

**To:** Cabinet  
**Date:** 13 November 2019  
**Report of:** Head of Business Improvement  
**Title of Report:** Workforce Equality Report and update on the Equalities Action Plan

<b>Summary and recommendations</b>	
<b>Purpose of report:</b>	To seek approval for the publication of the annual Workforce Equality Report 2017 to 2019; report progress on the Equalities Action Plan 2018 to 2021; and present proposals for additions to the Equalities Action Plan 2018 to 2021.
<b>Key decision:</b>	Yes
<b>Cabinet Member:</b>	Councillor Nigel Chapman, Safer Communities and Customer Focused Services
<b>Corporate Priority:</b>	An efficient and effective Council
<b>Policy Framework:</b>	None
<b>Recommendations:</b> That Cabinet resolves to:	
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>Approve</b> the Workforce Equality Report 2017 to 2019;</li> <li>2. <b>Delegate</b> authority to the Head of Business Improvement to publish the Workforce Equality Report and to make any typographical changes as may be required before publication;</li> <li>3. <b>Note</b> the current position with the Equalities Action Plan 2018 to 2021 (developed from the Workforce Equalities Report 2015 to 2017); and</li> <li>4. <b>Approve</b> the continuing and emerging actions to be included in updated Equalities Action Plan 2018 to 2021, which will be developed into a project plan for action.</li> </ol>

<b>Appendices</b>	
Appendix 1	Workforce Equality Report (2017 to 2019)
Appendix 2	Equalities Action Plan 2018 to 2021
Appendix 3	Proposed additions to the Equalities Action Plan 2018 to 2021

## **INTRODUCTION**

1. Oxford City Council is committed to making sure its workforce is representative of the diverse population it serves. The ability of those with lived experiences to relate to and understand the needs of communities' means their skills and insights can help the Council deliver responsive and accessible services to all. This report and summary provides details of successes in recruitment, building foundations in awareness and a culture for more diversity. Future actions will focus around the next step change: to increase diversity and create a culture of inclusion, where our diverse workforce can thrive, to deliver more relevant and inclusive services for everyone we serve.
2. Oxford has an ethnically and culturally diverse community, with circa 20% or more of the community with a BAME background and such diverse communities require the Council to provide strategic community leadership, promote community cohesion and equality across its services, with a workforce that reflect the communities it serves. Having a diverse workforce with people from different racial, educational and social backgrounds and a diverse age range opens up a wealth of possibilities to encourage improvement, creativity and innovation. The Council also acts as a model employer influencing other businesses to also act if it can demonstrate commitment and success.
3. This report is presented as follows:
  - (a) Presentation of the Workforce Equalities Report at Appendix 1, which is an annual report that is a legal requirement to publish every year under the Equality Act 2010.
  - (b) A review of achievements against the current Equalities Action Plan 2018 to 2021, which is presented at Appendix 2 with greater detail on the successes.
  - (c) Future actions to achieve a further step change in performance, through positive action targeting in particular the low under representation in the workforce of those with a BAME background. Appendix 3 proposes additions to the current Equalities Action Plan 2018 to 2021 that builds on the agreed actions.

## **BACKGROUND**

4. The WER due for publication in 2019 is solely focused on the Council and no longer includes Oxford Direct Services. This has impacted on the ability to provide data trend comparison/analysis for a number of areas, which are identified in the WER document and in the relevant sections of the report below.

However the Council as sole shareholder seeks assurance of compliance and good business practice from ODS on their legal duty and meeting shareholder objectives.

5. The employee and job applicant self-declaration data provided in the WER report is used in conjunction with national statistics to develop the equality action plan. In summary the WER tells us that:

- (a) BAME representation has two challenges, firstly more action is needed to increase diversity in the workforce as a whole and secondly more individuals from BAME backgrounds should hold more senior roles which increases ability to shape services to be responsive to needs. The proportion of staff from a BAME group increased by 1% to 12.96% as of 31<sup>st</sup> March 2019. (For information the proportion of staff from a BAME group was 13.1% as of 30<sup>th</sup> August 2019). Whilst this can be seen as a significant success, there needs to be a step change in the actions taken to achieve an annual improvement of at least 1.5% annually to achieve a medium term aim of representing BAME population, which will be circa 19 to 20%. The majority of the 91 staff from a BAME group as at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2019 (85%) are employed in roles below Grade 8, with only one colleague in a senior management role. Of these 91 staff, 48 are women and 43 are men.
- (b) Women represent 59% of the workforce. This is higher than the national average and a marginal rise on previous years. Women continue to be under-represented in roles above Grade 8 and in higher management roles (although compared to BAME there is a higher representation of women in management roles).
- (c) The percentage of staff who have declared themselves as having a disability was 9.54% (as of 31<sup>st</sup> March 2019), which is the highest self-declaration rate over the reporting period and exceeds the economically active percentage of the local population, which is close to 7%.
- (d) There continues to be a significant lack of voluntary disclosure of sexual orientation. Some 27% of the workforce decline to do so, despite a campaign in 2019 to improve the Council data for staff personal details. However new systems will hopefully address this area.

## **EQUALITIES FRAMEWORK FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT (EFLG)**

6. The Council is currently undertaking a self-assessment of progress and achievements against our corporate commitment to equality and inclusion, using the Equalities Framework for Local Government. The review will
- Appraise how we engage with the diverse range of communities living and working in Oxford and how this informs the delivery of services;
  - Highlight good practice, identify service gaps and make recommendations.
  - Consider our strategic vision on equalities and its alignment with existing work streams.
  - Prepare the Council for future external assessment against the LGA Equalities Framework for Local Government

The framework is made up of five themes, one of which a diverse workforce that represents the communities served and which can shape more responsive services and stewardship of the City. The outcomes of the Review, expected in Spring 2020, will help inform future development of the inclusive workforce programme. The five themes are: -

- a) **Knowing our communities**- understanding the diverse population of the city, how we discharge our legal duties under the Equalities Act 2010 and the impact of multiple inequalities in amplifying deprivation and wellbeing including increased likelihood of vulnerability and poverty.
- b) **Leadership, partnership and organisational commitment** - vision & priorities, organisational objectives, monitoring, communication – embedded through inclusive governance
- c) **Involving your communities** – empowering and engaging citizens, participation and representation
- d) **Responsive services** - Services that are accessible to all parts of the community, meet needs and target resources where needed
- e) **Diverse workforce** - A representative and diverse workforce who reflect good practice in equality and diversity

## **ACHIEVEMENTS AND REVIEW OF 2018 TO 2021 EQUALITIES ACTION PLAN**

7. The Equalities Action Plan 2018 to 2021, and associated activities and successes detailed in this report have established a good foundation from which the Council can continue to mark progress towards creating an inclusive environment and diverse workforce. The highlights of the successes and achievements in respect of the Equalities Action Plan are set out in the paragraphs below.
8. Mandatory training was provided to all staff and managers between January and March 2019, with the aims of increasing the case for positive action as well as addressing the barriers to action. The training provided can be summarised as follows: -
  - a) An e-learning programme on unconscious bias rolled out to all staff
  - b) 'Face-to-face' training provided to line managers covering: creating an inclusive environment; being a role model for diversity; and understanding unconscious bias in decision makingFurther training opportunities will be identified in the next financial year.
9. In addition, a programme of recruitment training is delivered by the HR team to both new managers, as well as colleagues requiring a 'refresher' in recruitment (i.e. line managers who do not recruit on a regular basis) which reinforces the messaging and learning delivered through the mandatory training detailed above.
10. An Equality, Diversity and Inclusion week of activity, '*Everyone Matters*', was held in June this year for council staff. The aims of the programme were to: -

- (a) Enable better insight and understanding of Oxford and its communities, along with current diversity and inclusion issues.
  - (b) Act as a catalyst for cultural change seeking to facilitate changed behaviours, encourage people to try new ways of working and develop tools, mechanism or practices which build a sense of ownership of the equalities agenda.
  - (c) Create an environment and culture that is inclusive, by encouraging a commitment to equalities and a curiosity about understanding better equality, diversity and inclusion both internally and externally.
11. The week was very successful in terms of outcomes, with positive feedback received from both delegates as well as training providers. 360 staff attended across the course of the week with over half making a personal commitment to change. A survey of participants after the event indicated a notable increase in delegates' knowledge and understanding of areas of Council policies and procedures; increased awareness of how they can contribute to the diversity agenda; and a significant increase in perception and understanding of the Council's commitment to equality. Another key outcome from the week was the identification of a group of colleagues who were interested in becoming an 'equalities ambassador', championing and promoting greater equalities and support the development of a more inclusive culture at service area level. Further information on this is detailed in the future actions section below.
12. The Council has maintained a commitment to learning. Funding from the apprenticeship levy has been used to provide career qualifications to 15 existing employees and will utilise circa £84,000 of the levy funding. Apprenticeships are viewed as a good route for increasing representation from some of the most disadvantaged communities, which includes those with protected characteristics under the Equality Act. An apprenticeship programme consisting of 2 year fixed term appointments has been successfully running since 2012, which has provided work and training opportunities for over 40 young people. The opportunities presented through the levy funding to support the development of staff will continue to be promoted across the Council.
13. It is recognised that there is limited awareness amongst the 16 to 18 age group of the wide range of career opportunities within the Council. As part of a plan to develop more effective engagement with this age group, a structured approach to work experience placements has been implemented in partnership with Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP). Two, small scale 'pilot' programmes were delivered in July and October involving four students in total, three from the BAME communities in Oxford. This programme has enabled the Council to engage directly with young people from Oxford, as well as provide a positive experience of working with the Council. Following the success of this pilot a similar programmes is scheduled for the summer of 2020. Over time it is hope that this programme will help to raise the profile of the Council amongst this key group of future workers.
14. Quarterly meetings are held with all Service Heads to discuss the specific demographics of their service area, as well as opportunities for developing a more diverse, representative workforce either through 'day to day' recruitment

and/or through planned organisational changes to reflect changing service requirements.

15. At an operational level all vacancies are reviewed by the HR Business Partner team with the recruiting manager to consider: the essential/desirable requirements in the person specification for the role, with particular focus on the level of qualifications required vis-à-vis equivalent experience; the content of the job description; and associated job advert and advertising methods, to ensure that these are as inclusive as possible to ensure that the vacancy attracts a diverse group of applicants. Different approaches to filling a post are also reviewed, such as entry-level career paths for more hard to fill posts where a 'grow our own' approach may be more appropriate. Examples of the positive impact of such interventions are the recruitment scheme for the Diversity and Inclusion Manager (Community Services) and the Trainee Solicitor (Law and Governance) both of which were offered to high quality applicants from a BAME group.
16. Advert copy for recruitment campaigns has been reviewed to promote the Council's commitment to increasing the representation of under-represented groups as well as offering support at application and interview stage for targeted roles, with the aim of improving the applicant success rate for under-represented groups.
17. A wide-ranging review of the Council's recruitment processes and procedures is being progressed, with the aim of improving the 'applicant experience' as well as widening the potential 'pool' of applicants for vacancies advertised by the Council. This process includes: simplifying the application process (internally facing aspects) and clarifying roles and responsibilities; revamping the Council's recruitment web page; exploring the use of social media; simplifying the current on-line application form; introducing a CV application route; reviewing all information provided to applicants; creating more 'applicant friendly' template letters and notifications; developing an improved on-boarding and induction process.
18. The improvements across the recruitment process has resulted in an increase in the percentage of job applications from BAME candidates from 20.07% at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2018 to 29.73% at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2019. This has translated to an increase in the percentage of new starters from BAME candidates to 18.03% at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2019 compared to 7.96% the previous year. Staff leavers from BAME groups also increased in the year to 13.6% compared to 7.95% in the previous year.
19. A revised exit interview process was rolled out in December 2018 with the aim of gaining greater insight on reasons for staff leaving the council, which is currently around 10% per annum. The revised process is based on an invitation to a meeting with a member of the HR team, rather than the relevant line manager. The new process has resulted in a significant increase in the uptake levels of exit interviews (circa 55% of staff leavers, from less than 30%), as well as improving the qualitative data 'captured' through the process, in particular about the 'reason' for leaving (primarily around career progression and development opportunities for the majority of leavers). This data will be used to develop

improvements and interventions going forwards, as well as provide feedback to the relevant service area(s) concerned.

20. Officers facilitated a CV writing workshop to a group of Asian women at Rosehill Community Centre earlier this year, with the aim of encouraging and supporting them into work. This workshop helped to promote greater level of understanding between the Council and the Asian group, as well as providing a route to engage a small section of the community for the *Everyone Matters* programme detailed above.
21. Two recruitment roadshows were held in local community centres in May and June 2018, with further events in February and October 2019. These events provide information to attendees on the range of opportunities within the Council and, where appropriate, provide face-to-face support to attendees on applying for current vacancies with the Council. Further events are planned in 2020.
22. Sickness absence data, as well as information on the reasons for staff accessing the employee assistance programme, indicates that mental health is a key factor in staff absence. To address this issue a comprehensive mental wellbeing programme, '*Thriving at Work*', has been implemented. Following an initial focus on communication, all staff were asked to complete an awareness training programme on mental health, whilst managers were additionally provided with a ½ day training course which considered how to support people in the organisation with their mental health.
23. The Council has funded the accreditation of four officers as Mental Health First Aid, (MHFA) instructors, enabling them to deliver accredited MHFA course to staff in the organisation. The Council currently has 36 accredited MHFA Aiders and an active Mental Wellbeing cohort delivering ad-hoc initiatives aimed at promoting positive mental wellbeing in the workplace such as; Tea & Talk sessions. The MHFA instructors are also accredited to deliver ½ day mental health awareness courses, with 3 sessions delivered earlier this year, with more scheduled from November. The mental health first aiders have had 25 contacts since April offering support to both colleagues and customers.
24. Further Mental Health First Aid training is scheduled for January 2020, and a Managing Mental Health workshop, aimed at line managers in the Council, is currently being designed which will be delivered in the New Year.
25. Creating an environment that is inclusive and supports health and wellbeing is a key pillar in good workforce strategies. With fast changing environments, an ageing workforce, increase in caring responsibilities and a rise in 24/7 social media internet connected living, creates pressure on individuals, as seen in the rise in stress related illnesses. Therefore employee well-being is a key element for a diverse workforce.

## **CONTINUING AND FUTURE ACTIONS TO 2020/21**

26. It is clear that the main areas of focus, based on current levels of under-representation, is to target BAME representation across the workforce as well as also improving BAME and women's representation in senior management and

senior grades. Based on this approach, the following key themes for the next iteration of the Equalities Action Plan are that:

- (a) The Council needs to focus beyond apprentices, building on success here.
  - (b) The Council needs to attract BAME graduates based in or returning to the city, working with local communities:
  - (c) The Council needs a step change in positive action, including developing BAME leaders and managers. This also achieves the objective of growing our talent and ensuring greater retention, as exit interviews revealed career progression as a key reason for leaving.
  - (d) To embed and increase cultural change, we need to sustain the momentum created during equalities week, with 'equalities ambassadors' acting as catalysts for further change and helping to support an inclusive work environment, free from discriminatory or unconscious bias.
  - (e) In our influencing role, influence national institutions to develop training pathways that appeal to BAME, women and those with disabilities, otherwise it will remain difficult to recruit to areas such as planning.
27. As part of the ongoing review of recruitment methods and processes the development of recruitment processes that focus on the success factors for a role, i.e. beyond the competency and behaviours required, including relevant language skills to enhance both our understanding and our ability to communicate with our communities, as well as greater monitoring and encouragement of self-reporting will enable more consistent application of current processes, and will help to reduce unconscious bias and enable focus on the behaviours needed for success.
28. In addition to the current development opportunities offered to managers either through the ILM scheme or apprenticeship levy, the Council is scoping out a management and leadership development programme for employees from under-represented groups at various levels as an internally focused Positive Action programme, with equalities in service delivery and engaging with communities at its core. The approach is to develop a future Oxford City Council leader and manager, an inclusive leader who understands equalities needs within the local community and has the mind-set and skills to deliver accessible responsive services. This programme will need to be progressed through normal procurement channels and funded through the existing budget provision. However if the costs of this programme, once identified, cannot be supported by existing budget provision for 2020/21, the priorities for learning and development spend will need to be re-evaluated.
29. A positive action plan will build on this year's positive action, but include further actions which will focus on key areas such as: -
- (a) understanding the school demographics of BAME students, challenging all roles that fall vacant, re-designing the next apprenticeship cohort;
  - (b) developing a *Managers of the Future* programme, as outlined above; and



- (c) Work with communities to understand where and how to reach out to graduates from under-represented groups, who could benefit from internships.
30. Technical Level apprenticeships – T or Technical level apprenticeships are being introduced in Sept 2020. A requirement of the full-time training programme is the completion of a minimum three month placement with an employer to gain practical skills and embed their learning. This placement is recognised as training, and within this programme at any point during the placement a suitable candidate could transfer into a work based apprenticeship as a full-time employee. The Council is currently reviewing how to integrate and maximise this opportunity by both promoting the Council as an employer to BAME communities through placements as well as identifying potential entry point recruitment routes into the Council, which could incorporate a T level placement programme.
31. Demography of City Schools – further research has been conducted to establish which schools in the city have the highest population of BAME students to enable more targeted recruitment roadshows and other school engagement opportunities. This data will be used in planning ‘outreach’ activity and, if approved, apprenticeship opportunities for the 2020 cohort.
32. Apprenticeship Cohorts – The Council is currently committed to providing funding for a biennial apprenticeship cohort. This has been successfully running since 2012. The next cohort is due in September 2020 and the approach to the level of qualifications offered will be reviewed to consider workforce planning activity and adopting positive action in the recruitment process. (The current apprenticeship cohort 2018 – 2020 consists of 11 apprentices of which 25% are from a BAME background).
33. Based on the principles set out in paragraph (25) above, it is proposed that the current Equalities Action Plan 2018 to 2021 is updated to reflect the ongoing and additional actions set out in the paragraphs above. Subject to approval the following new objectives will be incorporated into an updated Equalities Action Plan 2018 to 2021: -
- Increase representation of BAME employees in the workforce and by 1.5% per annum
  - Increase representation of BAME employees at all management levels
  - Increase representation of women at management levels where there is less than 50% representation
  - Recruitment practices that reduce unconscious bias and increase representation
  - Create a ‘pipeline’ of trained and skilled diverse recruits through apprentice and graduate training schemes
  - Develop an inclusive workplace culture that encourages innovation and delivery of accessible services

- Develop a network of ‘Equality Ambassadors’ who have the skills and tools to promote, improve and support equalities improvement in services and workplace

(Appendix 3 provides further detail on these proposed additions to the Equalities Action Plan 2018 to 2021).

## **MEASURING PROGRESS**

34. It was agreed in 2018 that increasing BAME levels of representation in the workforce would be a medium term issue and that the aim would be to increase levels to 13.65%. BAME representation as at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2018 was 11.95% for the Council, which increased to 12.96% as at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2019. (The current representative level as at 31<sup>st</sup> August 2019 13.1%, which is encouraging progress and places the council on track to achieve the 13.65% BAME participation rate. It is proposed that at least a 1.5% increase per year be the minimum target if the Council is to achieve a rate representative of the demographics of the local community over the next five years.
35. Progress will continue to be reviewed and measured regularly, to ensure that action plans and performance expectations can be adjusted accordingly.

## **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

36. In terms of future actions the associated financial implications will need to be developed and agreed, to reflect the new programmes of work set out in the paragraphs above. Where additional expenditure is identified this will need to be considered in the Budget Setting cycle and the Councils Consultation Budget to be published in December 2019.

## **LEGAL ISSUES**

37. The Equality Act 2010 (the Act), section 149 introduced the Public Sector Equality Duty. It requires that everything the Council does, must have due regard to the need to; eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by the Act; advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it; and foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and person who do not share it.
38. A relevant protected characteristic is defined in section 4 of the Act as; age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, and marriage and civil partnerships.
39. The Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties and Public Authorities) Regulations 2017 require the Council to publish information annually about how it complies with the Public Sector Equality Duty. The information must include, in particular, information relating to persons who share a relevant protected characteristic who are:
- (a) its employees;
  - (b) Other persons affected by its policies and practices.

40. The Regulations also impose obligations on the Council to publish information relating to the “gender pay gap” in the organisation on the snapshot date of 31<sup>st</sup> March in any year. In particular, the Council is required to publish the difference between the average hourly rate of pay paid to male and female employees; the difference between the average bonus paid to male and female employees; the proportions of male and of female employees who receive bonuses; and the relative proportions of male and female employees in each quartile pay band of the workforce.
41. The Workforce Equality Report and the Equalities Action Plan have been prepared in compliance with the requirements of the Act.
42. Positive Action is one of the Government’s range of measures aimed at tackling discrimination in the workplace under the Equality Act 2010. It can be used in two areas: encouragement in training and recruitment and promotion. To adopt positive action approaches the Council must ensure it can provide evidence of the ‘gap’ it is trying to resolve and that the approach is reasonable.

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<b>Background Papers:</b> None	
1	None

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