

EMPLOYMENT MATTERS COMMITTEE

18 APRIL 2013

EQUALITIES WORKING GROUP UPDATE

Report from: Tricia Palmer, Assistant Director, Organisational Services

Author: Wayne Hemingway, Democratic Services Officer

Summary

This report informs the Committee of a recent meeting of the Equalities Working Group.

1. Budget and Policy Framework

1.1 The Equalities Working Group was set up by the Employment Matters Committee and any recommendations will be a matter for the Employment Matters Committee to decide.

2. Background

2.1 The Committee established a Race Equality Review Working Group in July 2008 to review the actions taken in response to the Race Equality Review and comment on further actions needed. The Working Group's terms of reference was subsequently amended to enable it to meet with the Black Workers Forum, the Disabled Workers Forum and other equalities groups as appropriate on a regular basis and the name of the Working Group was changed to the Equalities Working Group. The Working Group's membership currently consists of Councillors Avey, Carr, Christine Godwin and Iles.

2.2 The Equalities Working Group met on 25 March 2013 with the Black Workers Forum and the Disabled Workers Forum. The notes from this meeting are set out in Appendix 1 to this report for Members' information.

3. Advice and Analysis

3.1 The Working Group drew from it a number of issues to bring to the Committee's attention including a summary of progress from each of the Forums.

3.2 The Equalities Working Group discussed the Council's 2013 workplace equality submission to Stonewall in which the Council had moved up 36 places on the Equality Index.

3.3 The Working Group also discussed the Council's latest annual equality report required by the Equality Act 2010 ("Delivering Fair and Responsive Services"), as well as discussing the latest updates from the Forums.

4. Risk Management

4.1 The Council is keen to ensure that its workforce represents the community, which supports our aim to provide high quality and responsive services.

5. Consultation

5.1 The Equalities Working Group acts as a consultation mechanism to enable Members to discuss issues with various bodies across the Council.

6. Financial and Legal Implications

6.1 There are no financial implications arising from this report.

6.2 The meetings of the Working Group will enable the Council to comply with its equalities duties under the Equality Act 2010.

7. Recommendation

7.1 That the report be noted.

Lead officer contact

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Background papers

Delivering Fair and Responsive Services 2013/2014
<http://www.medway.gov.uk/pdf/Fair%20and%20Responsive%20Services%202013-14.pdf>

Equalities Working Group

Notes of discussion 25 March 2013, 6.30pm – 7.55pm, Meeting Room 9, Gun Wharf

In attendance:

Councillor Avey
Councillor Carr
Councillor Christine Godwin
Councillor Iles

Black Workers Forum (BWF)

Trish Gayle
Marsha Wrye

Disabled Workers Forum (DWF)

Elaine Mansfield
Ian Townsend

Officers:

Wayne Hemingway, Democratic Services Officer
Tricia Palmer, Assistant Director, Organisational Services
Susan Rydings, Corporate Strategy, Performance and Improvement Officer
Sandra Steel, Organisational Change Officer

1. Apologies for absence

Chris Codling (LGBT Forum)

2. Notes of last meeting

The notes of the meeting held on 22 October 2012 were agreed.

3. Introductions

All those present were introduced at the meeting.

4. Stonewall Workplace Equality Index Submission 2013

This report provided details on the results of the 2013 submission and provided information on where the council had improved and where further work was needed (the monitoring of workforce data, community engagement, staff engagement and career development). The Council had moved up a total of 36 places in the ranking and was now placed at 161/376 participants. It was noted that the points total required to be included within the Top 100 was 137 points and the Council had scored 118 points.

The Organisational Change Officer referred to Medway's managers' guide to supporting LGBT staff which had now been shared as good practice with other external organisations and regular articles in Headlines (staff newsletter). She noted, however, that only 13.4% of staff had provided their personal details on self-serve (the corporate HR / Payroll Self Service portal for Medway employees).

The Group discussed a number of issues including:

- How staff could be encouraged to provide their personal details on self-serve
 - That it be stressed that the Council was interested in this data collectively in terms of its future submissions to Stonewall
 - That Medway had no responsibility for staff where, for example, a disability was not declared, therefore, it was important to make such declarations
 - That providing incentives may increase the numbers of staff providing their personal details **Action Point TP/SS**
 - The need to demonstrate why it was important to provide personal details and how this would help staff.
- Proposals for community engagement **Action Point TP/Chairman**
- That a joint conference for 2013 between the three forums (BWF, DWF and LGBTF) would require some common themes **Action Point SS**
- A proposal from the Libraries Service to hold an event to promote the Forums
- How to encourage further participation from Medway's schools **Action Point TP/SS**
 - To ensure that schools bulletin includes equalities information
 - Whether Schools Governor training could include equalities training (including the Medway Governors Association)
 - That "bite-size" equalities information be provided for schools staff meetings.
- Further "lunchtime learning" sessions at Gun Wharf **Action Point TP/SS**
- The need to ensure that other Council sites (outside of schools) were included, eg Woodlands Centre (Gillingham).

5. Delivering Fair and Responsive Services

This report summarised Medway's annual equalities report: Delivering fair and responsive services which fulfilled the Council's requirement to publish an annual Equality Report (Equality Act 2010) setting out how it met its Equality Duty to:

- eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation
- advance equal opportunities
- foster good relations.

The report provided details of the Council's seven equality objectives together with key achievements. The report also provided demographic information for Medway drawn from the 2011 census and comparative data between Medway Council's workforce and Medway as a whole.

The Corporate Strategy, Performance and Improvement Officer informed the Group that there were a number of examples of success around these issues. She also referred to the changing face of Medway's service users with regard to the need for awareness of service provision.

Members discussed a range of issues including:

- The Council's workforce profile which was broadly similar to other Local Authorities
- Whether there was a need, for example, an Older Workers Forum and/or a Younger Workers Forum to reflect the Council's workforce.
- That the Council's Apprentices met on a monthly basis
- Examples of younger workers through Black History Month and the BWF's work with young offenders.

6. Summary of Progress

Disabled Workers Forum

The Forum had provided a written summary of recent activities and the Group discussed a range of issues including:

- That the "middle lift" at Gun Wharf was awaiting repair
- Car parking charges for blue badge holders with reference to recent issues at Medway Maritime Hospital
- How disabled residents may be affected by welfare benefit changes
- An update on the Disabled Residents Forum. It was noted that an initial meeting had been arranged for 8 April 2013.
- That the DWF leaflet had been updated and would be distributed soon.
- That the DWF had decided not to join the Business Disability Forum on financial grounds.
- That Medway Council was displaying banners on the highway including positive images of disabled people and black people.

Black Workers Forum

The Forum had provided a written summary of recent activities and the Group discussed a range of issues including:

- The UNISON Black Members Conference including a speech from Neville Lawrence
- The development of Black History Month
- The BWF's work with young offenders
- That the achievements of both the DWF and BWF be included in future annual equalities reports **Action point SR**

LGBT Forum

The Group discussed Idaho Day (International Day against homophobia and transphobia) on 17 May 2013 and further information was requested by the Chairman. **Action Point SS**

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