

Report of Director of Resources and Housing
Report to Resources and Strategy Scrutiny Board

Date: 15th February 2021

Subject: Improving the experience and outcomes of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic colleagues at Leeds City Council

Are specific electoral wards affected? If yes, name(s) of ward(s):	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Has consultation been carried out?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Are there implications for equality and diversity and cohesion and integration?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Will the decision be open for call-in?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? If relevant, access to information procedure rule number: 10.4(3)	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No

Summary

1. Main issues

- In July 2020, the disproportionate impact of Covid 19 and the growing Black Lives Matter movement highlighted a broad range of issues for Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) colleagues working in the Council, some new and many longstanding.
- Our BAME Staff Network called for urgent action, and a chance to meet with CLT to share their experiences and work together to bring about positive change.
- The Council's strong track record on inclusion and commitment to fairness and equality is clear. The call to action from BAME colleagues has provided a further opportunity to reflect on how far we have come, and play a strong and visible role as a lead employer on this agenda.
- Scrutiny Board has asked for an update. This report outlines the renewed commitment made by the council and the initial joint action plan that has been created.
- Thoughts relating to longer term plans and priorities for 2021/22 are also shared.

2. Best Council Plan Implications (click [here](#) for the latest version of the Best Council Plan)

- Our [People Strategy 2020-25](#) sets out our ambition to be the Best Place to Work with a clear focus on creating a great all round employee experience for all staff,

with the support of their leaders and managers working in a positive organisational culture, driven by our council values.

- Inclusion sits at the heart of our People Strategy – we strive to ensure that all employees can be their best and are treated fairly.

3. Resource Implications

- The Council employs 2065 BAME employees (December 2020), which represents 14% of the council's overall workforce. At senior levels in the council, 11% of colleagues identify as BAME. The overall representation (at different grades) varies across our directorates.

Recommendations

- a) Resources and Strategy Scrutiny Board is asked to:
- I. Note the contents of this report.
 - II. Note the Joint Commitment and Activity Plan that has been created to support this work.
 - III. Receive further updates and reports as this important work progresses.

1. Purpose of this report

- 1.1 To provide Resources and Strategy Scrutiny Board with an update on the joint commitment from Corporate Leadership Team and our BAME Staff Network to improve the work experience and outcomes for BAME colleagues at Leeds City Council.

2. Background information

- 2.1 The BAME Staff Network issued a position statement and call to action in July 2020. Since then, Corporate Leadership Team have collectively met with BAME colleagues on three occasions, initially to listen to experiences, concerns and challenges, and more recently, to build action plans and monitor progress.
- 2.3 The BAME Staff Network have conducted a survey of BAME colleagues in the council. The results will be shared in February 2021 – 800 employees responded. This will be complemented by further focus groups to reach out to as many staff as possible. We will continue to seek out and use staff feedback to refine our understanding and response.
- 2.4 Capturing a 'single view' to represent all BAME staff is a flawed notion, and there is no substitute for on the ground engagement with as many individuals as possible. Everyone is different, and has their own unique set of experiences to share. Our BAME Staff Network, however, does act as a representative group on behalf of the BAME staff community, and is in touch with how many BAME colleagues are currently feeling.

3. Main issues

3.1 The Joint Commitment and Activity Plan

3.1.1 A Joint Commitment to stand against all forms of racism and inequality in our council and our city has been agreed between Corporate Leadership Team and the BAME Staff Network. This has support and endorsement from the Leader of the Council, and can be viewed [here](#).

3.1.2 The commitment to all BAME colleagues is to:

- Do more to listen to and understand your real lived experiences at work
- Not shy away from uncomfortable and challenging conversations, nor ignore hard truths
- Do all we can to eliminate racism and inequality – wherever we find it
- Deliver immediate and long term change by creating the plan together, and keeping your issues high on the agenda
- Expect everyone in the council to play their part – this is a whole #TeamLeeds effort, and there will be allies right across the organisation working with you for change
- Take a zero tolerance approach to racism in the workplace and within the communities we serve, taking all allegations of racism seriously. We will challenge and address inappropriate behaviour.

3.1.3 The impact and outcomes we aim to achieve include:

- Trust across the organisation to speak up
- Better progression and development
- A more representative workforce
- Reduced racism and a better everyday experience.

3.1.4 A short term activity plan has been agreed, and this has ensured that early and important action is being taken. It is directly based on the feedback from BAME colleagues and has guided work at corporate level and also at local service level. A Task and Finish group has been in place to oversee this work, and positive progress is being made.

3.1.5 Black History Month and Wear Red Day (Show Racism the Red Card) in autumn 2020 provided valuable opportunities to highlight our work and create cross council awareness and engagement.

3.1.6 Our activity plan themes are shown in the table below.

Areas covered in our jointly agreed activity plan	
Each Director to take personal responsibility for action across their services, based on the lived experiences of BAME colleagues in their teams. This will be backed by visible support from Members.	To show that we have strong leadership from the top and action takes place in all teams to improve the everyday experience for all BAME colleagues.

Share the CLT/BAME Joint statement and activity plan far and wide	To put BAME issues at the top of our priority list, and keep it there. Making sure the message and expectations get through.
Lead an urgent review to look into the experiences of BAME staff who raise claims of racism (including the Grievance process)	So that we are confident that all cases are taken seriously and we improve the support people get in these circumstances. We want to ensure people feel safe to speak out, and trust the organisation when they do.
Take a zero tolerance approach to racism in the workplace	To reduce the level of racism that staff experience, and to send a strong message that we will not tolerate any forms of abuse towards our staff.
Work with the network to monitor the impact of service reviews on the BAME community	To check how BAME staff and citizens are affected by council wide and directorate level service reviews, and make sure we consider the full equality implications of any proposed changes.
Conduct a survey with all BAME staff in the council	To give all 2000+ BAME colleagues across the council a chance to have a say on life at the council, and hear more valuable lived experiences to shape our work.
Implement checks to ensure Covid Risk Assessments are happening for BAME colleagues	The BAME network has helped to develop the risk assessment tool and its implementation – to make sure that it is being used at the right time and in the right way and is helping to protect BAME staff.
Create more diverse and representative recruitment and selection panels	To make sure our panels are a diverse mix of people and this facilitates fairness in decisions. It will also send a positive message to applicants to help develop trust.
Explore bringing anonymised shortlisting into our recruitment and selection process (this is where personal information is withheld from candidate applications)	To see how it could help us to reduce any discrimination and bias in the initial shortlisting stage.
Increase the number of BAME colleagues who take on the role of 'decision makers' in formal meetings and casework.	So that decision makers in our disciplinary, grievance and appeals process are more representative.
Build a strong and active network of Allies across the organisation	So that non-BAME colleagues are seen to stand alongside BAME colleagues and work together for positive change.
Review the information that we produce relating to BAME workforce issues, in all aspects of employment.	So we have the best dataset so that we can track the progress we are making. We want to report at a more granular level, monitoring outcomes for all the different groups that make up the BAME community.
Review progression and development opportunities for BAME staff	To assess what the council currently has on offer and how good the take up and representation is for BAME colleagues, but also to listen to ideas around what more we can do in this area – from work placements, apprenticeships and new entry levels to management and senior leadership.
Deliver inclusion events and training throughout the year, and be confident that it is reaching all teams.	To raise the awareness, understanding of all staff. To ensure that all staff act as strong ambassadors around inclusion, and have the knowledge and skills they need.
Work with and learn from others	To draw on the expertise, support and resources of partner organisations, and others with this shared endeavour - locally, regionally and beyond.

3.2 Taking this work forward – future plans and approach

- 3.2.1 Whilst the activity plan above has helped to deliver immediate actions, there is clearly a longer term programme of work required. To aid this longer term work, the BAME Staff Network have put forward a draft 2021/22 Plan. Corporate Leadership Team will continue to act as sponsors, and appropriate governance arrangements are being discussed. Once finalised, the plan and delivery approach can be shared with Scrutiny.
- 3.2.2 All of the work from the initial and immediate plan that we have been using to date, will be integrated into the new longer term version, as appropriate.
- 3.2.3 The results of the BAME staff survey (due in February) will give us further insight around the everyday experiences of our staff. Listening events at service level will also continue.
- 3.2.4 In December, the West Yorkshire and Harrogate Health and Care partnership released [the report findings](#) of an independent review into health inequalities due to Covid19, and the impact on BAME communities and colleagues. There are recommendations which relate to workforce and the wider community. The Council is currently setting out its own contribution and next steps, and there are strong connections to our internal LCC BAME Network plan.
- 3.2.5 Leeds City Council has joined a number of local authorities in pioneering a new Social Care Workforce Race Equality Standard (WRES). This will help us explore whether or not they are fully achieving race equality in the workplace. A key element of the WRES will be a focus on data analysis and measuring impact to drive improvement for our workforce. There is potential for this work to inform our evidence based approach to change across all areas of the council, not just in social care.
- 3.2.6 Leeds City Council also continues to engage with its partners, including the Anchor Institutions, the Health & Social Care Academy, NHS and other networks, to share its policy and practice, learn from others and augment its impact across the city and its communities.

4 Corporate considerations

4.1 Consultation and engagement

- 4.1.1 Listening to the lived experiences of all BAME colleagues is fundamental to driving positive change. As set out in the joint commitment, all members of the workforce will be expected to play their role too.

4.2 Equality and diversity / cohesion and integration

- 4.2.1 2020 has been an incredibly challenging year which has deeply affected BAME communities, including here in Leeds. It is vital that we continue to ensure that there remains a relentless focus deliver on our commitment as a council to improve the experiences of our BAME workforce.

4.3 Council policies and the Best Council Plan

4.3.1 Inclusion underpins the delivery of the Best Council Plan, our People Strategy 2020-25 and Best Place to Work ambitions.

4.4 Resources, procurement and value for money

4.4.1 The business case for inclusion and diversity is stronger than ever. It directly impacts on team performance and creativity, service reputation and reach, relationships with communities and partners, talent attraction and retention. There are clear benefits for getting it right, and significant consequences and lost opportunities for not doing so.

4.5 Legal implications, access to information, and call-in

4.5.1 There are no legal implications related to this report.

4.6 Risk management

4.6.1 A stronger accountability and governance framework is currently being developed to support delivery in 2021/22.

5 Recommendations

5.1 Resources and Strategy Scrutiny Board is asked to:

- I. Note the contents of this report.
- II. Note the Joint Commitment and Activity Plan that has been created to support this work.
- III. Receive further updates and reports as this important work progresses.

6 Background documents¹

6.1 None.

¹ The background documents listed in this section are available to download from the council's website, unless they contain confidential or exempt information. The list of background documents does not include published works.