

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Update and Staff Networks

Date: 12 December 2022

Report of: Director of Resources

Report to: Strategy and Resources Scrutiny Board

Will the decision be open for call in? Yes No

Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? Yes No

What is this report about?

Including how it contributes to the city's and council's ambitions

- Scrutiny Board Strategy & Resources has received a number of reports on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) over the past 2 years. This initially focussed on improving the experiences and outcomes of ethnically diverse colleagues working for the Council following the issues raised by the Black Lives Matter movement and consideration of the Race Equality Action Plan 2021-23.
- The work of the Board has mirrored ongoing work on EDI being undertaken corporately linked to the Council's organisational values and behaviours which are aimed at helping everyone to be their best in the workplace. These include a firm commitment to treating people fairly and ensuring they are valued for who they are, and that respect is given to all with a pledge to root out inequality and discrimination.
- The Board's interest in EDI has evolved to also include receiving direct feedback from the Council's staff networks to hear about their lived experiences working for the Council. As a result an item was considered in January 2022 that presented the Disability and Carers Equality Action Plan 2021-23 along with contributions from the DAWN, Race Equality, Working Carers and Healthy Minds staff networks.
- At the January meeting of the Board an area of focus for Board members was on facility time and funding. This has now been progressed, for facility time Chairs are entitled to 4 days per month (29.6 hours) to focus on network activity, Vice Chairs /Steering Group members 2 days per month (14.8 hours) and network members involved in task and finish work 1 day per month (7.4 hours). In terms of funding £1,500 per network has been allocated to support staff network activity in the Council which is a total budget of circa £10,000.
- This report provides the board with a further update on corporate EDI activity in the current year and also includes contributions from the LGBT+, Women's Voice and Early Careers staff networks.
- The Board's continuing focus on EDI contributes to the Council's aim to be the best place to work and along with supporting the Council's organisational values and People Strategy 2020-2025, is aimed at understanding lived experiences of staff and supports the corporate aims of ensuring all staff can 'be your best' in the workplace.

Recommendations

- Board members are asked to note the content of the report and appendices and are also asked to highlight any future areas of scrutiny work should any arise during discussion of this item.
- Board members are asked to consider the next steps for this work having received reports on EDI related issues since early 2021 and heard direct contributions from the Council's staff networks. One option is to produce a scrutiny statement that would enable initial findings to be made whilst also continuing to consider EDI related agenda items in the future.

Why is the proposal being put forward?

- 1 Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) as an organisational priority has been given a clear focus in 2022 both in terms of resources and the development of a clear plan to continue development and progress in this area. Activities on EDI have always been part of the important workplan of the Council's Human Resources service, set within the organisational development team. Since January 2022, a concerted effort has been made to bring about positive change on this agenda for the organisation, across workforce and organisational priorities.
- 2 In embedding EDI as the golden thread through the authority's organisational activity, there has been, and continues to be, strong corporate leadership and alignment on this agenda. The central theme of the annual Leadership conference in 2022 was EDI, where managers, chief officers and leadership teams attended the session which focused on our general approach, confirmation of what has been achieved this year and the future concrete steps being taken to empower and support leaders in the organisation to take forward the EDI agenda with their teams. Consequently, the Executive Board Member for Resources launched the mandatory 5 step EDI training programme for all appraising managers in the organisation which kicked off this month. EDI sessions have also been held with all leadership teams in the organisation with regular cascading of EDI priorities and messages through Best Council Leadership teams and management communication bulletins.
- 3 Alongside the Council's organisational values, the [People Strategy 2020-2025](#) sets out the vision to be the best place to work. This translates into ensuring every employee is supported to have a lived experience of "BEING YOUR BEST", where each colleague:
 - feels like they count
 - are supported to be well at work
 - are valued for who they are

The Vision

- 4 Work in 2022 leveraged a joint approach across the organisation to set out what is meant by Equality, Diversity & Inclusion. This took the form of detailed collaboration to derive an overall vision on EDI for the organisation. This was set out as follows:

Leeds Vision for Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion:

'We want Leeds to be a city that is fair and just, that recognises and embraces people's different needs, situations and ambitions. The barriers that limit what people can do and can be, will be removed, and everyone will be enabled to be their best.

For this to happen, we all need to take responsibility for our actions and behaviours'.

- 5 The vision as written, is to be formally ratified by the Council’s Executive board but has been broadly accepted as a statement that delineates the approach as a city and an organisation. Consequently, the ambition brings together the “trinity” of EDI focus to lay across the organisation, service delivery and community as a cohesive and interdependent agenda. Below sets out the 3 tranches in question.



- 6 The focus of this EDI update is the third element of “The Council as an employer” and its work to date on the workforce priorities area. From the beginning of the year, the Council has been clear in devising an approach on workforce priorities that determined key priorities.
- 7 These were centred around 5 workforce themes that had been developed after working with colleagues in the organisation, staff networks and representative bodies. The five themes are as follows:



- 8 These formed the areas to which a work plan was developed to deliver outcomes that centred on Equality, Diversity & inclusion. Several actions were drawn up under each theme to become the focus of planned activity, to drive outcomes on EDI.

Progress Update

- 9 In April 2022 a Head of Service from City Development was seconded into the HR service to help take forward specific actions in relation to the 5 priorities set out in the developed action plan. The table below sets out those various actions under each theme, the secondment responsibility was for specific elements within the plan, given the limited resources and timeline of 12 months to March 2023.

Our 5 Workforce Priorities

| Recruitment and initial welcome | Progression | Training for staff and managers | Speaking Up and Zero tolerance | Data and monitoring |
|--|---|---|--|---|
| Make our approaches more inclusive. | Support more people to progress | Get the offer right and ensure everyone engages | Tackle discrimination and unacceptable behaviour | Be clear about the difference we are making |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Practice review in selected areas Challenge ourselves at each stage of the process Diverse panels Anonymous shortlisting Quality feedback to unsuccessful candidates Feedback on overall experience Welcome when people join <p>Update @OCT 2022</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Better career development options for underrepresented groups. How work is allocated, acting ups and honorariums Positive action and support, including coaching and mentoring Uptake of mainstream training and development | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review what we currently have, and look to improve. Agree what should be mandatory. Agree best roll out model More regular reporting of uptake. Align with our Leadership and Management offer and embedding values work. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Introduce the Freedom to Speak Up Guardian role Conduct a Grievance practice review Set out our approach to zero tolerance in practice Improve consistency of local responses– all issues and concerns acted on, early and fairly | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Agree what measures and why? Improve our analysis and understanding, with more granular reporting More frequent reporting to a wider audience More visible benchmarking against others Better communication about progress and challenges |

GREEN - COMPLETED AMBER – ONGOING BLACK – TO BE STARTED

Recruitment and Initial Welcome

- A recruitment review is in progress, reviewing pre-selection, selection, and onboarding approaches in the organisation. This includes advertising, where we recruit, Job descriptions, interview processes and application forms and entry points to the organisation.
- An EDI Task & Finish project group formed (15 members) made up of staff network leads, Deputy Director, Heads of Service and several other staff and chaired by the seconded Head of HR Projects (EDI) is in place conducting an EDI review of the recruitment policy statement, diversity of panels, and EDI principles of recruitment.
- A report has been commissioned and completed and delivered by a graduate employee on EDI best practice which provides comparative details across other public sector organisations and external approaches from which the authority could learn.
- Approaches have now been trialled in HR of different types of recruitment tools to make appointments.

Training For Staff & Managers

- A new Leadership & Management offer has been launched with EDI embedded in its core as part of the development programme for managers – 1,658 managers have been trained already, out of a total of 2,200.
- A new mandatory EDI 5-step training for all managers has been launched and will be delivered to all 2,200 managers in LCC who will go through the training and then pick up with their teams separately.
- In addition to this training, the organisation has built in a section in the “Be Your Best” training module that covers EDI as a central topic within the generic management training modules.

It also features in the newly revised corporate induction sessions for starters and newly promoted colleagues. Accountability and measuring impact of all of these sits in the appraisal process which will have a stronger emphasis on EDI activities led by managers.

Speaking Up & Zero Tolerance

- 17 In July 2022, Leeds City Council became the first council in the UK to appoint a Freedom to Speak Up Guardian (FTSUG). In line with the council values of being 'open, honest & trusted' as well as 'treating people fairly' the purpose of the role is to enable all council employees to raise their voice, and have their voice heard in a forum that can respond, and affect positive change where needed.
- 18 The Freedom to Speak Up Guardian is a person who employees can approach to raise any concerns or suggestions they may have about the workplace. The Guardian works independently and impartially across the Council. They are not connected to HR, line management or trade unions. Employees can contact the Guardian openly (where they are happy for their identity to be known to others), confidentially (where the guardian does not disclose their identity without the person's consent) or anonymously.
- 19 The Guardian has a direct link to the Chief Executive of the Council and meets with him regularly to discuss the general themes and lessons learned from what people have spoken up about. The Guardian also has a link to elected members whose portfolio covers equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) in the workplace.
- 20 Members of staff can speak up about anything that is getting in the way of them doing a good job and bringing their whole selves to work, including where they or others feel that they are not being treated fairly, where they feel the quality of service provided to customers is falling short or where they feel that the Council is not acting in accordance with its values.
- 21 The role of the FTSUG is an important one in the context of the Council's refreshed approaches to EDI within the workforce. A recent staff survey (2019) indicated that disabled colleagues are some of the most dissatisfied members of staff within the Council. The recent Grievance Practice Review Report also highlights that members of staff from a diverse ethnic background are disproportionately over-represented in the grievance process. It is important that the Council is able listen to voices in the workforce to identify what may be driving such issues. The role of the Freedom to Speak up Guardian aims to reach all Council employees, including those who identify with one or more protected characteristic so that their voice can be heard, and the organisation can listen, respond and make changes to improve their experience of working for the Council. This also aligns with the Council's organisational plan. To support the Council's work around EDI, it is the intention that the Freedom to Speak Up Guardian will collect equalities monitoring data from those who have spoken up to enable the organisation to see who in the organisation is speaking up and identify and themes, trends or gaps in this data.
- 22 It will not be uncommon for the FTSUG to mention HR or other roles in the organisation that have responsibility for workforce wellbeing. The defined and clear separation of duties from HR and other functional/representative roles from those of the Freedom to Speak Up Guardian in the organisation means that the Guardian role has a trusted platform from which to work. This enables the freedom, latitude and trust to engage with colleagues as necessary and to maintain a healthy professional distance from corporate services. From time to time, speaking up matters may require engagement with HR. This is only done by agreement with the colleague who has spoken up, ensuring the independence of the Freedom to Speak Up Guardian role and their professional input.

- 23 As the role is an innovative one within a council setting there is continual reflection on Freedom to Speak Up processes and practices within the organisation. It is expected that as the role develops and becomes further embedded into the Council ways of working, the way in which the freedom to speak up within the organisation is facilitated will change over time. As such, the processes and the framework that supports the Freedom to speak Up Guardian's working practices within the council will be regularly reviewed.
- 24 In terms of zero tolerance, the Chief Executive and Leader of Council issued a joint, strong directive to all staff in 2022 setting out the zero-tolerance approach, the absolute ambition to deliver on this and the clear leadership message that this approach is non-negotiable. This statement is included as Appendix 4 to this report.
- 25 A significant review of the organisation's grievance practice has since been completed, which was a key EDI objective for 2022. This involved detailed listening interview sessions with 157 staff including staff networks, unions, HR colleagues, conflict mediators, senior managers, legal employment tribunal colleagues and colleagues who had gone through or were going through a grievance. The review culminated in a detailed report setting out 17 executive summary findings and 15 recommendations coalesced around 4 main themes:
- Timeliness – Acting quicker and earlier with urgency, to resolve conflict and reduce time taken to complete the process.
 - Accountability – Actively demonstrate, evidence and report on positive change, taking ownership of outcomes.
 - Behaviours – Managers need to provide stronger leadership at service and local levels to tackle behaviours in a timely manner.
 - Consistency of approach (Application) – Ensure consistency of approach across the organisation in discharging our duty of care as well ensuring due process.
- 26 The review also interpreted data for 2019/20 and 2020/21 on recorded grievance to ascertain the areas where trends created an opportunity for further improvement.

Data and Monitoring

- 27 Understanding data and carrying out monitoring of the plan to measure the impact of the approach on the organisation's efforts on EDI is a key area of development. It will demonstrate, or otherwise, how effective the plan is at delivering success on EDI. As a result a data working group has been successfully established, this will review the available data, bring together all data owners and build a dashboard on a range of EDI outputs and measures that will frequently be shared to measure progress. The working group is currently determining the necessary data to incorporate into a corporate dashboard on EDI.
- 28 The Leeds Data Analytics centre is also involved to help 'deep dive' into equality data and work with their data scientists and analysts will be undertaken to further explore what the data is saying and how best to maximise or fill the gaps, as well as making use of opportunities that may otherwise be missed.
- 29 Qualitative data is also being developed such as more bespoke surveys to improve understanding of how colleagues feel the organisation can do better on the EDI agenda, particularly around inclusion, which can be harder to pin down as a quantitative measure.

Progression

- 30 The final strand of EDI action plan revolves around progression actions. This needs to determine what can be done on positive action to support protected characteristics representation. This is under development, and work is being done to determine what the legal options are on positive action approaches.

Staff Networks

- 31 The voice of colleagues in the organisation forms a key plank of delivering relevant EDI progress. Protected characteristics and their representation across the organisation are a demonstration of how well EDI is embedded within organisational culture. Therefore the seconded head of HR projects (EDI) took on a link role to support and enable the staff networks to function as effectively as possible, by offering corporate support as needed and ensuring that the networks had access to relevant strategic developments around staff voice. This has included:

- Setting up 1-2-1 meetings with all staff network leads and steering teams who chose to take up the opportunity.
- Concluding a protected time allocation report for staff networks to carry out necessary work in this area by pulling together agreed time allocation and enabling sign off by the Corporate Leadership Team (CLT). This has ensured that voluntary work by colleagues in the staff networks was formally approved by the organisation.
- Concluded the establishment of a budget cost centre and funds to enable staff networks to have access to operational funding needed to accomplish their activities.
- Worked with staff networks on the grievance practice review to capture their input.
- Staff network leads are part of the membership of the task & finish EDI review project team.
- Coordinated the Diversity Staff Forum where all network leads meet with the Director of Resources on a 6 weekly cycle to ensure they continue to have access to corporate support and audience with a member of CLT.

- 32 To support this work with the staff networks and to hear feedback directly from them, the LGBT+, Women's Voice and Early Careers networks have provided a summary of their priorities, ongoing challenges and the successes achieved through the additional focus placed on EDI by the organisation in recent years. Each of the networks have provided a written statement which are included as appendices to this report and the networks will be represented by their chairs/leads at the meeting.

Future Plans

- 33 Delivery and implementation of the Mandatory EDI training to all 2,220 managers is a significant undertaking and will be the immediate focus of EDI work.
- 34 There is also the pending implementation of the 15 recommendations, referred to above, which have been approved by the Corporate Leadership Team.

35 Overhaul of recruitment practice is underway and is a priority.

36 The 5 themes of the workforce action plan all have ongoing work streams which require delivery.

What impact will this proposal have?

Wards Affected: All

Have ward members been consulted? Yes No

37 Continuing scrutiny of the Council’s activity on EDI will contribute to the Council’s ambitions in this area and lead to enhanced productivity and satisfaction in the workplace. Through critical friend challenge the Strategy and Resources Scrutiny Board will be able to set out its views on the latest update on corporate EDI activity and also hear directly from staff networks in a public committee setting.

What consultation and engagement has taken place?

38 Consultation and engagement are ongoing with the Chief Executive, CLT and Council Leader in terms of development of EDI activity.

What are the resource implications?

39 There are no specific resource implications contained in this report

What are the legal implications?

40 This report has no specific legal implications.

What are the key risks and how are they being managed?

41 This report has no specific risk management implications.

Does this proposal support the council’s 3 Key Pillars?

Inclusive Growth Health and Wellbeing Climate Emergency

42 The terms of reference of the Scrutiny Boards continue to promote a strategic and outward looking Scrutiny function that focuses on the Best City Ambition.

43 The ongoing EDI activity supports the Council’s organisational values and contributes to all staff feeling valued and being treated fairly in the workplace enabling them to be themselves at work and to operate in positive working environment.

Appendices

44 Appendix 1 – Early Careers staff network feedback on their priorities, successes and future challenges faced by the Council

45 Appendix 2 – Women’s Voice staff network feedback on their priorities, successes and future challenges faced by the Council

46 Appendix 3 – LGBT+ staff network feedback on their priorities, successes and future challenges faced by the Council

47 Appendix 4 – CLT and Race Equality network joint statement on zero tolerance

Background papers

48 None