

## **Task & Finish Group – Equality & Diversity**

Following the last meeting of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee, the Task & Finish Group has met on another three occasions, with several other meetings scheduled. At our meeting on 23 October, we had the opportunity to interview representatives from UNISON WDC branch and Investors in People (IIP). At the time of writing, our next meeting is on 4 November, when we intend to review the feedback received from UNISON and IIP, as well as proceed with planning the interviews with BAME members of WDC Staff.

As Members are aware, the Council has been celebrating Black History Month throughout October. I would like to thank our HR and Media team for helping raise awareness of this amongst WDC staff via the Intranet. A special Black History Month section was added on the Intranet page, with a variety of resources, including updates from the Task & Finish Group, pointers to online resources to do with Black History Month, access to free training sessions and webinars on the topic of race etc. Whilst some of the webinars are ongoing, we don't yet have attendance data, but the feedback received has been very positive and one of the courses was oversubscribed, leading to a second session being offered, which was very encouraging. As part of this, I was able to share an update with all staff via the Intranet on the work we have been doing as a Task & Finish Group. Members also have access to the Intranet and I do encourage you to visit the Black History Month page as it contains valuable information. The Intranet also highlighted the Council's plans beyond October, and here is an excerpt of what was communicated to staff:

### ***"Our Plans beyond October***

- 1. Updating our Induction and Training programmes (remotely) to include a new Equality, Diversity and Inclusion workshop (amended from the existing Social Media Discrimination the Law).*
- 2. A 'Black History Month'/Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Managers Forum Special on 22 October – we will share the presentation with you here.*
- 3. Awareness and training for our Employee Support Officers and Staff Voice representatives*
- 4. Updating our Equality and Diversity objectives 2021 – 2023*
- 5. Refresher of Equality Impact Assessment Training (remotely)*
- 6. Further bespoke awareness training after the success of the LGBT+ session*
- 7. Refresher of the key areas for staff and Managers of our Dignity at Work Policy*
- 8. Working with WCC to provide new guidance on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Guidance*
- 9. Continue to identify diversified job platforms*
- 10. Further analysis of diversity data"*

As you will be aware, following the work of this Group, all Members have received a reminder, as well as instructions, on how to update your own Equality & Diversity information via the Self-Serve portal. I am disappointed to report that only a further 4 Members have provided this information since our reminder in September. We are currently aware of only one BAME Councillor, with 74% of Members having not updated their profile. While I respect this is not mandatory,

I encourage you to do so if you haven't already updated your profile, as this is valuable data for the Council and aids the work of the Task and Finish Group which you have sponsored.

### **Future steps of the Task & Finish Group and Timelines**

We are grateful for those officers and third parties who agreed to meet with us during our 8 meetings over the last 3 months, providing meaningful data which we can use in our future recommendations. I would like to also thank my fellow Members of the Group who have already put a significant amount of work in this project.

The issue of race is a complex one, and as you will be aware, we have been tackling it from 3 different perspectives:

- Equality, diversity and inclusion within the workforce of the Council
- Equality, diversity and inclusion in the services it delivers
- The promotion of racial equality in general – such as addressing hate crime.

In terms of the last 2 bullet points, from our first meeting, Members were in agreement that we would like to go out in the community and involve our residents, so that we can get first hand data on their experiences. We have kept this under review, with the intention to arrange a consultation once it is safe to do so. However, due to the increased number of Coronavirus cases locally and the changing restrictions, we do not envisage this is something we can do any earlier than Spring 2021. Whilst we did consider the option of conducting this remotely via video calls, we feel that this approach may well exclude the very people we are seeking representations from. We therefore are not comfortable proceeding with this until such a time when we can be sure we can reach communities across a diverse group of residents. We also recognise that before we commence this part of our work, we need to bring the plans to this to this Committee for approval, which we will aim to provide in early 2021.

On the other hand, much progress has been made on the first bullet point regarding equality, diversity and inclusion within the workforce of the Council. Whilst we wish to conduct interviews with BAME staff to get some first-hand feedback from them, and are hoping to conduct this by early next year, we feel that a draft report and recommendations can be considered by the Task & Finish Group at its meeting in February 2021, and are aiming to present a report to the Overview & Scrutiny Committee at its meeting in March 2021.

Based on the two paragraphs above, we would like to divide the work of the Task & Finish Group in two parts: one focusing on WDC's role as the employer and E&D within its work force, aiming for recommendations to be considered by O&S in March 2021; and a second part focused on the community element, for which work will be started as soon as possible, when the Coronavirus legislation allows for that. A second report with recommendations will then be presented to the Overview & Scrutiny Committee as soon as this second element of it has been considered. We appreciate this is all part of the same, one project, and in normal circumstances, this work would have been conducted all at the same time. However, given the uncertainty around Coronavirus, we would rather take this approach and ensure recommendations around the workforce are considered

by the end of the financial year on 30 March 2021, giving officers a chance to consider implementation in the new financial year.

Finally, I am share with you, below, the index of the documentation and evidence we have been considering during this time, to give Members a feel of our work so far. As you know, this is a complex issue and we appreciate the Committee's support.

Councillor Mini Mangat

Chair of the Task & Finish Group

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