

**AGENDA ITEM**

**REPORT TO CABINET**

**14 FEBRUARY 2019**

**REPORT OF PEOPLE  
SELECT COMMITTEE**

## **CABINET DECISION**

**Lead Cabinet Member – Leader – Councillor Bob Cook**

### **SCRUTINY REVIEW OF UNDER-REPRESENTATION OF BME COMMUNITIES IN THE SBC WORKFORCE**

1. Summary

The attached report presents the outcomes of the People Select Committee's review of Under-representation of BME Communities in the SBC Workforce.

2. Recommendations

The Committee recommend that:

- 1) Further work be undertaken to investigate and follow-up on undeclared ethnicity of Council staff, ensuring clarity around why the Council is requesting ethnicity data and what it will be used for, and providing a paper copy of the equality monitoring form for those staff not within a traditional office base.
- 2) Discussions be held at Senior Management level to understand variances of BME representation across directorates and encourage shared corporate responsibility in increasing workforce diversity. Consideration be given to directorate-specific Action Plans to identify and promote potential employment opportunities to the BME community.
- 3) Senior Management should continue to periodically promote all Council staff forums (including the BME Staff Forum) and take positive action to ensure Officers are supported to attend and engage.
- 4) Interview evaluation be developed to allow any Council job applicant to comment on the interview process (organisation, documentation, interview panel, questions, etc.) which may identify areas for improvement.
- 5) To increase awareness of the Council, what it provides, and potential routes for employment (including apprenticeships, work placements, etc.), SBC promote itself as a diverse employer across a large and varied range of services through multiple mediums (e.g. via social media, in schools / colleges, at targeted job fairs, with established BME community groups).
- 6) A poster / social media campaign be developed (similar to 'Be a Councillor') to promote the diversity of the Council's staff and the roles they undertake.

- 7) The responses from BME staff to the Employee Survey 2018 are explored, particularly around opportunities to learn, develop and progress.
- 8) Subject to a review of who is responsible for each identified action, a final draft BME Staff Forum Action Plan be endorsed by the Council, and the proposed report on progress of this Action Plan be shared with the People Select Committee.

3. Reasons for the Recommendation(s)/Decision(s)

The report presents the findings of the scrutiny review of Under-representation of BME Communities in the SBC Workforce which was part of the 2018-2019 scrutiny work programme.

4. Members' Interests

Members (including co-opted Members) should consider whether they have a personal interest in any item, as defined in **paragraphs 9 and 11** of the Council's code of conduct and, if so, declare the existence and nature of that interest in accordance with and/or taking account of **paragraphs 12 - 17** of the code.

Where a Member regards him/herself as having a personal interest, as described in **paragraph 16** of the code, in any business of the Council he/she must then, **in accordance with paragraph 18** of the code, consider whether that interest is one which a member of the public, with knowledge of the relevant facts, would reasonably regard as so significant that it is likely to prejudice the Member's judgement of the public interest and the business:-

- affects the members financial position or the financial position of a person or body described in **paragraph 17** of the code, or
- relates to the determining of any approval, consent, licence, permission or registration in relation to the member or any person or body described in **paragraph 17** of the code.

A Member with a personal interest, as described in **paragraph 18** of the code, may attend the meeting but must not take part in the consideration and voting upon the relevant item of business. However, a member with such an interest may make representations, answer questions or give evidence relating to that business before the business is considered or voted on, provided the public are also allowed to attend the meeting for the same purpose whether under a statutory right or otherwise (**paragraph 19** of the code).

Members may participate in any discussion and vote on a matter in which they have an interest, as described in **paragraph 18** of the code, where that interest relates to functions of the Council detailed in **paragraph 20** of the code.

**Disclosable Pecuniary Interests**

It is a criminal offence for a member to participate in any discussion or vote on a matter in which he/she has a disclosable pecuniary interest (and where an appropriate dispensation has not been granted) **paragraph 21** of the code.

Members are required to comply with any procedural rule adopted by the Council which requires a member to leave the meeting room whilst the meeting is discussing a matter in which that member has a disclosable pecuniary interest (**paragraph 22** of the code).

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#### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The Committee recommend that:

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## DETAIL

1. Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council (SBC) has been working for a number of years to increase the representation of the BME community in its workforce. It is a stated aim of the Council's People Strategy that it wants to 'recruit and retain a diverse and talented workforce'. SBC seek to have a workforce that reflects the diversity of its residents, customers and stakeholders, and recognises that promoting equality benefits public services for all.
2. The Council monitors the workforce profile regularly and completes an annual Workforce Equality Information Report as part of its work to assess the effectiveness of its actions to increase the diversity of its workforce, and also to meet its duty under the Equality Act 2010. The annual Workforce Equality report forms part of the Council's broader duty to promote equality under the Act, and provides a summary and analysis of SBCs workforce against protected characteristics.
3. The workforce in the annual report is part of a range of management information about SBCs workforce which is considered by the Council's Senior Management Team, as well as other relevant stakeholders (e.g. Trade Unions, Councillors and Human Resources). In the latest report covering the period April 2016 – March 2017, the number of BME employees as at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2017 was 74 (2% of the workforce) – this remains fairly constant compared to 2016 (72 employees; 2% of the workforce). The report also shows that 2% of new starters declared themselves from a BME origin. These statistics show that the SBC workforce is under-represented by the BME community as 5% of the population of Stockton-on-Tees are BME (31<sup>st</sup> March 2017).
4. SBC continues to promote vacancies within the BME community through Community Engagement and supports the retention of its BME workforce, particularly through the BME staff forum. However, it is hoped that further progress can be made, with the aim for the diversity of the Council's workforce to be representative of the diversity of the Borough.
5. It was proposed, and subsequently agreed, that the Committee assess the Council's performance against the 'Roadmap to Success', recommended to organisations in the independent McGregor-Smith Review (2017) – *Race in the workplace* to assist leaders to move positively towards a more diverse workforce:
  - 1) Gather Data
  - 2) Take Accountability
  - 3) Raise Awareness
  - 4) Examine Recruitment
  - 5) Change Processes
6. The Committee took evidence from representatives of the Council's HR department, as well as Community Engagement Officers and the Chair of the Council's BME Staff Forum. To gain a wider perspective on issues around workforce diversity, the Committee also received contributions from the Catalyst Multicultural Forum (reflecting on responses to questions circulated to BME groups represented on the Forum), the Big Committee (formerly Stockton Youth Assembly) and the North East Ambulance Service.
7. In addition to the information received at formal Committee meetings, the Committee Vice-Chair also attended the latest BME Staff Forum quarterly meeting in December 2018 to

further discuss aspects in relation to this review, in particular the draft BME Staff Forum Action Plan.

## **COMMUNITY IMPACT IMPLICATIONS**

8. The recommendations proposed as part of this review aim to build on and enhance the measures previously identified by the Council and its BME Staff Forum to create a workforce that is representative of the diversity of the Borough's working population. Engagement with the BME community through a variety of mediums is central to this objective, particularly around increasing awareness of what the Council does and what employment opportunities and career pathways it can offer – this in turn has the potential for more BME individuals to consider SBC as an 'employer of choice'.

## **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

9. Any future work undertaken to promote the Council's role, employment opportunities / career pathways, and workforce diversity (as identified within this review) will need to be planned and undertaken in respect of existing resources.

## **LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

10. From a legal perspective, the recommendations identified as part of this review will assist in the Council's duty to promote equality under the Equality Act 2010.

## **RISK ASSESSMENT**

11. This review is categorised as low to medium risk. Existing management systems and daily routine activities are sufficient to control and reduce risk.

## **COUNCIL PLAN POLICY PRINCIPLES AND PRIORITIES**

12. The review will contribute to the following Council Plan 2018-21 theme and objective:

### Our Council

- Continue to attract, develop and support diverse, capable and resilient employees.
  - Further enhance the diversity of our workforce through recruitment and retention of under-represented groups.

## **CORPORATE PARENTING IMPLICATIONS**

13. There are no direct implications in the report.

## **CONSULTATION INCLUDING WARD/COUNCILLORS**

14. The Committee have received evidence as set out in the final report of the People Select Committee.

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Education related?: No

Background Papers: None

Ward(s) and Ward Councillors: Recommendations included in this review are not Ward-specific.

Property: n/a