# Employment Committee

Minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 24 September 2025 at the Town Hall, Royal Leamington Spa, at 6.00pm.

**Present:** Councillors Collins (Chair), Davidson, Gorman, King, Melrose, Payne, Syson, and Yellapragada.

**Officers:** Sophie Vale – Principal Committee Services Officer; Tracy Dolphin – Head of People and Communications; and Daniel Keating – Equalities, Diversity & Inclusion Business Partner

7. **Apologies and Substitutes**

(a) apologies for absence were received from Councillors Davison and Hales; and
(b) there were no substitutes.

8. **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest made.

9. **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 2 July 2025 were taken as read and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

10. **Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Update 2025**

The Committee considered a report from the Head of People and Communications which provided an update on the planned direction of Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) at Warwick District Council. This work aligned with the Council's People Strategy 2023 -2027 and would follow the appropriate Committee cycles/briefings for Councillors.

The report provided an update on the action plan (Appendix 1 to the report) from the previous September 2024 report. EDI provided a foundation for the Council's Corporate Strategy and was recognised as an integral part of the culture of the organisation, a key theme within the People Strategy and Service Area Plan for People and Communications.

The action plan detailed in Appendix 1 to the report provided an update to key initiatives.

The recommendations from the September 2024 report had been added into the Council's overall EDI plans, to look at all areas of diversity.

In September 2024, Employment Committee endorsed the commitment to the 'Race at Work Charter' which asked organisations to make a public commitment to improving equality of opportunity in the workplace with seven key objectives. These included commitments to:

1. appoint an Executive Sponsor for race equality;
2. capture ethnicity data and publicise progress;

3. commit at board level to zero tolerance of harassment and bullying;
4. make equity, diversity, and inclusion the responsibility of all leaders and managers;
5. take action that supported Black, Asian, Mixed Race and other ethnically diverse employee career progression;
6. support race inclusion allies in the workplace; and
7. include Black, Asian, Mixed Race and other ethnically diverse-led enterprise owners in supply chains.

All areas of the Race at Work Charter were being worked on through various initiatives and practices. This included endorsement of an executive sponsor as an EDI Champion; capturing Diversity Data across the organisation and publishing pay gaps as part of the guidelines; publication of the anti-hate crime statement; updates to the Dignity at Work policy; EDI training for all staff which included Allyship; fair recruitment practices; manager training on diversity and discrimination; and inclusion of equality in procurement which related to updated legislation 'Procurement Act 2023'.

The role of EDI Champion would help encompass and support EDI from a senior position. Appointing a senior leader as an Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Champion showed Warwick District Council's (WDC) further commitment in this area. Part of the Race at Work Charter required an Executive Sponsor for race equality, and WDC wanted to encompass all the protected characteristics within this. The launch of the EDI champion would align with WDC's communications and engagement plan linked to the other priorities outlined in the report.

The Workforce Steering Group had endorsed the nomination that the Head of Community Protection be appointed as EDI Champion, because this service area already championed EDI related events and projects. This role would act as a lead spokesperson internally, a voice on key groups to add value and importance to engagement, and a recognised advocate for Councilor questions and the wider community. Further promotion and engagement were planned.

Disclosure rate for the self-disclosure of diversity data had reduced from 59% to 58%. This was due to a percentage of new starters opting to not disclose their data and other people leaving the organisation that had declared their diversity data. An example of ethnicity data disclosure for other local authorities (2024/2025 reporting apart from Stratford-on-Avon District Council (SDC) which was 2019) was provided in paragraph 1.2.3 in the report.

The continued challenge to increase self-disclosure rates was being addressed by implementing a communication plan to educate employees about the importance of ethnicity disclosure, the benefits to the organisation and the impact on fostering an inclusive workplace through:

- general messaging and using the intranet;
- targeting senior leaders / managers; and
- approaching areas of the business with low disclosure rates.

The most recent campaign to all managers was sent out in August 2025.

The external website was updated to reflect WDC values and vision around EDI and also highlighted commitment to the Disability Confident Level 2 Scheme that the Council signed up to. The Recruitment Hub as well as links for new starters provided an enhanced experience for those looking at joining the Council or as part of their onboarding experience.

The anti-hate crime statement was published in August 2024 with the purpose of uniting staff and Councillors in a shared approach. This demonstrated WDC's standpoint to the public in a way that cut across all engagement and interaction with organisations, businesses and stakeholders and demonstrated that WDC was an inclusive place of work.

A hate crime was an offence committed against a person or property motivated by the perpetrator's hostility and prejudice towards people because they were seen as being different. No hate crime was acceptable.

Everyone had a right to live without fear, hostility, and intimidation from others because of who they were. Under the legislation (https://www.cps.gov.uk/crime-info/hate-crime), this included crime based on race, religion or belief, disability, gender identity and sexual orientation.

The Council had now published the agreed anti-hate crime statement internally and externally. It could be found on the EDI Intranet page homepage and the external page.

The United Kingdom's Supreme Court ruled that the terms "woman" and "sex" referred to a "biological woman and biological sex" under UK equality laws. This was the result of a long-running court battle between For Women Scotland Limited and The Scottish Ministers. Whilst the wider impact of this decision on the community was not yet clear, it should be emphasised that trans and non-binary people remained protected under equality legislation through the protected characteristic of "gender reassignment".

Warwick District Council had a firm commitment to a zero-tolerance approach to bullying, discrimination, and harassment of any kind, both in the community and the workplace, as outlined in the Anti-Hate Crime Statement, and would continue to support anyone who raised an issue under the Dignity at Work Policy.

Interim guidance was published by the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) (An interim update on the practical implications of the UK Supreme Court judgment | EHRC). However, there was a delay, with the expectation that the EHRC would publish an updated Code of Practice August/Sept 2025 and then the Employment Code of Practice at a later date. When this was published, WDC would seek legal advice and act accordingly. This would be communicated internally and externally.

The first series of Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) Workshops were delivered from November 2024 to March 2025. This session highlighted key information, how to complete an EqIA and who to contact for help, feedback, and advice. So far, 52 officers had attended these sessions. There was one session per quarter planned for new starters or those looking to refresh their knowledge on the subject.

All EqIA related information was available on the EDI Intranet page, with on-going support available from the EDI Business Partner. There was also external information posted about EqIA's.

A central bank of completed EqIA's was now available as a way to access best practice and avoid EqIA's becoming lost on individual or team drives.

In 2023/2024, West Midlands Employers delivered a series of 'Equality, Diversity, Inclusion and Workplace Behaviour' workshops to equip staff with the fundamentals of EDI. The key objectives for participants were to gain an understanding of EDI and the link to workplace behaviours; examine individual and organisational responsibilities and explore ways to challenge exclusionary behaviours.

294 staff attended sessions of which over 90% of participants agreed (65.3%) and strongly agreed (25.3%) that the course was beneficial to their personal development. These sessions were now a core component (mandatory) of the WDC Induction. Those staff who were not previously able to attend were required to join.

As of May 2025, 471 staff had attended the EDI and Workplace Behaviours Workshop. Immediate feedback from participants showed that most attendees self-reported being 'not confident' or 'somewhat not confident' at the start of the session, which then shifted to over 80% of participants reporting 'somewhat confident' and 'extremely confident'. Key words on the word clouds were 'interesting, informative, valuable, beneficial, useful and thought-provoking'.

This had been further supported by ongoing conversations and raising awareness through the following events:

a) 'Neurodiversity and ADHD Awareness' for all colleagues and managers – 98 attendees. 60% of staff reported feeling 'not confident' before the session, with 83% then reporting 'confident' or 'extremely confident' by the end of it. Key words reported were 'eye-opening, engaging, helpful, informative, interesting';
b) 'Neurodiversity and Autism Awareness' for all colleagues and managers – 119 attendees in total with similar feedback compared to the ADHD Awareness events. Key comments were 'engaging, informative, interesting, insightful'; and
c) information and support related to the menopause had been highly requested by staff. As a result, WDC ran two 'Menopause Awareness in the Workplace sessions' in June 2025. One for staff and one for managers. A total of 64 people attended the 'all colleagues' session, with 48 of staff reporting to feel either 'not confident' or 'neutral' around their understanding of Menopause in the Workplace. By the end of the 75-minute session, 47 shifted to 'somewhat confident' and 'extremely confident' in their knowledge and understanding.

For the 90-minute line manager session of which 35 attended, 19 started out as 'neutral' or 'not confident', transforming into 24 people in the 'extremely confident' and 'confident' category. These sessions would be repeated in November 2025, and on an annual basis.

A Menopause Awareness intranet page was created to align with the above sessions. This page contained information covered in the sessions, internal Menopause Champion videos of their lived experience, signposting, and a manager handbook. This page had 186 views since its creation.

All Councillors received an email on the 3 July 2025 with qualitative feedback, the two-week timed recordings, link to the Menopause intranet page, and more updates.

Legislation in October 2024 raised new duties for employers related to Sexual Harassment. This meant taking reasonable steps to prevent sexual harassment to employees, workers, contractors from all areas, such as from colleagues, customers, external parties, and others. The Employment Committee was asked to approve the policy (Appendix 2 to the report) and associated supporting actions below.

The steps WDC had taken to meet this new duty included the following:

a) updates to the Dignity at Work Policy to explicitly define sexual harassment and all related information;
b) intranet page created which held all related information, signposting and where to get support;
c) new addition to risk assessments and a checklist for managers
d) new quiz on Meta to direct people to the updated Dignity at Work Policy and ensure understanding of the new duty;
e) updates in the EDI & Workplace Behaviours Workshop to include information on sexual harassment;
f) updates to the HR for Non-HR manager training to include information on sexual harassment;
g) Managers Forum updated in November 2024 with the new legislation and upcoming changes; and
h) Sexual Harassment Awareness training for all colleagues via Meta (ten-minute interactive module) and a 60-minute online session in September 2025 with Inclusive Employers.

In terms of alternative options, doing nothing was not an option, however, consideration of resources and capacity was imperative to consider the priorities of the Council's EDI agenda.

In response to questions from Members, the Head of People & Communications and the EDI Business Partner stated that:

- in 2021/22, WDC had moved to a new payroll system, and sensitive data was not allowed to be moved across systems. Prior to this, 97% of diversity data had been declared, but the new system meant that all employees needed to declare again;
- because most people had provided diversity data as a new starter, it had been difficult to encourage people to fill it in again;
- there had been six campaigns to encourage self-disclosure;
- because it was not mandatory, WDC could not force people to self-disclose, but encouraged people to fill in the form as 'preferring not to say' was still useful data;
- WDC was part of the West Midlands Equality Network and did regular benchmarking exercises with other local authorities. WDC was not

doing anything different to its peers; the lack of data was mainly due to the new payroll system and the subsequent difficulties with getting people to redeclare;
- the most recent campaign had used a multi-media approach and had tried to promote the benefits of diversity data as an incentive to get people to declare;
- it was challenging to overcome the friction between staff knowing they should self-disclose, and actually logging on to iTrent to fill it in;
- WDC received an annual report from Warwickshire County Council about disclosure rates. The report showed that a major contribution to the lack of data was the ratios of people leaving and joining;
- they were very careful about how data was interpreted. Analysis would not be undertaken if a sample was so small that individuals were at risk of being identified;
- managers had attended a meeting in which external support had been brought in to educate on menopause awareness. At the meeting, they asked for two volunteers – one male, one female - to become menopause champions for the Council;
- the male perspective on menopause had been included in subsequent training videos on the subject;
- menopause was a difficult subject for some, but it was important to provide appropriate signposting and ensure that staff felt that they had support;
- out of the 160 employees who attended the menopause awareness training sessions, approximately 30% had been men. This was somewhat representative of the wider Council, which consisted of 60% female and 40% male employees;
- if any employee disclosed a disability, the Council would ensure reasonable adjustments were made where necessary and would refer to Occupational Health for further assistance. Disability support was tailored to individual need;
- from a training and awareness perspective, there was non-HR manager training available which covered disability;
- WDC was a disability competent employer, meaning that any disabled applicant who met the essential criteria for a role was automatically shortlisted for interview;
- the updated sexual harassment policy, if approved, would be uploaded onto the Council's intranet to ensure access by all employees; and
- the Inclusive Employers membership would not be renewed. It had been useful but was not meeting value for money expectations. Annual membership was £3900, which gave access to two 60-minute training sessions and online resources. Sessions on their own cost £850 plus VAT.

Members thanked officers for their work on this campaign, and emphasised the importance of continuing EDI initiatives.

It was proposed by Councillor Margrave, seconded by Councillor Melrose and

**Resolved that**

(1) the follow up actions from the EDI Update Report Sept 2024 (Appendix 1 to the report) be noted; and

(2) the Sexual Harassment Policy and associated actions (Appendix 2 to the report) be approved.

11. **Gender and Ethnicity Pay Gap Reporting as at 31 March 2025**

The Committee considered a report from the Head of People and Communications which presented the mandatory gender pay gap information that must be reported to Central Government and published on the Warwick District Council (WDC) website. It also presented the Ethnicity Pay Gap reporting and recommended its publication by the Council.

In accordance with the Equality Act 2010, with effect from 30 March 2018, it was a requirement to report and publish specific gender pay gap information. The report was the seventh annual statement.

Although this was not a legal requirement, in June 2020 the Council decided that "in order to support its consideration of the report and the monitoring of the action plan, the Council required the publication of relevant annual data, including an Ethnicity Pay Gap report alongside the current Gender Pay Gap report". The WDC gender pay and ethnicity pay gap reporting figures had been calculated using the standard methodologies used in the Equality Act 2010 (Gender Pay Gap Information) Regulations 2017. The data included the following types of staff: employees with a contract of employment (part-time, full-time, permanent and fixed term) and casuals/workers (glossary in Appendix 1 to the report).

Under the Equal Pay Act 1970, men and women must receive equal pay for:

- the same or broadly similar work;
- work rated as equivalent under a job evaluation scheme; or
- work of equal value.

WDC had a clear policy of paying employees equally for the same or equivalent work, regardless of their sex or ethnicity. In order to achieve this WDC:

- operated job evaluation methodology to grade all jobs, using the Hay Job Evaluation Scheme to ensure that jobs were paid fairly;
- ensured that allowances were awarded fairly and consistently across the Council; and
- re-evaluated job roles and pay grades as necessary to ensure a fair structure.

For the purposes of pay gap reporting as at 31 March 25, Warwick District Council paid 546 people, 320 females (59%), 226 male (41%).

Bonus pay definition was classed as "any remuneration that was in the form of money, vouchers, securities, securities options or interests in securities and related to profit sharing, productivity, performance, incentive or commission." Non-consolidated bonuses were included. For WDC, this captured Long Service Awards and one-off honoraria payments.

The table at paragraph 2.1 in the report showed the WDC Gender Pay Gap figures as at 31 March 2025, together with a comparison of the 31 March 2024 figures, the 31 March 2023 figures, and the earliest recorded figures at 31 March 2018.

In summary, the mean gender pay gap had diminished by 1% from 2024 to 2025, this was due to more women being in the upper pay quartile since records began in 2018. Relating to the median gender pay gap, a positive trend had been identified from 2018 to 2024 with no change for 2025.

- The Mean Gender pay gap was 10.7%
  - a decrease of 1% since 31 March 2024
  - a decrease of 4.6% since 31 March 2018

- The Median Gender pay gap was 7.6%
  - the same as 31 March 2024
  - a decrease of 3.3% since 31 March 2018

- The Mean Gender Bonus pay gap was -33.2% and the Median bonus pay gap was -40%. These figures were skewed due to a greater than average one-off honorarium payment.

- The percentage of women in the lower quartile was 53.3%
  - a decrease of 20.1% since 31 March 2024
  - a decrease of 9.7% since 31 March 2018

- The percentage of women in the lower middle quartile was 65.4%
  - an increase of 1.4% since 31 March 2018

- The percentage of women in the upper middle quartile was 57.4%
  - a decrease of 7.2% since 31 March 2024
  - a decrease of 3.6% since 31 March 2018

- The percentage of women in the upper quartile was 58.4%
  - an increase of 15.9% since 31 March 2024
  - an increase of 20.4% since 31 March 2018

WDC continued to review and promote the inclusive benefits of the organisation as part of the ongoing Recruitment, Retention, and Remuneration project, these included:

- flexible working - all employees had a statutory right to request flexible working. This right applied from the first day of employment. Employees did not have an automatic right to work flexibly. All requests would be given serious consideration and agreed unless there was a genuine business reason not to. This included a contractual change to the number of hours worked, the times at which they were worked and the work location. This could help people remain in a role that best reflected their skills, whilst also having a working pattern to reflect other responsibilities;
- agile working - WDC's People Strategy, and Values reflected the ambition as an organisation to embrace digital opportunities, innovate and enable people to see work as what they do, not where they do it.

WDC delivered creative, customer-focused, high-performing services and positively contributed to the Council priorities within an agile working environment. This gave even greater flexibility on work location and managing individual work hours, with a focus on outputs;

- recruitment and representation at Senior Leadership level – the Senior Leadership team was made up of 50% female and 50% male which was representative of the local and national population. Diversity data of Chief Officer recruitment was monitored to ensure a representative pool of candidates;
- policy updates – changes to WDC Adoption policy in 2024 now matched the maternity policy where the requirement to pay back 12 weeks half pay unless returning to work for a minimum of three months was waived. This amendment also supported the aim of the Council to support family friendly policies and as a benefit in the recruitment processes; and
- menopause awareness - studies from the UK-based Fawcett Society revealed that 10% of women left their jobs due to menopause symptoms, while 25% considered leaving. WDC were continuing to work with Workforce Steering Group and internal Menopause Champions to increase awareness in this area. Following on from a session for Managers Forum, in June 2025, two Menopause Awareness in the Workplace sessions took place for colleagues and managers. There were 48 colleagues who reported either 'not confident' or 'neutral' around their understanding of Menopause in the Workplace. By the end of the 75-minute session, 47 shifted to 'somewhat confident' and 'extremely confident' in their knowledge and understanding.

  For the 90-minute manager session of which 35 attended, 19 started out as 'neutral' or 'not confident', transforming into 24 people in the 'extremely confident' and 'very confident' category. These sessions would be repeated in November 2025, and on an annual basis.

  Both sessions were recorded to enable those that couldn't attend to be able to listen to the session. A Menopause Awareness intranet page was created to align with the above sessions. This page contained information covered in the sessions, internal Menopause Champion videos of their lived experience, signposting, and a manager handbook. This page now had over 170 views since creation.

  All Councillors received an email on the 3 July 2025 with qualitative feedback, the recordings, link to the Menopause intranet page and more updates.

As a learning point from the March 2024 report, controls had been put in place to ensure that all data review underwent robust checks. It was imperative to recognise that the information reported related to ethnicity was not a mandatory requirement for staff and was voluntarily disclosed. This was stated on WDC application forms.

The continued challenge to increase self-disclosure rates was being addressed by implementing a communication plan to educate employees about the importance of ethnicity disclosure, the benefits to the organisation and the impact on fostering an inclusive workplace through:

- general messaging and using the intranet;
- targeting senior leaders / managers; and
- approaching areas of the business with low disclosure rates

The most recent campaign was launched August 2025 and WDC would continue to monitor and encourage disclosure.

Ethnicity was a special category of personal data, and therefore due to the low number of disclosures, it was not possible to provide a more detailed breakdown as this could constitute personal data and directly identify individuals. Furthermore, as a result, the data provided could not be classed as representative of the organisation, which WDC were continuing to address.

After benchmarking with other Councils, the aspirational figure for disclosure was 90% for WDC to ensure the data could be used to inform further on other areas.

The table at paragraph 3.4 in the report showed disclosure rates for other Councils. To help target groups that had 'not declared' rather than 'preferred not to say', WDC had reviewed the evaluation of the data and separated this for 2024 & 2025. This was shown in the table at paragraph 3.5 in the report.

Data calculated in previous reports had 'not declared' included in the 'White British' category. The data shown would now only compare 'white' and 'not-white' data and had not included those that had 'not declared' or 'preferred not to say' as previously.

The table at paragraph 3.6 in the report showed the WDC Ethnicity Pay Gap figures as at 31 March 2025, together with an updated comparison of the 31 March 2024.

It was not possible to provide a summary of analysis or trends for this information based on the rationale set out above.

As Ethnicity Pay Gap reporting was not mandatory, it was not possible to give a national picture for comparisons.

Addressing the underlying causes of a gender pay and ethnicity pay gap as well as developing an effective action plan, was an ongoing and iterative process, and the data should not be reviewed in isolation. The Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion action plan as part of the People Strategy had been reviewed to ensure actions could be aligned to the gender and ethnicity pay gap. This was supported by consideration of comparative data to be able to benchmark best practice both internally and externally and working with wider groups, for example the West Midlands Equalities Network.

The 'Equalities, Diversity, Inclusion, and Workplace Behaviours' sessions 2023/2024 were attended by 294 staff. 90% of participants agreed (65.3%) and strongly agreed (25.3%) that the course was beneficial to their personal development. From January 2024, the total of people attending this session was 471 which was now mandatory for new

starters.

All managers and those involved with recruitment attended 'Recruitment & Selection' training which looked at bias in recruitment, interview techniques, following a fair & clear process and related legislation. All managers attended the 'HR for non-HR Managers' training that had a focus on equality, legislation, types of discrimination, being aware of bias and being a consciously inclusive and considerate manager.

The EDI plan and approach of the Council looked at all areas of EDI. This included looking at all areas of equality and diversity when it came to Equality Impact Assessments and toolkit for managers on this. Awareness continued on significant themes and topics internal information on key areas, such as; Menopause, LGBTQ+ & History Month, Race Equality Week, Neurodiversity, ADHD and Autism Awareness Days. This ran alongside the Inclusion Calendar linked to engagement and communication of key events.

The Council continued to promote and review the benefits of working for Warwick District Council through the 'family friendly' policies, for example maternity and adoption 'pay back' scheme withdrawn; health and well-being cash plan scheme; agile working; continued development of flexible working options that supported effective work life balance; and development opportunities including an increased promotion of 'work apprenticeship' training.

In terms of alternative options, none were considered as Gender Pay Gap reporting and publishing was required by law.

In response to questions from Members, the Head of People and Communications and the EDI Business Partner stated that:

- WDC had a flexible working policy which set out the statutory right to request flexible working arrangements;
- this policy was in addition to the agile working policy, which enabled employees to work from anywhere;
- agile working was dependent upon business needs and operational requirements of a given post, as well as the certainty of confidentiality within the work space;
- the agile working policy was part of the Council's People Strategy and the commitment to smarter working practices;
- recent staff surveys had shown that staff valued agile working, and it was a benefit for recruitment and retention;
- days in the office were not mandatory on an organisational level, but could be implemented by managers depending on the requirements of a given post; and
- there was no gender pay gap reporting within ethnicity pay gap data due to a lack of data. Only 50% of non-white employees had self-reported ethnicity data, so a gender and ethnicity cross-section could not be undertaken because of the risk of identifying individuals.

It was proposed by Councillor Collins, seconded by Councillor Melrose, and

**Recommended to Council** that

(1) the Gender Pay Gap reporting as of 31 March 2025, as detailed in the report, be published and

(2) the Ethnicity Pay Gap reporting as of 31 March 2025, as detailed in the report, be published.

(The meeting ended at 6.37pm.)

CHAIRMAN
19 November 2025