

BRISTOL CITY COUNCIL

HUMAN RESOURCES COMMITTEE

25 JUNE 2015

Report of: Richard Billingham (Service Director: Human Resources)

Title: Improving our approach to equality and diversity – Staff-Led Groups

Ward: N/A

Officer Presenting Report: Richard Billingham

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RECOMMENDATION

That the Committee notes the report.

Summary

The purpose of this report is to update the Committee on changes to the way in which equality and diversity amongst the Council's workforce are led.

The significant issues in the report are:

- A Corporate Equality Group (CEG) will be formed to lead and improve the diversity of the workforce so that it mirrors Bristol's diversity and to ensure the whole organisation is actively engaged in achieving a positive working environment.
- The current Self-Organised Groups will become Staff-Led Groups.
- Reverse mentoring will be offered to each SLG Chair and will rotate amongst SLT members each year.
- Each SLG will develop and implement its own work programme that will be aligned to the Corporate Equalities Group priorities and work programme.
- Each SLG will produce an annual report that measures the outcomes achieved as a result of their activities, and sets out their plans for the year ahead.

- The groups will be integral to the equalities impact assessment process.
- The groups will provide their members with an element of peer support, and signpost members to sources of information and advice rather than become directly involved in casework.

Policy

1. The Council's Equalities Policy Statement says:

- “We will encourage our staff to use positive action to overcome disadvantage, discrimination, and deprivation. Our workforce will better represent the varied communities of Bristol.
- We will value our staff from equalities groups and create an environment where staff from equalities groups feel valued and supported and where discrimination is eliminated”.

Consultation

2. Internal

Senior Leadership Team (19 May 2015)

Self-Organised Groups (26 May 2015)

Corporate Joint Consultative Committee (04 June 2015).

3. External

None.

4. Context

4.1 There are four active self-organised employee groups (SOGs) and these have been running within the Council for some years:

- Black and Minority Ethnic Employee's Group
- Disabled Employees Group
- Rainbow LGBT Staff Network
- Youth Employees Voice.

4.2 The SOGs have their own terms of reference and meet monthly or six weekly including an AGM. They have individual aims, but not cross-cutting aims across all groups.

- 4.3 Chairs of the SOGs met the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) on 24 March 2015, after which the SLT asked for proposals on a way forward to be developed. The SOG Chairs then met with the SLT for a feedback meeting on 26 May 2015. This report reflects the discussions between the SLT and the SOG Chairs.
- 4.4 The SLT recognise that we can improve as an organisation in order to better reflect the diversity of the city we serve and also to engage more effectively with the needs and aspirations of employees from equalities communities. The preferred approach is one in which democratic, participative, self-governing groups are accountable for representing the views of the diverse employees within the workforce whilst assisting the organisation to achieve its strategic aims.
- 4.5 To this end, a Corporate Equality Group (CEG) will be formed to lead and improve the diversity of the workforce so that it mirrors Bristol's diversity and to ensure the whole organisation is actively engaged in achieving a positive working environment. It will meet every other month and will be chaired by a member of the SLT. Membership will also incorporate corporate trade union representatives and other employees as nominated by each DLT.
- 4.6 The current Self-Organised Groups will become Staff-Led Groups (SLGs), each covering staff with protected characteristics as now (ie, black and minority ethnic; disabled; lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender; and young people).
- 4.7 SLG Chairs may spend up to 10% (5% each if an SLG has two co-chairs) of their contracted working hours on SLG objectives (at their contractual rate of pay). They will continue to be managed by their current manager. Reverse mentoring will be offered to each SLG Chair as follows below, and will rotate amongst SLT members each year:
- Black & Minority Ethnic – John Readman (Strategic Director, People)
 - Disabled – Max Wide (Strategic Director, Business Change)
 - Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual & Transgender – Barra Mac Ruairi (Strategic Director, Place)
 - Young People – Alison Comley (Strategic Director, Neighbourhoods)
- 4.8 The organisational “link” for the new groups will shift from Equalities to HR. The £15k budget for SLGs will also transfer to HR and will be used between the new groups to develop and support the achievement of shared as well as group-specific goals.
- 4.9 These changes will be publicised over the coming weeks through a

variety of channels.

4.10 Key features of the new arrangements are:

- Each SLG will develop and implement its own work programme that will be aligned to the Corporate Equalities Group priorities and work programme. They will take a proactive, solutions-focused and strategic approach to their work.
- Each SLG will adopt robust annual election and induction processes for key roles (eg, Chair, Vice Chair, Treasurer).
- Chairs of the new groups will serve no more than two consecutive annual terms of office.
- Each SLG will update its membership list annually and through effective marketing of their activities and outcomes ensure that their membership comprises no less than 10% of the relevant population of centrally-employed staff, which is currently as follows:

Protected characteristic	Current centrally-employed population (18 May 2015)	Minimum SLG membership (10%)
BME	663	66
Disabled	399	40
Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender	144	14
Young people (aged 16-24)	257	26

- Each SLG will produce an annual report that measures the outcomes achieved as a result of their activities, and sets out their plans for the year ahead.
- The groups will be integral to the equalities impact assessment process
- The groups will provide their members with an element of peer support, and signpost members to sources of information and advice rather than become directly involved in casework.
- The leadership of the groups will be appropriately inducted and understand the requirements of their roles.

5. Proposal

That the Committee notes the report.

6. Other Options Considered

None.

7. Risk Assessment

None, as this report is for information only.

Public Sector Equality Duties

- 8a) Before making a decision, section 149 Equality Act 2010 requires that each decision-maker considers the need to promote equality for persons with the following “protected characteristics”: age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation. Each decision-maker must, therefore, have due regard to the need to:
- i) Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct prohibited under the Equality Act 2010.
 - ii) Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not share it. This involves having due regard, in particular, to the need to --
 - remove or minimise disadvantage suffered by persons who share a relevant protected characteristic;
 - take steps to meet the needs of persons who share a relevant protected characteristic that are different from the needs of people who do not share it (in relation to disabled people, this includes, in particular, steps to take account of disabled persons' disabilities);
 - encourage persons who share a protected characteristic to participate in public life or in any other activity in which participation by such persons is disproportionately low.
 - iii) Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not share it. This involves having due regard, in particular, to the need to –
 - tackle prejudice; and
 - promote understanding.

- 8b) The changes outlined in this report will enhance the Council's ability to discharge its duties under the Equality Act 2010.

Legal and Resource Implications

Legal

"There are no direct legal implications arising from this Report. The Council has a duty of equality towards its employees and service users and the information and proposals contained within the Report will work towards meeting that duty."

**(Legal advice provided by Husinara Jones for Service Director:
Legal and Democratic Services)**

Financial

(a) Revenue

Not applicable.

(b) Capital

Not applicable.

Land

Not applicable.

Personnel

None.

Appendices:

None.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985 Background Papers:

None.