

EMPLOYMENT MATTERS COMMITTEE

25 JUNE 2014

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 the outcome 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 28 April 2014 with the 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 Working Group discussed the Council's 2014 Stonewall Workplace Equality Index Submission. The Council had taken part in the benchmarking exercise four years running and have moved positions up the index as follows:

2011 268/378

2012 197/363

2013 161/376

2014 108/369

- 3.3 This year to get into the Top 100, organisations needed to score 148 points and Medway Council scored 144 points, resulting in 108th position. By Stonewall's own admission, competition was tough with the threshold for the Top 100 this year going up 11 marks. The fact that Medway had improved 53 places this year is a great achievement and showed how far Medway was progressing toward becoming an LGB friendly employer and employer of choice.
- 3.4 The Working Group discussed areas for improvement and other issues such as the importance of staff providing their personal data (equality monitoring information) as this was an area which required improvement. The Group also discussed the merits of the pay progression scheme which allowed for employees' active involvement in staff forums to contribute towards an additional merit payment.
- 3.5 The Working Group also discussed particular issues as raised by the Forums including support for colleagues and the rebranding of the LGBT Forum as Prism.
- 3.6 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

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Background papers

None

Equalities Working Group

Notes of discussion 28 April 2014, 6.30pm – 7.15pm, Meeting Room 8, Gun Wharf

In attendance:

Councillor Avey
Clarke
Councillor Christine Godwin
Councillor Wicks

Black Workers Forum (BWF)

None

Disabled Workers Forum (DWF)

Elaine Mansfield
Ian Townsend

LGBT Forum (LGBT)

Simon Harrington

Officers:

Wayne Hemingway, Democratic Services Officer
Lesley Jones, Corporate Improvement Officer
Tricia Palmer, Assistant Director, Organisational Services

1. Apologies for absence

Sandra Steel, Trish Gayle (BWF) and Marsha Wrye (BWF).

2. Notes of last meeting

The notes of the meeting held on 21 October 2013 were agreed.

Ian Townsend informed the Group that Elaine Mansfield had not accompanied him on the independent travel day to Margate (item 7 – Summary of Progress, Disabled Workers Forum).

The Assistant Director, Organisational Services, informed the Group that no events had been arranged since the last meeting with regard to the relevant action point.

3. Stonewall Workplace Quality Index Submission 2014

The Assistant Director, Organisational Services, submitted a report which provided details of the 2014 Workplace Equality Index submission to Stonewall. She stated that by Stonewall's own admission, competition was tough with the threshold for the Top 100 this year going up 11 marks. The fact that Medway had improved 53 places this year was a great achievement and showed how far Medway was progressing toward becoming an LGB friendly

employer and employer of choice. This year to get into the Top 100 organisations needed to score 148 points and Medway Council scored 144 points, resulting in 108th position.

The Assistant Director, Organisational Services, gave examples of good practice including the Line Managers Guide to Supporting LGB staff which had been shared with other organisations. She stated that there had been greater community engagement in the past year which had contributed to Medway's higher ranking. She also referred to Appendix 3 to the report which set out areas for improvement.

The Group discussed the importance of staff providing their personal data (equality monitoring information) as this was an area which required improvement. The Group also discussed the merits of the pay progression scheme which allowed for employees' active involvement in staff forums to contribute towards an additional merit payment.

4. Summary of Progress from the Forums

Disabled Workers Forum

Ian Townsend informed the Group that some colleagues had been delayed in their return to work as a result of not receiving appropriate support. He provided further information in relation to one case which related to the provision of a specific piece of equipment. Two colleagues had taken the issue through the Grievance Procedure whilst the other two colleagues had gone through the tribunal process. He considered there was a further need for equalities training.

The Assistant Director, Organisational Services, informed the Group that she was willing to look into these cases if Ian Townsend would provide more information outside the meeting - **Action: TP and IT**. She informed the Group that Occupational Health would advise on an appropriate course of action to facilitate employees with physical or mental health disabilities, however, on some occasions it may not be possible for the employer to meet an employee's requirements. She stated that with regards to the use of formal HR procedures, HR would work with managers and employees to seek a resolution without resorting to such procedures.

The Group discussed this issue in general including whether equalities training should be mandatory.

Ian Townsend tabled a document "Welcome one and all" which had been produced by the Disabled Workers Forum as a guide for meetings/events organisers in respect of people with disabilities. He referred to a couple of recent publications he had been involved with and also provided an example of a recent meeting at Gun Wharf at which poor attention had been paid to his disability.

Ian Townsend also asked whether the Group could arrange a card for Trish Gayle (Black Workers Forum) who was currently on long term sick. **Action:**
WH

LGBT Forum

Simon Harrington informed the Group that the LGBT Forum had met regularly over the past few months although attendance was low. He referred to some recent highlights including:

- Celebration of the outcome of the recent Stonewall submission
- The development of a LGBT Yammer (closed) group (the Council's internal social network)
- LGBT History month held in February
- Update to the Employee's Handbook
- World Aids Day
- The forthcoming rebrand and rename of the LGBT Forum as Prism. This new Group would also allow employees who may have LGBT family or friends to attend the Group which would act more as a support network.
- Idaho Day (Saturday 17 May 2014). It was hoped that the Council would fly the Idaho flag on Monday 19 May.

It was noted that LGBT Forum meetings had been held on a monthly basis at different start times to help attendance.

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