

EQUALITIES PANEL

26 January 2021
16.00-18.00pm

Present:

Chair: Suzanne Hemingway

Councillors: Collis, Thittala, Porrer,

Public Members: Graham Lewis, Judith Margolis, Orsola Rath Spivack, Susan Wan,

Officers: Naomi Armstrong, Lesley-Ann George, Ariadne Henry and Alistair Wilson

FOR THE INFORMATION OF THE COUNCIL

21/1/EP Welcome, Introductions and Apologies

Apologies were received from:

Elected members: Councillors Jennifer Page-Croft and Martin Smart

Public members: Raheela Rehman

Staff members: Joe Obe

21/2/EP Declarations of Interest

No interests were declared.

21/3/EP Minutes of Previous Meeting and Matters Arising

The minutes of the meeting of the 7th July 2020 were approved and signed as an accurate record.

21/4/EP Public questions

There were no public questions.

The ordering of items on the agenda was changed to ensure that Cllr Thittala who proposed the Black Lives Matter motion could be present for this item however, for ease of the reader, these minutes will follow the order of the published agenda.

21/5/EP Black Lives Matter motion

Helen Crowther, Equality and Anti-Poverty Officer, provided a presentation on the Black Lives Matter motion and progress of the council in meeting some actions in the motion. She shared:

This was a cross-Party motion agreed at Full Council on 16th July. Councillor Thittala proposed the motion and Councillor Porrer seconded it – the councillors are both members of the Equalities Panel.

The motion expresses support for Black Lives Matter and acknowledges that much more is needed to be done to tackle structural and individual racism and welcomes the council's role as a public leader to spearhead this work locally.

Updates on progress relating to actions in the motion include:

All councillors are required to attend an Equality and Diversity briefing in the first year of their term and two dates were provided for councillors in 2020. The briefing was also recorded. In addition to this, councillors attended Gypsy, Roma, and Traveller cultural awareness training.

The motion shares that the council will identify actions to increase recruitment and retention of BAME staff as part of its next Single Equality Scheme and help promote voices of BAME staff. The Equality in Employment item provided an update related to recruitment and retention. A BAME staff group has been set up as a safe space for BAME staff to share their experiences of being from ethnic minority backgrounds and raise any issues. A separate meeting was also held for all staff who felt impacted by issues raised by the Black Lives Matter protests and George Floyd's death in the summer. A further meeting for all staff on race equality would take place on 5th February, which would also be an

opportunity to consult staff on how the council can promote race equality as part of its new equalities strategy.

The Director of Public Health was due to present a report at the Environment and Community Scrutiny Committee on 28th January on the impact of Covid-19 on BAME communities in Cambridge. The report going to Committee demonstrates that Bangladeshi, Indian and Pakistani communities are disproportionately impacted when looking at contraction rates from September to 27 December (13.8% of those tested positive for coronavirus where they make up 4.8% of the population according to the last Census). Hospital data shows that BAME people are more likely to be admitted but that there is no difference in death rates compared to White British people.

The council is working with the Food Poverty Alliance to raise awareness of how people in food poverty have specific religious, health or cultural requirements. A meeting was held with Cambridge City Foodbank, Cambridge Ethnic Community Forum, and the Karim Foundation. From this meeting the Foodbank agreed to look into if there are further organisations supporting BAME communities who might issue food vouchers and consider the diversity of food on offer at the Foodbank.

The Office for the Police and Crime Commissioner has been asked to report on the measures to eliminate the disproportionality of BAME people affected by the use of stop and search. There was a Business Coordination Board meeting held by the police in December at which it was announced that there will be an Independent Use of Force Scrutiny Group. The minutes of the meeting discussing the action in detail were still to be published.

Cambridge Ethnic Community Forum has been commissioned by the council to produce a race equality toolkit by the end of February.

Cambridge City Council organised a meeting on 22nd October in order to enhance dialogue between existing local BAME community groups, the City Council, and other local public service organisations. The meeting discussed policing and stop and search, how we celebrate different cultures as a city, and the disproportionate impact of Covid-19 on BAME communities.

One action arising from the 22 October meeting was for the police to share details of the Independent Use of Force Scrutiny Group with the community group members who may wish to be involved. Another action was for Cambridge City Council to explore further means to celebrate Black cultures in its annual events like the Mela and/ or arrange something for August to mark the abolition of slavery.

Panel members were invited to ask questions and/ or provide feedback on how the Council may further work on actions in the motion:

One Panel Member said that conversations on race equality needed to be kept open and that the council could also consider how younger voices are heard .

A Panel member and Councillor who attended the Gypsy, Roma, and Traveller cultural awareness training said that it was excellent.

Panel members shared it was really important to keep chasing the police to more fully understand outcomes from their meeting in December and what they are doing about disproportionality in stop and search rates for BAME people compared to White British people.

A Panel member asked how the council is communicating the information from the report with BAME communities and commented on the importance of taking action to support the communities given that 13.8% of positive cases of coronavirus were from Bangladeshi, Indian and Pakistani people. They asked if we are awaiting further detail on this before action is taken.

Building on action taken around the motion, it was suggested that the council also meet with and consult voluntary and community sector groups representing Asian communities, especially given the information that Bangladeshi, Indian and Pakistani communities are disproportionately likely to test positive for coronavirus.

In response to these comments and questions, officers said the following:

Helen Crowther will talk to the Children and Young People's Participation Service around how we may consult with young people on promoting race equality and tackling discrimination in the city. Suzanne Hemingway, Strategic Director, commented that in the October meeting with the public sector and community groups, there were people from a range of ages representing the community groups. It was also helpful for community groups to learn more about what the other community groups work on.

Helen Crowther confirmed that the council will continue to ask the police for further information on action taken around disproportionality of stop and search for BAME communities.

The information from the Public Health report will be shared with voluntary and community sector groups supporting BAME people, including Cambridge Ethnic Community Forum and their member organisations.

Ariadne Henry, Community Development Officer, shared that herself and two other officers in Community Services have been working with Bangladeshi and South Asian communities throughout the pandemic to share Public Health messaging. Learning from Peterborough City Council is that word of mouth is the best means of communicating with ethnic minority groups. Some ways we have been keeping in touch with communities include regular conversations with the mosques, Gurdwara and members of the Hindu community, and bi-weekly communications with Asian women's groups.

Suzanne Hemingway and Helen Crowther agreed that the council will consult with voluntary and community sector groups supporting Asian communities as part of the process of consulting on the next Single Equality Scheme.

21/6/EP Equality in Employment End of Year Workforce Update: April 2019 - March 2020

Deborah Simpson, Head of Human Resources, shared key information with the Panel from the Equality in Employment End of Year Workforce Report:

- At 31st March 2020, 48.49% of our staff were female compared to 51.51% male. This has been consistent since 2016 and is different from other local authorities, particularly unitary and county level where typically their workforce profile is 70% female.
- There was no gender pay reporting for 2020, as this was not required by the government due to the pandemic, but we shall report on this in 2021.
- 45 to 54 is the most common age group working for the council.
- 44.62% of the workforce has worked at the council for 10 years or more.
- 7.54% of staff declare themselves as BAME – compared to the council's target of 9.5%
- 7.13% of staff declared themselves as disabled – compared to the council's target of 7.5%
- The targets for proportion of BAME and disabled staff as a percentage of the workforce will remain the same. The 2021 Census will be a useful benchmark to set these targets going forward.
- BAME representation has increased across the pay bands and is now higher in Bands 3, 4, 6 and 8 than in 2019.
- The report identifies actions the council has undertaken to help improve representation of BAME staff members, including by helping a BAME staff group to set up and commissioning unconscious bias training for Council staff.
- Cambridge City Council continues to be a Disability Confident employer
- An increasing number of staff declare their sexuality as lesbian, gay, bisexual or questioning – 4.47% (up by 12 people since 2019).

- The council ran Management Development Programme training, and this was attended by a higher percentage of disabled people and women than the percentage of disabled people and women in the workforce profile.
- In relation to recruitment, the number of applications received from disabled people as a percentage of all applications received was 10.72%. This is an increase of 4.25% from the previous year. For BAME people this was 29.22%, (an increase of 8.69% from the previous year) and analysis shows that we are attracting BAME people's applications to roles in a wide variety of service areas. The percentage of BAME people's applications that were successful was 12.64%.
- 12% of promotions were from individuals declaring themselves as from a BAME background – up by 5% on 2019.
- Most apprentices are male (24 compared to 14 female) and 10% of apprentices are BAME, and 13% have a disability.

Panel members provided feedback on the report and asked some questions:

- Three Panel members shared that they felt the report was much easier to read than it has been in previous years due to the use of graphics.
- One Panel member asked if it was possible to look at staff take-up of staff parental leave.
- The Panel were interested to know more about the different ways that the council supports flexible working, including during the pandemic.
- A Panel member shared that trends related to workforce representation were encouraging and asked how the council will set its targets going forward and how ambitious the council ultimately plans to be in this.

In relation to queries on flexible working, Suzanne Hemingway, Strategic Director, shared that employees will be working differently following learning from the pandemic in relation to flexible working practices. Deborah Simpson, Head of Human Resources, reflected that the pandemic had led to significant changes in flexible working and managers have been encouraged to support their staff in this. Due to this support from managers, the council has had very little need e to furlough staff with childcare responsibilities.

In answer to the other queries above, Deborah Simpson said:

- The council will be able to report on take-up of shared parental leave in its Equality in Employment report from April 2021, as the new HR system shall make this possible.
- The targets for representation of BAME people and disabled people as a percentage of the workforce will be reconsidered related to data from the 2021 Census. The council is quietly ambitious and optimistic that it will be able to reach current targets.
- In relation to BAME people's representation, TUPE transfers have masked some progress towards meeting targets. TUPE involves transferring staff to another organisation whilst retaining similar terms of employment. There have been TUPE transfers of staff from services with a higher proportion of people from BAME backgrounds but increases in BAME representation in other services has helped maintain the overall BAME representation in the Council's workforce.

Deborah Simpson asked the Panel members for feedback on what more the council might do to help meet the action in the Black Lives Matter motion that "requests that the City Council reviews the Single Equality Scheme, prior to a reaffirmation of the scheme with particular and specific reference to the employment, recruitment and retention of staff with particular emphasis on enhancing consultation and representation of BAME staff". One Panel member commented that it was useful to hear that BAME people and disabled people made up a higher proportion as apprentices than their proportion in the overall workforce, and that it would be helpful to note their progression from the apprenticeship in relation to their retention at the council. Deborah Simpson said this was a useful observation and something the council can consider in its reporting.

21/7/EP Single Equality Scheme 2021 to 2024 consultation

A presentation was delivered by Helen Crowther, Equality and Anti-Poverty Officer, on plans for the development of and consultation for the new Single Equality Scheme (SES). She shared:

- The SES provides equality objectives over a 3-year period and helps the council to meet the Public Sector Equality Duty obligation that the council publish its equality objectives at least every 4 years. The next SES will be going to the Environment and Community Scrutiny Committee on 1st July 2021 for approval.

- Consultation is being undertaken with Equalities Panel members (this meeting), race equality meetings with staff (one was held in June 2020 and the next will be February 2021), staff members part of the Joint Equalities Group, meetings with heads of service, and meetings with voluntary and community sector (VCS) organisations supporting equality groups. The VCS organisations have also been involved in helping the council develop an Inclusion and Engagement Questionnaire – the findings of which will inform the SES and potentially the VCS organisations' own work. A meeting will be held with the VCS organisations about the results.
- Initial priorities for the next SES are:
 - Partnership working
 - Taking into account how intersectionality shapes need and also experiences of discrimination. For instance, relating the SES to the council's Anti-Poverty Strategy, as some equality groups are more likely to experience poverty than others and experience poverty in different ways
 - Responding to inequalities related to or exacerbated by Covid-19
 - Reflect concerns around race equality
- Some inequalities related to or exacerbated by Covid-19 that shall be considered in the new SES include:
 - Issues in accessing healthcare not related to coronavirus and knock-on impacts of this
 - How South Asian groups are more vulnerable to coronavirus
 - Worsened mental health
 - Digital exclusion
- Examples of issues relating to equality that can be identified by cursory analysis of responses to the Inclusion and Engagement questionnaire at 18th January (the questionnaire was due to close on 1st February):
 - In many responses to the question on what the best thing about Cambridge is, people mentioned ethnic diversity of the city. In responses about the worst thing about Cambridge many people mentioned inequality and homelessness.
 - When asked how council services might be made more welcoming the most common answers related to difficulties people have had

in navigating our website and options given when contacting the council by phone.

- Related to health and wellbeing, issues emerging from responses were around missed appointments or treatment for health conditions other than coronavirus during the pandemic, and answers from respondents suggested that mental health and isolation and loneliness has worsened during the pandemic.
- Relating to safety, half of those who experienced domestic abuse did not report it to the police. Also, a quarter of respondents had experienced bullying, harassment, physical or verbal abuse, or threats related to age, disability, gender, ethnicity, religion, sex, or sexual orientation.
- The Panel was asked to note that the questionnaire's findings are not representative: they will give indications as to some of the experiences and issues that some people from different equality groups have in the city. Most people completing the questionnaire did so after seeing it on social media and are from higher socio-economic backgrounds. Some of the findings in the questionnaire may support national data on issues experienced by different equality groups – demonstrating which national issues are also experienced locally.

A Mentimeter question was asked of Panel members “What do you think the top priorities should be for the next Single Equality Scheme?” to help generate the discussion consulting with Panel members on the next SES. The most common five answers were: Inclusion, intersectionality, race equality, mental health, and poverty.

Panel members were then invited to provide feedback on their views around what needs to be prioritised in the new scheme:

- Panel members were concerned that school closures have exacerbated existing educational inequalities. The Panel wanted to know where families without WiFi or computers can go for support.
- Given that the council is not a mental health provider, the council was asked what impact it may have on improving people's mental health and wellbeing. A Panel member shared that there may be many different things that make a difference to mental wellbeing and working in partnership with other organisations will be key to this for the council.

- The council was asked what work is being done to tackle loneliness most likely to be experienced by older people, as this is a large reason for older people having visited food hubs during the pandemic.
- A Panel member supported intersectionality as a priority and wondered if the new SES may further strengthen the council's work with mutual aid groups to pick up on numerous issues people have. Another member shared that the council has been working across services, groups and partnerships in a way it has never had to before to respond to issues relating to the pandemic and felt it would be positive if this were to continue.
- A staff member of the Panel who has worked in the community resilience team shared that they were worried that whilst extra support is available to help people during the pandemic, this may not continue beyond the pandemic when the need is still likely to be there – especially relating to people in poverty.
- Another Panel member expanded that there are people who have needed support during the pandemic who have never needed this before and who are likely to still need help after the pandemic is over.
- The Panel shared their concern for people with no recourse to public funds in this category. It was noted there is a lack of reliable data on the number of people with no recourse to public funds because people in this situation do not tend to contact public services, but there is a risk that the number of people in this category increases following the UK's departure from the EU if people do not have settled status.
- A Panel member said that the SES could consider children and young people who have been in care as a vulnerable group.

Council Officers responded to these comments:

- Suzanne Hemingway, Strategic Director, shared that the Cambridgeshire Digital Partnership could help families with no computers or WiFi. Moreover, if people do not have access to a means to engage with online learning at home, they can go into school.
- Helen Crowther, Equality and Anti-Poverty Officer, said that the council has been sharing information on how people can look after their mental health through their website and information on the #NowWereTalking campaign on social media. The #NowWereTalking campaign is part of

Cambridgeshire County Council's Campaign to End Loneliness, which is aimed to help reduce loneliness experienced by older people. Cambridge City Council has been supporting this campaign since before the pandemic.

- Many of the customers the council may be supporting with queries have mental health issues, and training is run for frontline staff to develop knowledge on mental health, communicating with people with different mental health issues, and where people can seek support for their mental health. The Council also supports people with mental health issues as part of its Tenancy Sustainment Service.

21/8/EP Any Other Business

Ariadne Henry, Community Development Officer and Panel member, asked that information on Holocaust Memorial Day events be circulated to Panel members.

21/9/EP Date of Next Meeting

6 July 2021.

The meeting ended at 18.00pm

CHAIR