

People Select Committee

A meeting of People Select Committee was held on Monday, 19th November, 2018.

Present: Cllr Jean O'Donnell (Chair) Cllr Louise Baldock (Vice Chair) Cllr Sonia Bailey, Cllr Gillian Corr, Cllr Stefan Houghton, Cllr Barbara Inman, Cllr Eileen Johnson,

Officers: Beccy Brown, Jill Douglas (HR), Haleem Ghafoor, Roisin McKenzie (LS), Gary Woods, Marianne Sleeman (DCE)

Also in attendance:

Apologies: Cllr Elsie Hampton, Mrs Neelam un Kabir, Katie Slack

PEO Evacuation Procedure

42/18

The evacuation procedure was noted.

PEO Declarations of Interest

43/18

There were no interests declared.

PEO Minutes of the meeting held on 17th September 2018

44/18

Consideration was given to the draft minutes of the meetings held on 17th September 2018.

AGREED:

That the minutes of the meetings held on 17th September 2018 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

PEO Scrutiny Review of Under-representation of BME Communities in the SBC Workforce

45/18

Members received information regarding the Scrutiny Review of Under-representation of BME Communities in the SBC Workforce from representatives of HR, Community Engagement and the BME Staff Forum. In addition to the Council's Workforce Equality Information Report 2016-2017 and the draft BME Staff Forum Action Plan 2018-2019 (circulated to Committee Members prior to this meeting), a presentation was given, the main points of which included:

- A key objective within the Council Plan was to continue to attract, develop and support diverse, capable and resilient employees. This had been translated into an HR target, namely, for the Council to have a workforce that is representative of the working population in the Borough.
- This commitment is something the Council believes is the right thing to do, and recognise the many benefits in achieving this. However, despite numerous previous attempts to increase workforce diversity, the proportion of BME staff compared to the overall staff numbers remains static.

- Corporate Workforce Data showed that, as of the 30th September 2018, SBC employed 73 (declared) BME staff which represented 2.3% of the total workforce – however, 183 (6.4%) staff had not declared their ethnicity, so the actual number of BME staff may be higher. The Borough’s working population is 4.1% BME (according to the 2011 census) – as such, there would need to be around 130 BME staff at the Council to be representative of the overall working population of Stockton-on-Tees.
- Ethnicity by Council directorate and by grade was provided.
- In terms of recruitment, the number of Council job applications submitted by (declared) BME candidates from 1st October 2017 – 30th September 2018 was good in relation to overall applications (5.9%), as were the numbers of (declared) BME candidates invited to interview (5.3%). However, the number of (declared) BME candidates actually appointed dropped to 1.9% in the same period. The Council have begun looking into the reasons for this.
- The ways in which the Council engages with the BME community regarding employment opportunities was shared. Officers acknowledged that more could be done via increased targeted work, though pressures on resources mean this is not always easy to undertake.
- Compulsory training was given to every Officer involved in recruitment but more in-depth training for managers was suggested.
- Regarding retention, consideration could be given to collecting data around progression of BME employees as an outcome of this scrutiny review.
- There were four Equality Staff Forums currently active within the Council who meet regularly and offer a great role in providing support and challenge to leaders.
- The Council’s BME Staff Forum refreshed its Terms of Reference and devised an Action Plan to tackle issues around increasing workforce diversity. All Members agreed it was a great opportunity to make a difference within the Council.
- As a result of the outcome of the recent SBC Employee Survey, the existing BME Staff Forum Action Plan may need to be amended.
- The BME Staff Forum plan to take a more active role in ‘Show Racism the Red Card’. The Forum has a wealth of expertise and want the Council to use this to aid diversity.

Main issues discussed were as follows:

- Members queried if anything could be done with colleges to improve employability and readiness for work. The Council does offer additional help for people applying, and could look at how and when that support is provided. SBC Learning & Skills also provide good courses which help potential applicants, and are aware of Council vacancies.
- BME Staff Forum operates an environment where employees can share

issues within a safe place. There have been no reported concerns regarding any hate crime incidents towards BME staff.

- A diverse workforce helps provide quality services and increases understanding of other cultures.
- Backdrop of cuts to Council resources over recent years which has affected recruitment of any staff, whether of BME origin or not. Have withdrawn from job fairs due to staffing cuts.
- Could increase BME staff ratios, but they may not actually live in the Borough itself, so may not truly be representative of Stockton-on-Tees.
- Some BME communities aim much higher than SBC and even the Borough itself, but are these communities aware of what the range of Council services and job roles (particularly professional occupations)? Need Council to be a realistic option for BME job seekers.
- Why do some people not declare their ethnicity? Could be a variety of reasons, but hope that people do not think that the Council would misuse this information. Clarity around the reasons why the Council request this may help, as would the provision of paper forms where employees may not have access to a computer (e.g. staff away from a traditional office-base).
- Officers not aware of any reported criticism of SBC not being representative of the Borough, but are nevertheless committed to increasing workforce diversity. SBC diversity no worse than most other Local Authorities.

AGREED

That the information be noted.

**PEO
46/18** **Work Programme 2018-2019**

Consideration was given to the People Select Committee Work Programme 2018-2019. The next Committee meeting will take place on the 17th December 2018.

It was noted that, as part of the ongoing Scrutiny Review of Under-representation of BME Communities in the SBC Workforce, the Chair and Vice-Chair had been invited to the next BME Staff Forum on the 13th December 2018. Feedback on this visit will be provided at the next Committee meeting in December 2018.

AGREED:

That the Work Programme be noted.

**PEO
47/18** **Chair's Update**

The Chair had nothing further to report.