

## **EMPLOYMENT MATTERS COMMITTEE**

**20 NOVEMBER 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, Clarke, Christine Godwin and Wicks.

2.2 The Equalities Working Group met on 21 October 2013 with the Black Workers Forum, Disabled Workers Forum and LGBT Forum.

#### **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. The Assistant Director, Organisational Services stated that she was confident that this submission was stronger than in previous years and that considerable work had been put in to strengthening community engagement. She also stated that the Council had supported

Idaho (International Day against homophobia and transphobia) day by flying a flag at the Council building. An event had also taken place in Rochester called 'Picnic under the Rainbow'.

- 3.3 There was an update on the Equalities Conference and it was stated that last year the LGBT Forum had a conference entitled 'Be yourself at work' and that planning was now underway for a Conference for Spring 2014. The other Forums had requested that the Conference had a wider theme next time. An initial meeting had been held between the Forums earlier that day to plan for the event.
- 3.4 The Equalities Working Group also discussed Two Ticks Accreditation Scheme. This scheme was awarded to employers which were positive about employing disabled people including commitments to employ, keep and develop the abilities of disabled people. It was noted that the Council was required to renew its membership annually.
- 3.5 The Performance and improvement Officer circulated a summary report on the Equality Audit 2013 and referred to areas where the Council was doing well and other areas of potential improvement. The Equalities and Access Group would monitor the Action Plan which had been based on the outcome of the Equality Audit. The Equalities and Access Group included representative from each directorate.
- 3.6 The individual Forums also gave updates on action since the last meeting. This included efforts to increase participation in the Disabled Workers Forum and the LGBT Forum and the work of the Black Workers Forum with Rochester young offenders.
- 3.7 The notes are attached at appendix 1.

#### **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**

Wayne Hemingway  
Democratic Services  
T: 01634 332509  
E: [wayne.hemingway@medway.gov.uk](mailto:wayne.hemingway@medway.gov.uk)

**Background papers**

None



## **Equalities Working Group**

**Notes of discussion 21 October 2013, 6.30pm – 7.05pm, Meeting Room 8, Gun Wharf**

### **In attendance:**

Councillor Avey  
Councillor Christine Godwin  
Councillor Wicks

### **Black Workers Forum (BWF)**

Trish Gayle (TG)  
Ajit Kaur

### **Disabled Workers Forum (DWF)**

Elaine Mansfield

### **LGBT Forum (LGBT)**

Simon Harrington

### **Officers:**

Rosie Gunstone, Democratic Services Officer  
Susan Olney, Corporate Strategy, Performance and Improvement Officer (SO)  
Tricia Palmer, Assistant Director, Organisational Services (TP)

### **1. Apologies for absence**

Ian Townsend, Sandra Steel, Trish Gayle and Marsha Wrye.

### **2. Notes of last meeting**

The notes of the meeting held on 25 March 2013 were agreed.

### **3. Introductions**

All those present were introduced at the meeting.

### **4. Stonewall Workplace Quality Index Submission 2013**

The Assistant Director, Organisational Services updated the Group on the progress with the 2013 submission and stated that this was the third year of submitting. She was confident that the submission was stronger than in previous years and that considerable work had been put in to strengthening community engagement. A new Chairman for LGBT issues had been appointed and community groups including Metro, Healthwatch Medway, MEGAN CIC (Medway Engagement Group and Network) (who deal with LGBT mental health issues) had been working to champion the needs of LGBT staff. A lot of work had been done on an Equality Index and social housing had been involved in community work. On that basis the community score for the submission should be much stronger than before.

She stated that the Council had supported Idaho (International Day against homophobia and transphobia) day by flying a flag at the Council building. An event had also taken place in Rochester called 'Picnic under the Rainbow'.

Simon Harrington referred to good attendance at the 'Be yourself at work' conference although he said the response to the staff survey had been disappointing. Although the LGBT Forum had not been as involved as it could have been in 'Picnic under the Rainbow' he saw that as a stepping stone towards a future event such as a 'Pride' event.

## **5. Equalities Conference**

The Assistant Director, Organisational Services gave an update on the Equalities Conference and stated that last year the LGBT Forum had a conference entitled 'Be yourself at work' but planning was now underway for a Conference for Spring 2014 and the other Forums had requested that the Conference has a wider theme next time. An initial meeting had been held between the Forums earlier that day to plan for the event.

Simon Harrington referred to a potential contact for a speaker for the Conference who was James Walton who was the first person in the police force to have a civil partnership. He had worked with the Citizen's Advice Bureau and with schools and on the topic of equalities generally not just gay issues.

Discussion took place around the potential of having a half day event which has an interactive factor and guest speaker but as a wider event for all.

The Equalities Working Group would be invited to the event. Trish Gayle referred to a meeting she had held with Ian Townsend in September and she knew he was keen to educate as many people as possible about equality issues. She referred to an event she had been to recently on equalities where a quiz had been used as an education tool that she thought was very helpful and informative. It was agreed that this suggestion would be considered at the next planning event.

## **6. Two Ticks Accreditation**

Elaine Mansfield confirmed that the Two Ticks Accreditation scheme required the Council to renew its membership annually. Two ticks demonstrated that Medway Council was positive about employing disabled people. The symbol was awarded by JobCentre Plus to employers who had made commitments to employ, keep and develop the abilities of disabled people.

She stated that regular PDRs were undertaken and the Council did more than it actually needed to be part of the scheme.

## **7. Summary of progress**

### **Disabled Workers Forum**

Elaine Mansfield referred to the notes produced by Ian Townsend from the Disabled Workers Forum and stated that although meetings of the Forum took place regularly they were badly attended. Efforts had been made in an attempt to boost attendance including advertisements and an awareness day every year.

Reference was made to the work that Ian Townsend undertakes over the year including an independent travel day to Margate and back with Elaine Mansfield and two Strood Academy Year 11 students in wheelchairs with their carers. The day had been very successful and all had learned something valuable during the day.

It was stated that Gillingham Library now have support from Kent Autistic Trust which had been promoted through the DWF through its work with libraries.

### **Black Workers Forum**

Trish Gayle referred to ongoing work with Rochester young offenders supporting them with cultural issues such as particular needs for care of their skin, hair and diet. She referred to eight young black people who were part of the Youth Parliament and work for the black achievers award for the Medway Afro Caribbean community this year, which she undertook to share with the Equalities Working Group shortly.

**Action point: TG**

It was stated that the Council's Organisational Development Officer had volunteered to be the new champion for the Forum and would be meeting with the Forum to discuss an action plan and two projects in a few months time.

### **LGBT Forum**

This report set out an update on the LGBT Forum, which had not been as active as it could have been. Simon Harrington had been appointed as the new chair of the Forum and hoped to revitalise the Forum. The first meeting he had attended in October had been very poorly attended. The latest Stonewall questionnaire had been submitted however and it was hoped that a better placing would be achieved than for the previous year.

### **General**

Simon Harrington expressed the wish of working across the various Forums and that he was planning on an event for World Aids Day on 1 December and for there to be red ribbons in the café and reception and that the event would be coordinated with the Terence Higgins Trust. Discussion took place as to whether public health colleagues had been involved with the Forums and in particular whether they might get involved around the World Aids Day event. **Action point: SO**

Members of the Working Group requested details of events, which take place by email and for details of submissions to be emailed round. **Action point: All Forum members.**

The Performance and Improvement Officer circulated a summary report on the Equality Audit 2013 and referred to areas where the Council was doing well and other areas of potential improvement. She referred to ongoing work to improve the equalities information on the website. She offered to share the audit with Members of the Working Group by email. **Action point: SO**

Following a question the Performance and Improvement Officer explained that the Equalities and Access Group would monitor the Action Plan which has been based on the outcome of the Equality Audit. The Equalities and Access Group included representative from each directorate. The Director of Regeneration, Community and Culture chaired the Group. Some of the Members of the Equalities Working Group

expressed an interest in the work of the group. It was confirmed that the group was complementary to the Equalities Working Group rather than duplicating any of its work.

Elaine Mansfield asked if there had been any progress with the disabled residents forum and the Performance and Improvement Officer stated that there would be a launch next Spring. She undertook to share details. **Action point: SO.**

Rosie Gunstone  
Democratic Services  
T: 01634 332715  
E: [rosie.gunstone@medway.gov.uk](mailto:rosie.gunstone@medway.gov.uk)