered to all applicants who are unsuccessful at the interview stage. The Council has also trialled anonymised shortlisting for a period of time but this was found to make no difference to recruitment outcomes.

55. The Council's workplace premises are currently in the process of being rationalised and the Review Group note the need for premises to be safely accessible to people with disabilities and compliant with disability equality laws, with reasonable adjustments identified and implemented. The Review Group understand that advice has been sought on all design standards for workplace refurbishments and new build projects and that fire risk and evacuation plans are in place. The Review Group welcome these measures and note the need for them to take place on an ongoing basis. Accessibility is about more than getting into buildings and the Review Group encourage more three-dimensional thinking about diversity and accessibility that extends to employment practices and processes as well as premises. Consideration should be given to how frequently accessibility audits should take place at each workplace premises and the Council could look at setting maximum intervals between accessibility audits.

Recommendation 1 – That the Council undertakes comprehensive accessibility audits of its employment practices, premises, public-facing information (for instance, on the website) and externally available application forms, at appropriate intervals. Consideration should be given to how frequently these audits should take place at each workplace premises and to the setting of maximum intervals between audits.

56. The Review Group noted in discussion that millennial workers (those born after 1979) look for different things from a job and from an employer than older demographics and questioned whether more traditional adverts for local government vacancies would appeal to these groups. The Review Group heard that there is a need to understand what younger people want but that officers need time to be proactive rather than reactive in these sorts of areas. The Review Group support the review of recruitment which is already underway and suggest that the Council should continue to explore ways of making its recruitment processes more appealing and accessible to young people and other under-represented groups. This should include looking at the way job adverts are presented and branded as well as where they are placed, with a view to making them more inclusive.

Recommendation 2 – That the Council reviews recruitment branding to better target vacancies at under-represented groups and young people, including utilising settings or channels that are less traditional to local government but more inclusive.

57. The Review Group heard that BME employees had been encouraged to contribute to focus group discussions about what the Council was seen as standing for and what prevented these groups from applying for vacancies at the Council. There have also been a number of outreach activities to encourage under-represented groups to apply for jobs at the Council, including at job fairs and other events in community settings. The Council is also able to reach out to young people in schools through the Business in the Community partnership. The Review Group heard that attendance at community events had been poor amongst target groups and while the Council's Communities Team is working to build relationships with different communities in the City, progress is slow. The Review Group encourage and support continued efforts to reach out and build relationships with under-represented communities in a variety of ways.

Recommendation 3 – That the Council continues to promote itself as an inclusive employer through outreach activities including continuing to hold open recruitment sessions in community settings, reaching out in schools through the Business in the Community partnership, and attending job fairs and community meetings.

58. The Review Group considered whether the Council could extend its reach further into communities by placing job advertisements in community settings. This would need to be done at low cost and is likely to be most effective when the Council recruiting in bulk to multiple vacancies. The Review Group support moves to utilise community centres and potentially community newspapers and social media platforms.

Recommendation 4 – That the Council investigates opportunities to advertise multiple vacancies in community settings at low cost, which could include making use of community newspaper social media platforms, as well as community newspapers and, as long as those running them are willing, community centres.

59. Similarly, the Review Group also suggest that the Council could make use of its own assets, such as Streetscene vehicles, in promoting itself as an inclusive employer around the city.

Recommendation 5 – That the Council makes use of its assets to promote itself as an inclusive employer, including Streetscene vehicles.

60. The Review Group questioned what arrangements the Council has in place to manage and promote talent within the organisation and whether any support is specifically targeted at under-represented groups. The Review Group heard that talent management within the organisation is not specific to succession planning or to helping to further the careers of employees from under-represented groups. The Review Group suggest that officers explore whether there would be an appetite amongst employees from under-represented groups for a more targeted talent management system and seek ideas for what types of support such a programme would include.

Recommendation 6 – That the Council reviews its Talent Management Framework and researches whether the inclusion of a more targeted talent management programme would appeal to under-represented groups, as well as what such a programme would include.

61. The Review Group noted that language can be a barrier to some under-represented groups in accessing Council services and heard that customer-facing employees who could speak a second language did utilise these skills in assisting customers. The Review Group suggest that when the Council is recruiting to certain customer-facing roles it could include the ability to speak a second language as a desirable criterion in the role profile. This should be limited to languages spoken by communities based in the city and to roles that are likely to come into contact with members of these communities. Recognising the ability to speak a second language as a useful skill may help to encourage applicants from under-represented communities to apply successfully for roles on the Council workforce. The Review Group note that there may be difficulties around defining exactly what level of language skills would constitute the ability to speak a second language, so clear guidance would be needed on this.

Recommendation 7 – That the Council emphasises the value it attaches to the ability to speak a second language by including this skill in the desirable criteria for selected customer-facing job vacancies, such as Tenancy Management Officers and Customer Service Officers.

62. The Review Group questioned whether the Council could make more use of language skills of employees across the organisation in assisting customers. It is suggested that the Council should identify priority skills that may not currently be utilised (such as the ability to speak a second language) and undertakes a skills audit with the aim of finding and utilising these skills within its workforce.

Recommendation 8 – That the Council undertakes a workforce skills audit with the purpose of identifying priority competencies and hidden talents that aren't currently being utilised but would benefit to the organisation, including the ability to speak a second language.

63. The Review Group also suggest that there may be an opportunity to actively utilise employees with the ability to speak a second language by asking to have them 'on call' to speak with customers. If this would address a business need then consideration should be given to rewarding these staff with a small pay supplement, similar to than give to fire wardens for example.

Recommendation 9 – That the Council considers the feasibility of having staff who are known to speak a second language 'on call' to communicate with customers who speak little or no English, and whether these staff could be rewarded with a small pay supplement.

Preventing and addressing discrimination

64. The Review Group considered how the Council deals with discrimination and found that instances of conscious or subconscious discrimination are not showing

through in the Council's reporting. There are perhaps 3-4 grievance cases each year and these tend to relate to issues of care of property. Occasional cases of discrimination or bullying have been dealt with effectively and a small number of employees have been dismissed in recent years as a result. The Review Group considered whether there may be a macho culture in parts of the organisation that is exclusive of under-represented groups, and whether this type of culture may be present in a more subconscious sense in office based environments.

65. The Review Group questioned what types of information the Council gathers in employee surveys and exit interviews and what the results indicate in terms of employees' experiences and perceptions of the culture of the organisation. Previous staff surveys have included questions around discrimination but not since 2013, so no recent and useful staff survey data is available. Exit interviews are offered to all leavers but many leavers appear to lack the motivation to take these up and are thought to move on for a range of internal and external factors. The Review Group heard that exit interviews tend to produce low quality data and this may be because many leavers wish to keep their options open for the future, or possibly to draw a line under any negative experiences they may have had.

66. As would be expected from a public sector organisation, the Review Group found that Council has robust anti-discrimination policies and reporting procedures in place. The Council also benefits from strong trade unions and the work of HR Business Partners. The Review Group suggest that the Council's policies around anti-discrimination should have a high profile within the organisation, including on the Council Intranet, as part of efforts to maintain an inclusive culture.

Recommendation 10 – That all Council employees are reminded of the Council's Fair Employment Statement and employment policies at least annually. These documents should also be prominent and easily accessible on the Council's Intranet.

67. The Review Group note the importance of regularly getting the right messages across to staff in order to help them to recognise and prevent instances of discrimination. The Review Group expect that senior employees lead by example in challenging discriminatory language and behaviours and suggest that all staff should be made aware and reminded of their responsibilities to do so as a matter of course.

Recommendation 11 – That all Council employees are at least annually made aware of their responsibility to challenge discriminatory language and behaviour in the workplace, wherever that may be, as matter of course.

68. The Review Group questioned whether employees are provided with training to help them to tackle discrimination. The Review Group suggest that training on recognising unconscious biases should be prioritised and focused on the Council's HR Business Partners and the managers across the organisation most regularly involved in recruiting cohorts of new starters. This training could either be delivered in house or sourced at a relatively modest cost. The Review Group also suggest that once this training has been delivered it should be followed up with refresher courses, perhaps annually.

Recommendation 12 – That unconscious bias training is provided to the Council’s most frequent recruiting managers and HR Business Partners. Ideally this would be followed up with annual refresher courses in order to maintain awareness and compliance with good practice.

69. Leadership from the highest levels of the Council could be useful for signalling to the workforce just how much value senior leaders place on building an inclusive, diverse workplace. Employees will take diversity more seriously if Council leaders show they want the most inclusive workplace and cascade that message down the organisation. The Review Group suggest that the Council identifies senior leaders who could visibly act as Diversity Champions. These Diversity Champions would not need to report one or more of the equality characteristics, although significant advantage could be gained if they did. Linked to this role, the Review Group suggest the plotting of a year-long calendar of activities where Diversity Champions or other people within the organisation could visibly lead employees to place a strong emphasis on diversity. Leading celebrations such as Black History Month, Pride, International Day of Persons with Disabilities, International Transgender Day of Visibility, and International Women’s Day, would help to embed equality in the workplace, create conversations and reinforce positive attitudes towards diversity, especially when celebrations involve people at all levels of the Council.

Recommendation 13 – That the Council identifies one or more Diversity Champions at senior levels who would help to embed equality in the workplace. These Diversity Champions could lead on communicating the importance of diversity and monitoring within the organisation and co-ordinate a calendar of activities in support of celebrations such as Black History Month, Pride, etc.

70. The Review Group suggest that the Council also appoints a single elected councillor to visibly oversee and externally represent the Council’s equality and diversity work. This would also help in reinforcing messages about diversity, inclusion, and monitoring to the Council workforce.

Recommendation 14 – That the Council identifies an elected member to oversee and externally represent the Council’s equality and diversity work.

Being inclusive of LGBT employees

71. Specific consideration was given to whether the Council is inclusive of LGBT people generally and transgender people in particular. The Review Group has recommended that further consideration should be given to why the LGBT workforce is small and less willing to disclose.

72. The Council pays a sum each year to show that it is an LGBT inclusive employer and acquire advice on being more inclusive by being a Stonewall Diversity Champion. The Review Group questioned the value for money of retaining this status given that the only benefit to the Council, as reported by officers, is use of the Stonewall’s Diversity Champion logo. The Council must be mindful of the financial investments it makes and if there is no tangible evidence to suggest that

being a Stonewall Diversity Champion has made or is making a positive difference in attracting and retaining LGBT staff, consideration should be given to obtaining better value from Stonewall and, failing that, dedicating the funding to other means of tackling discrimination, such as training recruiting managers.

73. Bearing in mind that the LGBT workforce is small and less willing to disclose, consideration should be given to the tension between the message that might be sent out by declining to continue as a Stonewall Diversity Champion and the quite strong practical benefits that could accrue to recruitment and better rates of disclosure from better spending that sum of money.

Recommendation 15 – That the Council seeks to obtain better value from its status as a Stonewall Diversity Champion and, failing that, considers whether the small membership fee would be better invested in other means of tackling discrimination.

74. As discussed in paragraphs 34-36, there are significant gaps in the sexual orientation data held by the Council, as well as to a lesser extent the disability and ethnicity data. This indicates under-reporting by Council employees and in particular among the LGBT workforce, which is very small. Evidence shows that sexual orientation is considered to be more private than other equalities data that is routinely monitored⁷, which may help to explain low LGBT disclosure rates. The Review Group suggest that the Council prioritises building confidence in monitoring by making extra efforts to explain to the workforce why key pieces of personal information are monitored. Offering monitoring opportunities at regular intervals is centrally important, to emphasise the Council's prioritisation of monitoring and because people's level of impairment, sexuality, and gender identity are not fixed.

Recommendation 16 – That the Council continues to ask employees to review and complete their personal details, including sensitive information such as their sexual orientation, on at least an annual basis, as well as continuing to target identified data gaps. Explanation should be provided as to why sensitive personal information is held by the organisation and the wider benefits of doing so.

75. Some recommendations in this report would benefit from Council employees significantly increasing disclosure over a short-term horizon. The Review Group suggest that the setting of targets for increasing disclosure rates, for example across an eighteen-month window, would further emphasise the Council's prioritisation of monitoring and help to mobilise extra resources.

Recommendation 17 – That the Council sets targets for increasing disclosure rates to reduce data gaps for sexual orientation, disability and ethnicity over a fixed period of time (e.g. eighteen months).

76. Consideration was given to the inclusion of the *Prefer not to say* option for sexual orientation on the Council's monitoring form. The inclusion of this option may

⁷ [Improving sexual orientation monitoring, Equality and Human Rights Commission, 2010, p. 5](#)

send a signal that this data is something that should be considered private. It also produces data that can be difficult to use and analyse and some employers such as IBM and Brighton and Hove Council do not provide this option⁸. At the same time the *Prefer not to say* option provides individuals with the choice not to disclose their personal data and recognises that this information is shared on a voluntary basis. The Unison guidance on LGBT workforce monitoring advises employers that 'questions on sexual orientation and gender identity should always include a 'prefer not to select' option'⁹. The Equality and Human Rights Council report *Improving Sexual Orientation Monitoring* includes case study examples of good practice. These examples include how an employer significantly increased sexual orientation disclosure rates and how another employer has effectively communicated why personal data is monitored. The Review Group suggest that the Council should continue to keep national good practice and its own monitoring arrangements under review.

Recommendation 18 – That the Council maintains a watching brief on good practice in workforce equalities monitoring and continues to keep its own monitoring arrangements under review, including how questions are asked and the language used as well as the continued inclusion of a 'prefer not to say' option.

77. The personal information the Council holds on employees is not currently inclusive of transgender people because being transgender is not a form of sexual orientation, it is a matter of gender identity or gender history. The Review Group suggest that consideration should be given to monitoring the gender identity of employees in addition to sexual orientation. This would need to be done in accordance with good practice, which would include consulting with staff, and with the purpose of identifying discrimination and building equality. If done with care and confidentiality, the monitoring of gender identity would over time help to demonstrate that the Council is committed to building an LGBT friendly workplace. The Unison factsheet on LGBT workforce monitoring provides useful guidance including dos and don'ts that the Council should follow.

Recommendation 19 – That consideration is given to whether the sensitive personal data of applicants and employees requested and held by the Council should be more inclusive of transgender people. For example, the Council should consider consulting with appropriate individuals and Trade Unions on adding an appropriately worded gender identity field to its monitoring forms, with the clear purpose of building equality and identifying discrimination.

78. The Review Group also considered the use by the Council of gendered titles such as Mr and Mrs, which are not inclusive of transgender people, to address employees and customers. The Review Group note that the use of the gender-neutral title Mx is inclusive of transgender people and is gradually becoming more

⁸ [Improving sexual orientation monitoring, Equality and Human Rights Commission, 2010, p. 20](#)

⁹ [LGBT workforce monitoring, Unison, p. 4](#)

widely used and accepted in the UK, including on government forms¹⁰. Consideration should be given to including Mx alongside the more established titles on Council forms and databases.

Recommendation 20 – That the Council adopts gender-neutral terms on forms as part of its ongoing work to be as inclusive as possible, for instance, giving consideration to adding the title Mx in addition to the more established gendered titles such as Mr, Mrs, Miss and Ms.

79. Consideration was given to the extent to which the continued inclusion and use of titles on Council forms and correspondence will be necessary in future. The Review Group suggest that, with Trade Union support, these could ultimately be phased out on some or all Council forms over the coming years.

Recommendation 21 - That consideration is given to whether there is merit in phasing out the use of titles on Council forms and databases over the medium term.

Conclusion

80. The Review Group conclude that the Council has good policies and measures in place aimed at helping to overcome barriers faced by under-represented groups and to tackle discrimination. As a result, steady progress has been made over recent years in ensuring that the Council workforce is gradually becoming more representative of the diverse communities it serves. The Review Group welcome the progress made and encourage further improvements, particularly in relation to ensuring that the Council's employment practices are more inclusive of transgender people.

¹⁰ [Gender neutral honorific Mx 'to be included' in the Oxford English Dictionary alongside Mr, Ms and Mrs and Miss, The Independent, 3 May 2015](#)

Project Scope – Equality & Diversity Review Group

Review Topic	‘Equality and Diversity’
Lead Member	Councillor Tom Hayes
Other Review Group Members	Councillor Altaf-Khan Councillor Sian Taylor Councillor David Thomas
Officer Support and allocate hours	Scrutiny Officer support – approx. 2-4 days per month for up to 4 months (mid-October to early-December and mid-February to mid-April). Additional support from Organisational Development, Learning and Human Resources.
Background	<p>Oxford City Council is an employer committed to increasing the diversity of its workforce and providing an inclusive work environment with equality of opportunity for all employees. However, some groups with protected characteristics (under the Equality Act 2010) are under-represented.</p> <p>The Council produces an annual workplace equalities report and monitors performance against the following targets (results as of June 2015):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The percentage of employees with a disability - 8.52% (target 10%); - The percentage of black and minority ethnic employees - 7.2% (target 9%). This figure rises to >12% when staff from white European and other ethnicities are included. <p>The Scrutiny Committee has previously focused on the employment of staff from BME groups. Applications from BME groups have increased in recent years but appointment rates remain proportionally lower.</p> <p>One third of the workforce is female but many services have an even gender profile (the exceptions being direct labour services). In 2014/15, 38% of new recruits were female.</p> <p>Under 1% of employees have self-declared as LGBT and this number has been stable for many years.</p> <p>The Council will need to manage changes to the age profile of its workforce as working lives, including manual working lives, are extended and rates of employees with a disability may increase.</p>
Rationale	<p>Scrutiny members want to understand whether there is more that could reasonably be done to promote equality and diversity within the Council’s workforce.</p> <p>The Scrutiny Committee prioritised a review focusing on ‘equality</p>

	and diversity' when agreeing its work programme for 2015-16.
Purpose of Review	To identify how the City Council promotes equality and diversity within its workforce and what further steps is feasible. Key lines of enquiry are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What barriers are faced by under-represented groups in recruitment and career progression at the City Council; - How does the Council prevent and address discrimination, including specifically discrimination against LGBT employees.
Indicators of Success	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The production of an evidence-based report with recommendations to the City Executive Board aimed at improving outcomes; - Identifying and assessing Council policies and practices that impact on equality and diversity, including any gaps or opportunities; - Good quality engagement with under-represented groups or their representatives; - Detailed consideration of two specific issues or strands relating to the topic of equality and diversity; - The majority of recommendations to the City Executive Board are agreed.
Out of scope	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Broader community engagement activities, consultation and the provision of Council services to diverse groups.
Methodology/ Approach	Evidence gathering could include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Inviting written and verbal evidence from stakeholders and experts; - Reviewing employment, recruitment and application data to identify inequalities and under-represented groups, including in particular types of jobs and at different grade levels; - Employee focus groups; - Issuing a call for evidence to City Councillors, other interested parties and/or the public; - Desk research / literature review, including of relevant Council policies; - Considering what could be learnt from other organisations;
Specify Witnesses/ Experts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Chris Harvey – OD, Learning & HR Support Manager; - Jarlath Brine – OD & Learning Advisor; - Justine Thorne – HR Manager; - Caroline Glendinning – Unison Branch Secretary; - Martin Naish – Unite the Union Equalities rep.; <p><i>Other witnesses TBC</i></p>
Specify Evidence Sources for Documents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Corporate Equality Scheme 2012-15 – Oxford City Council; - Annual Workplace Equalities Report 2014-2015 – Oxford City Council; - Applicant and recruitment equalities data by service; - Employment equalities data by service and pay grade. <p><i>Other document evidence sources TBC</i></p>

Specify Site Visits	N/A		
Projected start date	26 October 2015	Report published to Scrutiny Committee	24 March 2016
Meeting Frequency	Monthly	Projected completion date	14 April 2016 CEB

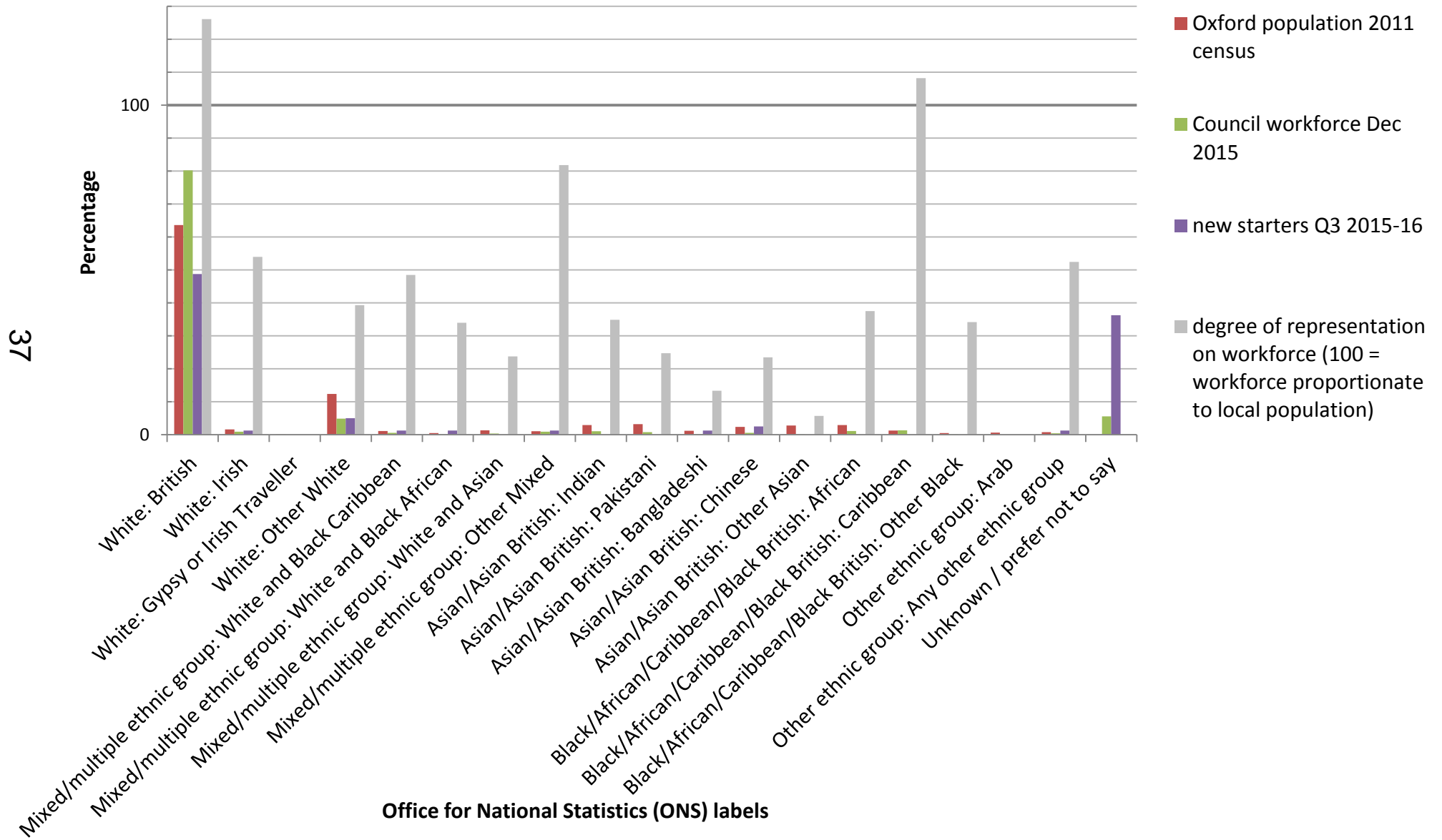
Draft outline of meetings and indicative dates

Meeting one – 26 October 2015
Scoping meeting to agree the purpose of the review.
Meeting two – 19 November 2015
Meeting to engage with key witnesses / experts and plan further evidence gathering methods and sessions.
Meeting three – w/c 8 February (TBC)
Evidence session.
Meeting four – w/c 29 February (TBC)
Evidence session.
Meeting five – w/c 14 March (TBC)
Meeting to reflect on evidence gathered and consider a draft report and recommendations.

This page is intentionally left blank

Appendix 3

Figure 1: The degree of representation of different ethnic groups on the Council workforce based on the Oxford population



37

Office for National Statistics (ONS) labels

Figure 2: Minority ethnic groups on the Council workforce compared with the Oxford and Oxfordshire populations

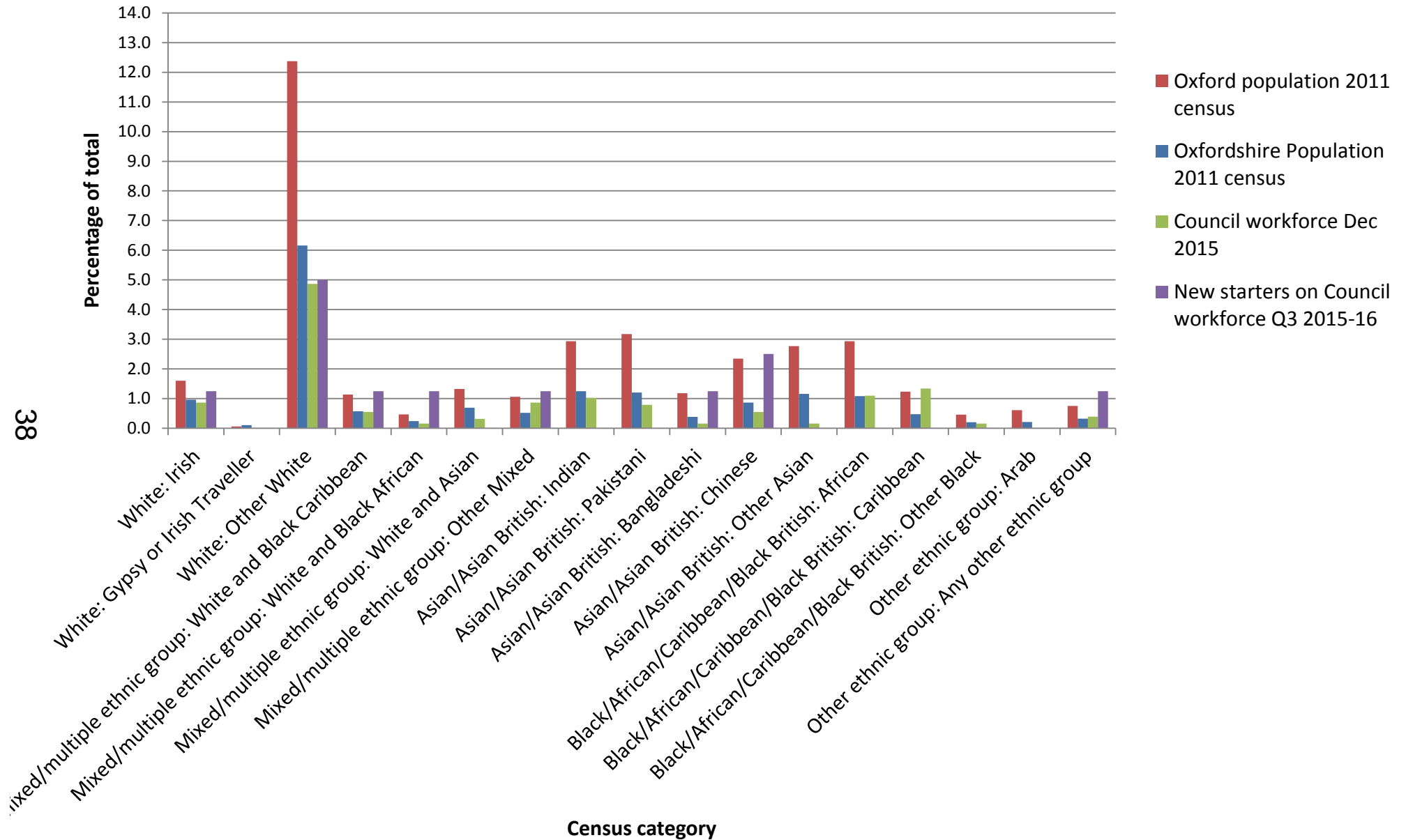


Figure 3: Ethnic groupings on the Council workforce by pay grade

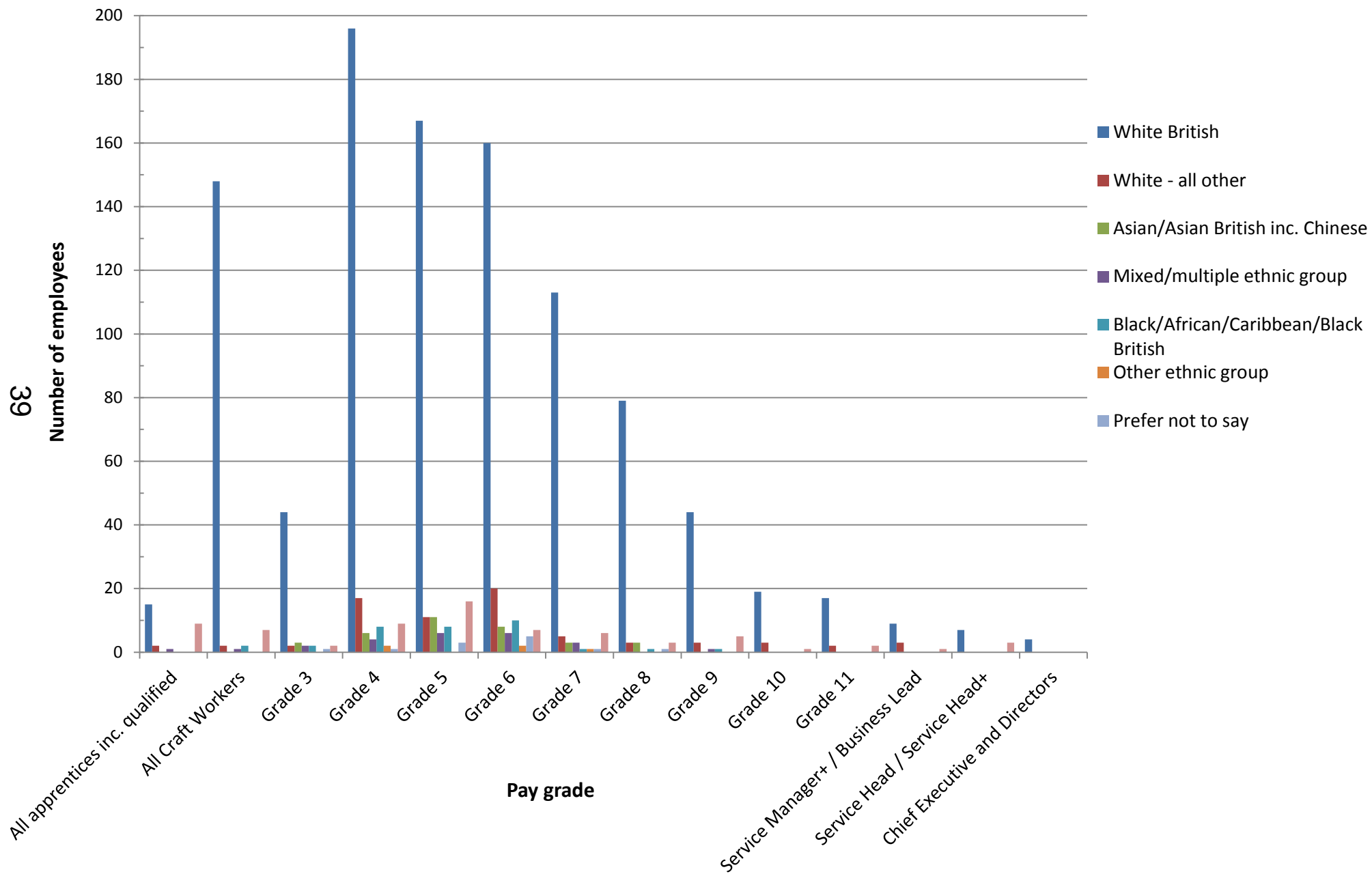


Figure 4: The proportion of BME and White Other employees in each Council service area

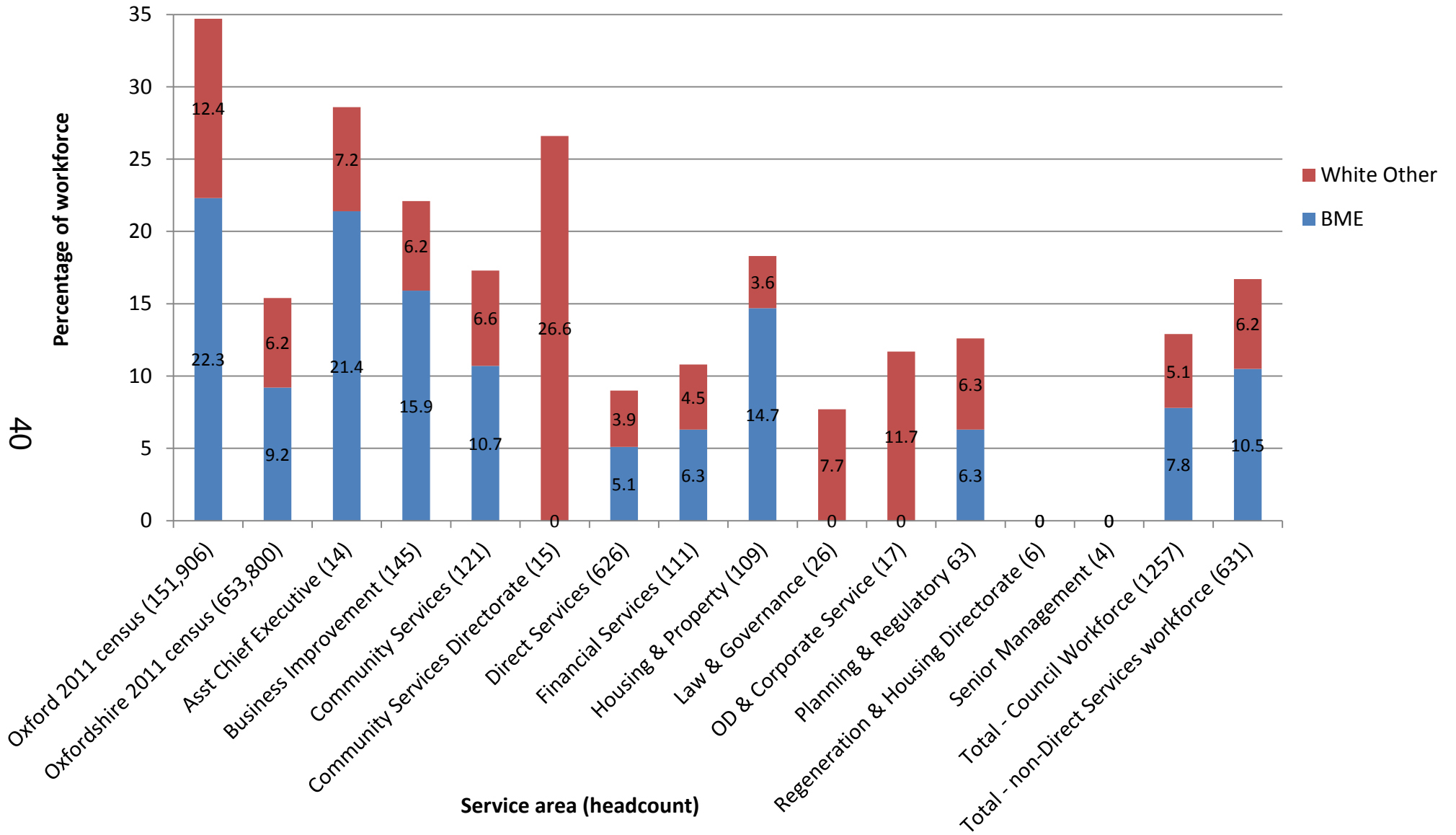
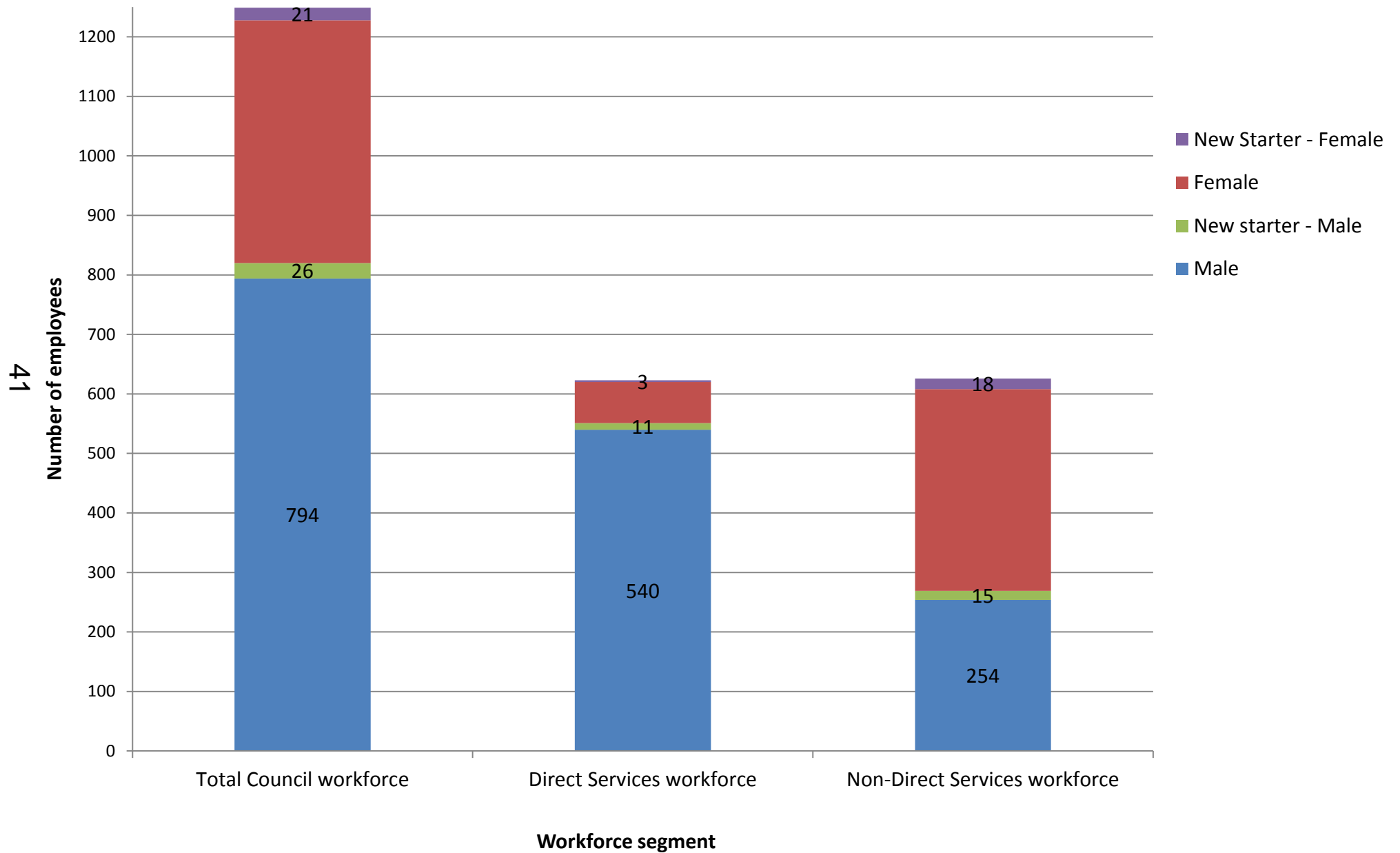


Figure 5: Gender composition of the Council workforce



**Figure 6: Gender balance of Council service areas
(excluding Direct Services)**

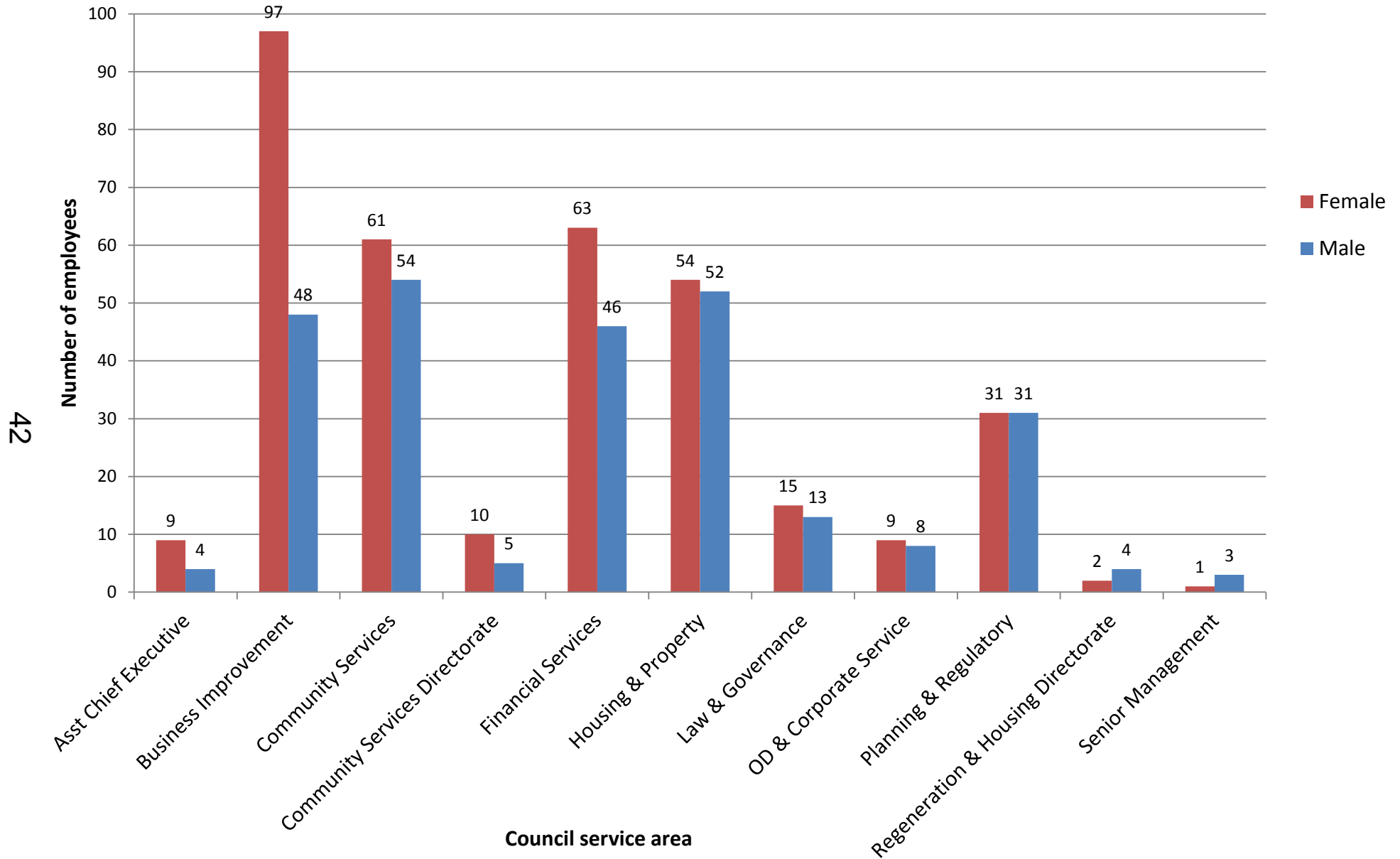


Figure 7: Gender balance of the Council workforce by pay grade

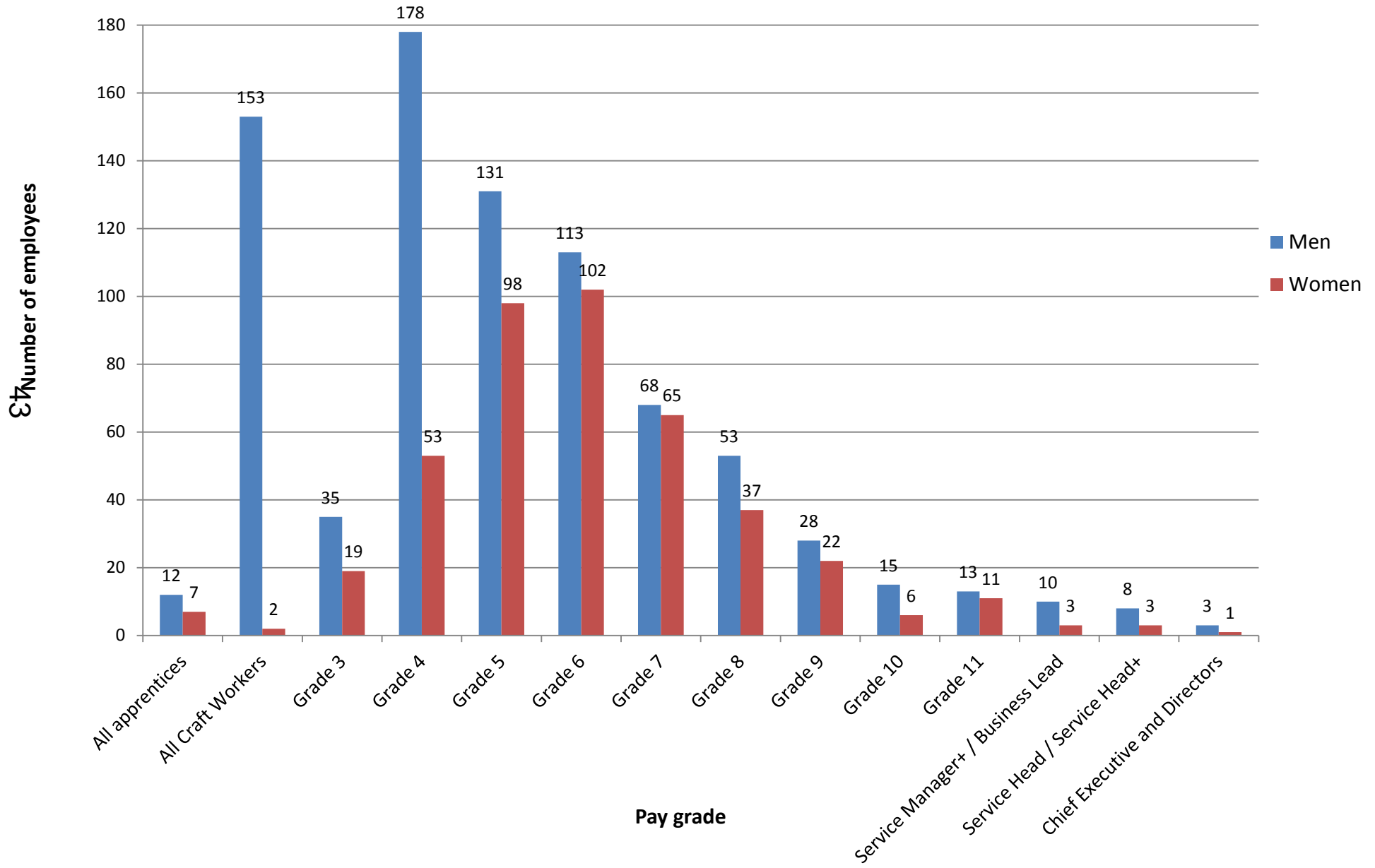


Figure 8: Average hourly pay by gender and service area

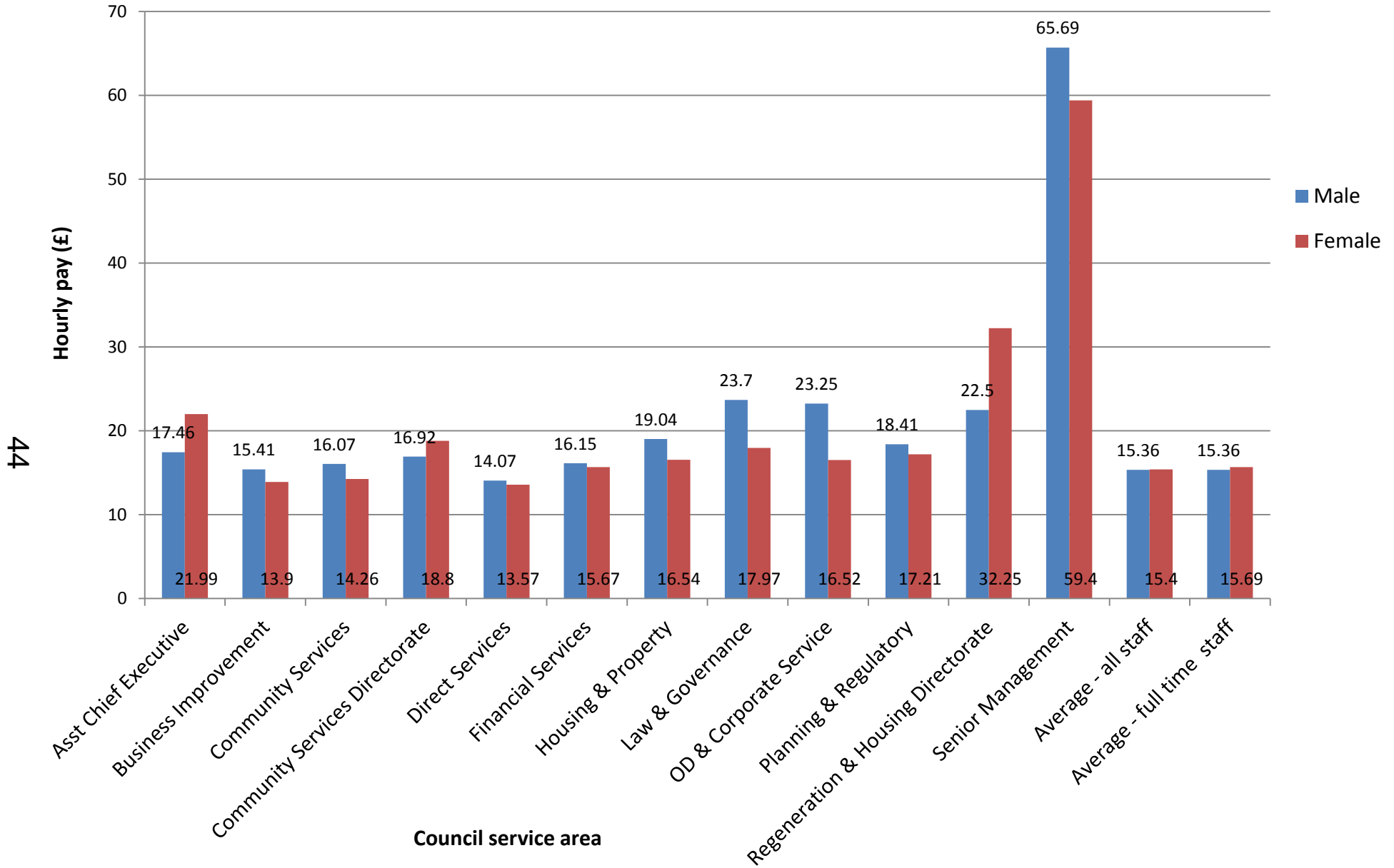
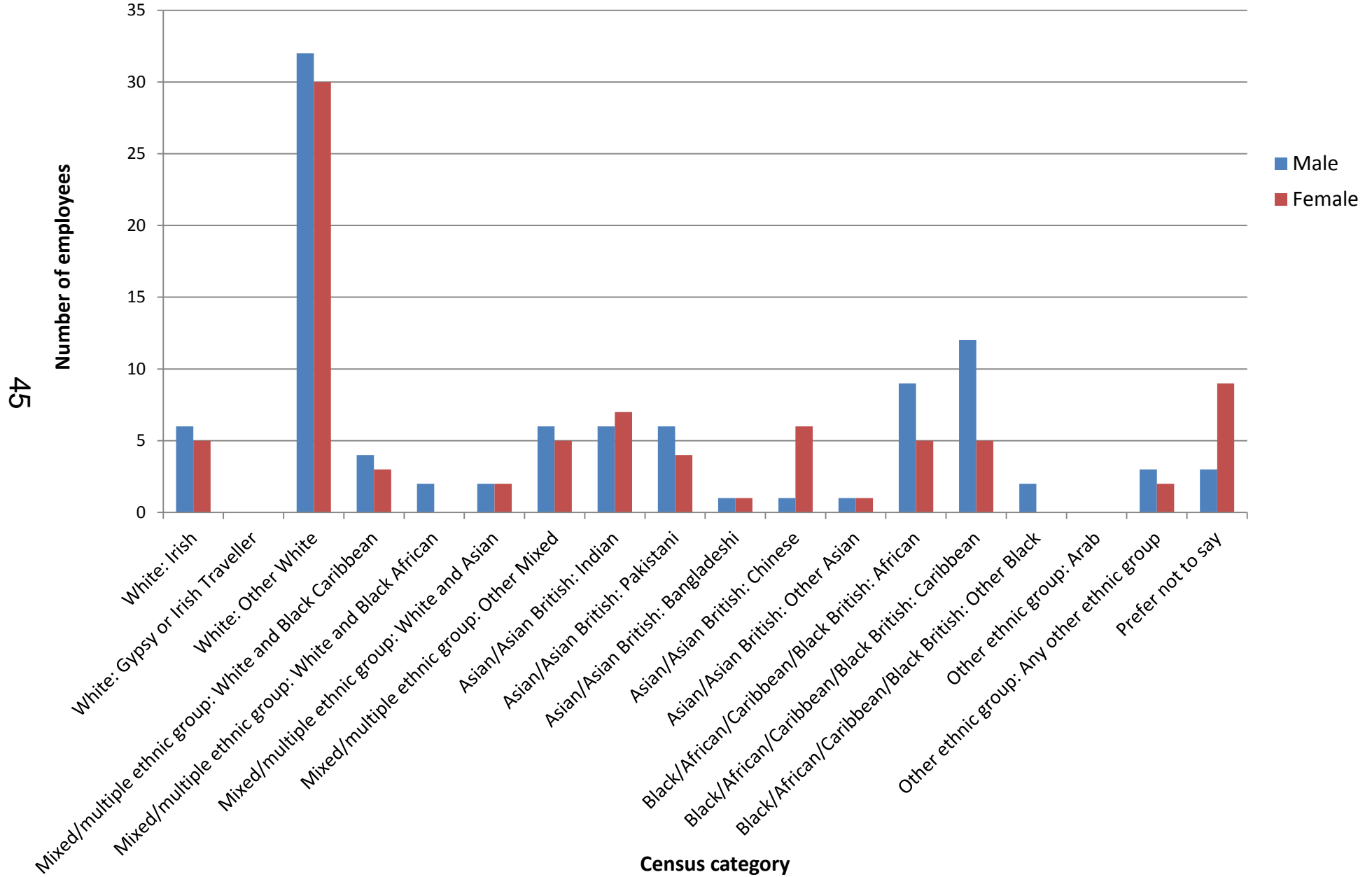


Figure 9: Gender balance of minority ethnic groups on the Council workforce



This page is intentionally left blank

To: City Executive Board

Date: 16 June 2016

Report of: Scrutiny Committee

Title of Report: Apprentices

Summary and Recommendations

Purpose of report: To present a recommendation of the Scrutiny Committee on apprentices

Scrutiny Lead Member: Councillor Andrew Gant

Executive lead member: Councillor Pat Kennedy, Board Member for Young People, Schools and Skills

Recommendation of the Scrutiny Committee to the City Executive Board:

That the City Executive Board states whether it agrees or disagrees with the nine recommendations set out in the body of this report.

Introduction

1. The Scrutiny Committee requested a report on apprentices employed by the Council and considered this item at its meeting on 7 June 2016. The Committee would like to thank Councillor Pat Kennedy and Jarlath Brine for providing the report and answering questions. The Committee would also like to thank Cllr Jean Fooks for speaking on this item.
2. The Committee agreed several recommendations to submit to the City Executive Board (CEB). Recommendation 1 was submitted to the CEB meeting on 16 June 2016 due to the timing of a recruitment exercise, which would be impacted if the recommendation was agreed, and the need for a quick decision. CEB was advised that a full report would follow.

Summary and recommendations

3. The Committee heard that the Council was in the process of recruiting 21 apprentices as part of a campaign that focused on OX1 to OX4 postcode areas and would close on 30 June 2016. The Committee was advised that some fifty-nine applications had been received (as of 7 June 2016), with approximately half of these applicants resident in the City. The Committee considered whether the policy of recruiting applicants who were resident in the City reflected the realities of the local labour market, given the very high cost of living in Oxford and the high numbers of workers who commute in to the City. The Committee suggest that consideration should be given to extending the eligibility criteria beyond the OX1 to OX4 catchment areas but with a preference for recruiting applicants who are resident within these areas where possible.

Recommendation 1 - That consideration is given to extending the eligibility criteria for apprenticeships beyond the OX1 to OX4 postcode areas but with a preference for appointing applicants with these postcodes.

4. The Committee noted that the majority of Council apprentices were aged 19 or under when recruited. The Committee heard that the eligibility criteria stipulated that applicants were aged 16 to 20. It was suggested that this created a gap in the opportunities available to young people aged 21-24 who are not in education, employment or training (NEET), and those aged over 24. These groups could include, for example, women entering the labour market having started families at a young age and people who had dropped out of education and wanted a second chance. The Committee suggest that there is a case for widening the eligibility criteria to offer apprenticeship opportunities to older applicants and to the group aged 20-24 in particular.

Recommendation 2 - That consideration is given to making apprenticeship opportunities available to older applicants and in particular to those aged 20-24.

5. In response to a question, the Committee heard that a recent event at Rose Hill had resulted in thirty or so meaningful conversations with prospective apprentices. The Council had had to take on something of a careers advisory role as good quality careers advice either seemed to be lacking in schools, or the advice given was counter-productive in terms of promoting vocational opportunities. The Committee heard that the Council had offered week-long placements leading to a qualification but there had been no take up from schools. Similarly, while a majority of parents thought that apprenticeships were a good thing, only 20% of parents thought an apprenticeship was okay for their son or daughter. The Committee suggest that a more co-ordinated approach should be taken in schools to raise awareness of these kinds of opportunities, promote them to pupils and parents and challenge misconceptions.

Recommendation 3 - That a more co-ordinated approach is taken in schools to raise awareness of apprenticeship and work experience opportunities and promote them to pupils and their parents.

6. The Committee noted concern that black and minority ethnic (BME) groups were under-represented among apprentices. The numbers of BME apprentices had

decreased year on year to a position where only approximately 6% of apprentices came from BME communities, compared with 22.3% of the Oxford population in the 2011 census. The Committee questioned whether a particular focus was placed on encouraging BME applicants and heard that three workshops targeting BME groups had had mixed success but a key change had been the Council's work with schools as part of the Business in the Community initiative, whereby BME pupils had been encouraged to attend recruitment evenings and make applications. The Committee suggest that there is a need for more joined up working and engagement with these groups. The Committee also note that elected members could do more to promote Council vacancies and encourage communities to engage with the Council as a potential employer.

Recommendation 4 – That a particular focus is put on encouraging Black and Minority Ethnic pupils to take up work experience placements and apprenticeships.

7. The Committee questioned how the Council engaged with hard to reach groups when promoting apprenticeship opportunities, including for example, young people who are disconnected from schools and women who had started families at a young age and wanted to return to the workforce. The Committee suggest that the Council should engage with higher education colleges and social housing providers in order to reach some of these groups. The Committee also suggest that lessons on engaging with hard to reach groups could be learnt from the Change 100 internship programme, which was focused on talented disabled students and utilised social media and targeted advertising campaigns to engage effectively with these groups.

Recommendation 5 – That the Council links in with social housing providers and higher education colleges in order to engage with hard to reach groups.

Recommendation 6 – That the Council considers what can be learnt from the Change 100 internship programme, including their advertising and social media campaigns.

8. The Committee questioned what the Council's distinctive brand and offer was and whether there was a need to simplify access given that the market was crowded and somewhat confused. The Committee heard that no other employer in the City was able to offer the same range of apprenticeship opportunities as the Council. These opportunities included trade and office based apprenticeships and masters-level qualifications. Quality and incentives were built in to apprenticeships at every stage and 70% of Council apprentices had been successfully succession-planned into permanent jobs. The Committee also considered pay levels and whether the Council could pay the Oxford Living Wage to all apprentices. The Committee heard that this would not be appropriate at entry-point but that apprentices could progress quickly in terms of their remuneration if they were successful in their role. The Committee suggest that further thought should be given to how the Council defines and markets itself as an employer and its offer to potential apprentices.

Recommendation 7 – That further consideration is given to defining and promoting the Council's brand and offer to prospective apprentices, including in terms of pay rates and career progression opportunities.

9. The Committee noted that there had been significant cuts to post-16 non-tertiary training at a national level in recent years and that further cuts were expected. Oxford was the lowest ranked city in the UK for apprenticeship starts per 1,000 working population, and although this was explainable and not something the City Council was culpable for, actions were not meeting needs in the City. The Committee suggest that the Council should take these issues up with Oxfordshire Skills Board and ask them to do more to promote apprenticeship opportunities.

Recommendation 8 – That the Council seeks to influence Oxfordshire Skills Board to do more to promote apprenticeship opportunities.

10. The Committee noted that the Government's Enterprise Bill would introduce apprenticeship starts targets for all public sector organisations which, if set at 2.3% of headcount, would equate to approximately 28 Council apprenticeship starts each year. The Apprenticeship Levy would be introduced at 0.5% of total payroll and would have to be spent on recognised apprenticeships lasting at least one year, although it was unclear how tightly these would be defined. The Council was proposing to Government as part of a devolution bid that all Apprenticeship Levy funding collected in Oxfordshire should be spent on skills within the County. The Committee suggest that the Council should continue to keep the details of this legislation under review and make appropriate plans to mitigate its impacts, including both the levy and the starts targets.

Recommendation 9 – That the Council keeps the details of the Enterprise Bill under review and makes appropriate plans to mitigate its impacts, including the Apprenticeship Levy and the apprenticeship start targets.

Further consideration

11. The Committee requested another update report in 12 months' time.

Name and contact details of author:-

Andrew Brown on behalf of the Scrutiny Committee
Scrutiny Officer
Law and Governance
Tel: 01865 252230 e-mail: abrown2@oxford.gov.uk

List of background papers: None
Version number: 1

To: City Executive Board

Date: 14 July 2016

Report of: Housing Panel (Panel of the Scrutiny Committee)

Title of Report: Private Sector Housing Policy

Summary and Recommendations

Purpose of report: To present the recommendations of the Housing Panel on the Private Sector Housing Policy

Scrutiny Lead Member: Councillor David Henwood

Executive lead member:

Councillor Bob Price, Board Member for Corporate Strategy & Economic Development;

Councillor Alex Hollingsworth, Board Member for Planning & Regulatory

Recommendation of the Housing Panel to the City Executive Board:

That the City Executive Board states whether it agrees or disagrees with the recommendation set out in the body of this report.

Introduction

1. The Housing Panel pre-scrutinised the Private Sector Housing Policy (post-consultation) at its meeting on 7 July 2016. The Panel would like to thank Councillor Bob Price, Ian Wright and Mike Browning for attending the meeting and answering questions.

Summary and recommendation

2. The Board Member for Corporate Strategy & Economic Development introduced the report. He said that the consultation feedback had generally been positive but only 17% percent of respondents had been landlords, so there was a need to proceed with care. Respondents had generally supported the Councils aims which included focusing on energy efficiency, reducing carbon emissions, food poverty and beds in sheds. This report would set the strategic framework for

future interventions in the private rented sector. Legal advice would be sought prior to the development of a selective licensing scheme, which would be subject to a public consultation and at least two further reports to the City Executive Board. The intention was that the scheme would be self-funding and reflect the range of conditions in the private rented sector.

3. The Panel asked a number of questions including about the scale and risks around the roll-out of a selective licensing scheme, and how good landlords would be encouraged and rewarded. The Panel heard that the preference was for selective licensing to be rolled-out city-wide because all but three wards could already be considered to have a high proportion of privately rented properties. However, approval from DCLG will be required for such a scheme. There was a need to get good landlords onside from the beginning and fee structures would be set to encourage good practices, as with the licensing of Houses in Multiple Occupations (HMOs), while robust enforcement action provided a deterrent.
4. The Panel also asked about the illegal subdivision of HMOs and issues around Airbnb properties. The Panel heard that these were complex issues and that action had already been taken regarding a landlord who had illegally subdivided properties in an attempt to avoid HMO licensing. The Environmental Health Service Manager explained the circumstances in which these might be properties of interest to his team, for example if an Airbnb property was advertised with breakfast included.
5. The Panel questioned measures to improve energy ratings and the possible use of social prescribing to improve housing conditions. The Panel heard that it was now a legal requirement for landlords to provide an Energy Performance Certificate and the Council was targeting the poorest performing properties. Social prescribing had been tried in other areas and a housing and health cost calculator had been developed and is being used but there was a need to convince health partners such as the local Clinical Commissioning Group to invest in prevention. The Board Member said that closer working between health and housing formed part of the Council's devolution proposal and the new development at Barton Park had been awarded with Healthy City status.
6. The Panel considered the consultation methodology and questioned the locations and outcomes of road show events, the use of social media and whether feedback was provided to respondents. The Panel heard that the choice of locations was based on findings from a previous consultation. The Panel noted that future consultations on specific schemes were likely to attract a bigger response than the overarching Policy document. The Panel commented that they would like to see road show events at other locations and the use of local newsletters to advertise consultations and provide feedback to communities. The Panel suggest that future consultations exercises should be carefully designed and that members should have an opportunity to contribute suggestions.

Recommendation 1 – That careful thought is given to future public consultations on private sector housing interventions and that members are specifically invited to comment on the range and style of any consultations.

Name and contact details of author:-

Andrew Brown on behalf of the Scrutiny Committee
Scrutiny Officer
Law and Governance
Tel: 01865 252230 e-mail: abrown2@oxford.gov.uk

List of background papers: None;

Version number: 1

This page is intentionally left blank

To: City Executive Board

Date: 14 July 2016

Report of: Scrutiny Committee

Title of Report: Fusion Lifestyle's 2016/17 Annual Service Plan

Summary and Recommendations

Purpose of report: To present a recommendation of the Scrutiny Committee on Fusion Lifestyle's 2016/17 Annual Service Plan

Scrutiny Lead Member: Councillor Andrew Gant

Executive lead member: Councillor Linda Smith, Board Member for Leisure, Parks and Sport

Recommendation of the Scrutiny Committee to the City Executive Board:

That the City Executive Board states whether it agrees or disagrees with the seven recommendations set out in the body of this report.

Introduction

1. The Scrutiny Committee pre-scrutinised Fusion Lifestyle's 2016/17 Annual Service Plan at its meeting on 4 July 2016. The Committee considered this item alongside a Fusion Lifestyle performance report for 2015/16, which helped to inform the Committee's debate. The Committee would like to thank Councillor Linda Smith, Ian Brooke and Lucy Cherry for presenting these reports and answering questions.

Summary and recommendation

2. The Board Member for Leisure, Parks and Sport introduced the reports and said that they contained some very positive headlines, such as a 71% increase in visits to leisure centres since the contract commenced and the expected achievement of a zero subsidy per user in 2017/18. Fusion Lifestyle had provided feedback that the Council was one of their most demanding customers. The Head of Community Services added that in 2008 the Council was spending

£2m per year on subsidising visits to leisure centres and next year this would reduce to nothing.

3. The Committee raised concerns about how quickly minor maintenance requests and IT failures were dealt with and questioned whether these issues were considered in performance assessments. The Committee also commented that staffing could be more responsive to demand at some facilities, for example by the opening of a second kiosk when a queue was forming. The Committee heard that there were a variety of assessments including mystery visits and customer journey mapping. Officers could not excuse failures to fix minor maintenance issues such as broken light bulbs but were not aware of any continuous problems, and such issues should be seen in the context of a vast increase in usage over recent years.
4. In response to a question about tracking the numbers of individuals visiting leisure centres rather than the total number of visits, the Board Member explained that there were lots of casual users. She wanted these users to buy into the loyalty schemes and these needed to be promoted more.
5. The Committee questioned what user involvement there was on the Leisure Partnership Board and commented that a user representative had been unable to attend recent meetings because they had taken place in the daytime on a week day. The Committee heard that the Board met quarterly and its minutes were published on the Council website. The membership included two elected members as well as customer representatives including older and younger people. The Committee suggest that the Council should look to strengthen user representation on the Board to provide useful consumer opinion on matters before the Board, and if necessary, the meeting times should be changed to facilitate this.

Recommendation 1 – That the Council encourages and seeks to facilitate stronger user representation on the Leisure Partnership Board, including by varying meeting times if required.

6. The Committee noted that Ferry Leisure Centre had a user group in place and suggest that the Council should encourage the formation of user groups at leisure centres that don't already have them, targeting regular customers if possible. The Committee commented that each user groups could have a representative on the Leisure Partnership Board, which would help to strengthen user representation (as suggested in recommendation 1).

Recommendation 2 – That the Council encourages the formation of user groups at the remaining Leisure Centres and considers how these user groups could link in with the Leisure Partnership Board, perhaps with each user group having a representative on the Board.

7. The Committee queried annual reductions in swimming visits by people under the age of 17 (from 48,400 in 2014/15 to 45,200 in 2015/16) and by people over the age of 60 (from 33,000 to 22,600) and asked what the explanations were. The Committee heard that there was work taking place nationally to address a decline

in swimming and that officers wanted to address the reductions by attracting new swimmers, particularly amongst older people. The Committee noted that the Service Plan included a target to deliver a 3% year-on-year increase in over 60 swimming. The Committee suggest that, given the 32% drop in over 60 swimming in 2015/16, Fusion should be challenged to deliver a higher increase in 2016/17.

Recommendation 3 – That the Council takes further steps to understand why the numbers of swimming visits have declined amongst some target groups and challenges Fusion Lifestyle to set a more ambitious target for increasing swimming visits by people over the age of 60 in 2016/17.

8. The Committee questioned whether leisure centres linked in with other local community facilities and suggested that there may be opportunities to increase footfall at non-peak times by offering discounted entry to daytime users of nearby community centres or nursery schools, for example. The Committee heard that such changes would have contract implications and affect the subsidy.
9. The Committee considered a suggestion that differential membership pricing structures should be introduced at different leisure centres to incentivise visits to facilities that were less well used. The Committee voiced some reservations around fairness and the accessibility of centres for people living in different parts of the City but indicated that it would support this proposal being pursued provided that no prices would increase and that all existing concessions would be unaffected. The Committee noted that consideration would need to be given to the implications of such a change on the Fusion Lifestyle contract.

Recommendation 4 – That further consideration is given to the case for and expected impacts of a proposal to introduce reduced non-concessionary membership fees at less well used leisure centres.

10. In response to a question about whether the Council benchmarks fees and performance with the wider market, the Committee heard that neighbouring authorities are used as a benchmark and that all facilities in the City are QUEST accredited. The Committee suggest that benchmarking should be undertaken with the wider leisure market including the private sector. The insights gained may help the Council and Fusion Lifestyle to fine-tune performance targets in future years.

Recommendation 5 – That benchmarking on performance, participation and price is undertaken with the wider market, including the private sector, not just with neighbouring local authorities.

11. The Committee considered a proposal that gym-only membership packages should be introduced alongside swimming-only packages and combined packages. The Board Member said that she thought this could lead to a decrease rather than an increase in participation. The Committee suggest that further consideration should be given to introducing this type of membership option, perhaps on a trial basis at one centre so that its impacts can be assessed.

Recommendation 6 – That further consideration is given to the idea of introducing gym-only membership options, perhaps on a limited trial basis.

12. The Committee questioned whether the five key strategic objectives for 2016/17 listed in the Service Plan should be read in priority order and suggest that it would be helpful to prioritise these as that may help to inform considerations about things like the possible introduction of differential pricing, for example.

Recommendation 7 – That consideration is given to the priority order of the five key strategic objectives for 2016/17.

Further consideration

13. The Committee commented that information on the following would be useful in future years to supplement the performance dashboard provided to Scrutiny:
- The numbers of visitors as well as visits;
 - Seasonal variations in usage;
 - More analysis around changes in usage levels amongst different target groups and communities of interest;
 - More detail around actions taken to address any reductions in usage;
 - National trends such as changes in the take up of different activities;
 - Contract performance over the longer term, perhaps through the inclusion of performance data for a base year as well the preceding year;
 - Capital responsibilities and the capital spend profile for the coming years;
14. The Committee requested a written response in respect of the following points:
- The extent of competitor benchmarking against neighbouring local authorities and against alternative models of provision in Oxford, both the more expensive private ones and the newer budget offers;
 - How customer satisfaction is measured;
 - The marketing and accessibility of leisure services to women from black and ethnic minority groups;
 - The use of social media and the marketing and visibility of leisure services to groups who may be less likely to engage with these channels, such as older people.

Name and contact details of author:-

Andrew Brown on behalf of the Scrutiny Committee
Scrutiny Officer
Law and Governance
Tel: 01865 252230 e-mail: abrown2@oxford.gov.uk

List of background papers: None
Version number: 1

To: City Executive Board

Date: 14 July 2016

Report of: Scrutiny Committee

Title of Report: Grant Allocations – Monitoring Report

Summary and Recommendations

Purpose of report: To present the recommendations of the Scrutiny Committee on the Grant Allocations Monitoring Report

Scrutiny Lead Member: Councillor Andrew Gant

Executive lead member: Councillor Christine Simm, Board Member for Culture and Communities

Recommendation of the Scrutiny Committee to the City Executive Board:

That the City Executive Board states whether it agrees or disagrees with the two recommendations set out in the body of this report.

Introduction

1. The Scrutiny Committee pre-scrutinised the Grant Allocations Monitoring Report at its meeting on 4 July 2016. The Committee would like to thank Councillor Christine Simm, Ian Brooke and Julia Tomkins for presenting this item and answering questions.

Summary and recommendation

2. The Board Member for Culture and Communities introduced the report and said that in a time of austerity there was less money to spend but increasing need in the City. The social and economic geography of Oxford was changing and was being impacted by things like the closure of children's centres. For many organisations a relatively small amount of grant funding could help to build resilience or leverage in other funding.

3. The Committee warmly welcomed the continued discretionary Council funding that facilitated the work of the local community and voluntary sector. The Committee agreed not to consider the merits of specific grant allocations and instead focused its discussion wider issues around grant monitoring.
4. The Committee questioned whether allocations could be conditional on recipients achieving match funding from other sources. The Committee heard that while this was taken into consideration, it should not be a requirement as the Council did not want to create barriers to small organisations seeking to access funding.
5. The Committee noted that the Council needed to achieve the best possible value for money from its grants programme. The amount of additional funding leveraged in and the number of beneficiaries were useful indications in this respect. The Committee noted that some types of interventions that benefit relatively few individuals, such as homelessness prevention, could deliver more social value than, for example, inclusive arts and culture schemes that benefit many more individuals. The Committee suggest that it would be useful to measure and monitor the social value impacts of grant allocations, perhaps at category level, in addition to leveraged funding and the numbers of beneficiaries.

Recommendation 1 – That consideration is given to how to quantify the social value achieved from the different grant programmes for community and voluntary organisations and to the inclusion of a measure of social value in future grant monitoring reports.

6. The Committee questioned how grant allocations were tied into service delivery and noted that they would like to see more research to inform how the Council could best focus resources (e.g. across homelessness grants and Discretionary Housing Payments). The Board Member said that the grant allocations were in line with the Council's strategic aims and that the Council's approach to advice commissioning, which was part of the Council's cross-cutting Financial Inclusion Strategy, was a good example of joined up thinking. The Committee suggest that consideration should be given to how the Council could do more of that and what the mechanism for doing so would be.

Recommendation 2 – That consideration is given to whether and how the Council could better integrate its grant programmes for community and voluntary organisations with related aspects of service delivery, with a view to focusing resources as effectively as possible.

Name and contact details of author:-

Andrew Brown on behalf of the Scrutiny Committee
Scrutiny Officer
Law and Governance
Tel: 01865 252230 e-mail: abrown2@oxford.gov.uk

List of background papers: None
Version number: 1

To: City Executive Board

Date: 14 July 2016

Report of: Housing Panel (Panel of the Scrutiny Committee)

Title of Report: Review of Lord Mayors Deposit Guarantee Scheme

Summary and Recommendations

Purpose of report: To present the recommendation of the Housing Panel on the Review of Lord Mayors Deposit Guarantee Scheme.

Scrutiny Lead Member: Councillor David Henwood

Executive lead member: Councillor Mike Rowley, Board Member for Housing

Recommendation of the Housing Panel to the City Executive Board:

That the City Executive Board states whether it agrees or disagrees with the recommendation set out in the body of this report.

Introduction

1. The Housing Panel pre-scrutinised the Review of Lord Mayors Deposit Guarantee Scheme decision at its meeting on 7 July 2016. The Panel would like to thank Stephen Clarke and David Rundle for attending the meeting and answering questions.

Summary and recommendation

2. The Private Rented Sector Team Leader introduced the report. He said the scheme had been introduced 23 years ago and was last reviewed 8 years ago. The proposal was to enhance the scheme by offering an increased bond above Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rates, which were significantly below market rents in the City, and also offering a loan equating to 6-8 weeks rent in advance.
3. The Panel strongly supported the scheme and the proposed enhanced offer and questioned why the Private Rented Sector Team had only been able to help eight

households last year given that 252 assessments had been undertaken. The Panel heard that the market had shrunk in recent years and that refusals were largely due to landlords rejecting applicants. A survey last year had revealed that only 5% of landlords and agencies would accept Housing Benefit claimants, despite 70% of this group being in work. Applicants with rent arrears would also be refused unless they had a repayment plan in place. Applicants were required to find properties themselves and needed to be motivated to encourage landlords to take them on but were signposted to ‘tenant ready’ courses.

4. The Panel questioned the level of funding available for the scheme and the risk of the enhanced offer being suspended due to lack of funds. The Panel heard that the scheme was funded from a one-off £50k reserve and that expenditure would be monitored in-year. The expenditure and the number of clients assisted would be reviewed and reported annually. The Panel suggest that a report should come to the City Executive Board and Scrutiny after one year so that if necessary, any funding changes could be picked up in the following budget round.

Recommendation – That after the pilot year a review of the enhanced offer including expenditure, the number of clients assisted and refusal reasons is reported to the City Executive Board.

Name and contact details of author:-

Andrew Brown on behalf of the Scrutiny Committee
Scrutiny Officer
Law and Governance
Tel: 01865 252230 e-mail: abrown2@oxford.gov.uk

List of background papers: None
Version number: 1