

EMPLOYMENT MATTERS COMMITTEE

1 SEPTEMBER 2021

EQUALITIES BOARD

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Summary

The report seeks to update Employment Matters Committee (EMC) on the progress of the Equalities Board and associated staff networks

1. Budget and policy framework

1.1. The Equality Act 2010 states our general duty as a public service provider is to have due regard to consider all individuals when carrying out our day-to-day work, whether it is shaping strategy and policy, delivering services or in relation to our employees.

1.2 The Council's commitment to equality is reviewed annually within the equalities report.

1.3 Actions relating to this work fall within existing budgets and are a matter for the Equalities Board (EB), Corporate Management Team (CMT) and Employment Matters Committee (EMC).

2. Background

2.1 The EB, chaired by Neil Davies, Chief Executive, was set up in September 2020 and consists of representatives across the whole Council, including HR and staff networks and forums. An early task was to establish the terms of reference for the EB, which are attached at Appendix 1. The Board meets once every quarter.

2.2 Accountability for the EB will be monitored by the CMT through a twice-yearly report explaining the ambition & intent of the EB and showing progress to date.

2.3 This report will also be provided to EMC annually.

3 Annual equalities report

3.1 The Council must publish information by 31 January each year to demonstrate compliance with the Equality Duty including information relating to its employees (as we employ over 150 staff) and others who share protected characteristics and who are affected by its policies and practices such as service users. The draft annual equality report will be:

- considered by the EB in December 2021
- presented for approval to CMT in January 2022.

3.2 At the Equalities Board on 30 March 2021 the Head of Human Resources shared the Medway employee data at Appendix 2. The ambition is to breakdown this data further and benchmark the information against other Local Authorities. There will be an internal communications campaign to encourage and give staff confidence to declare this information; explaining what the data is used for and why it is important to declare. Each staff forum is reviewing declarations and recording.

4 Equalities objectives

4.1 The Council must prepare and publish equality objectives and update them at least every four years. The Council must ensure the objectives are specific and measurable and set out how progress towards the objectives will be measured. The Council must also consider publishing equality information before preparing and publishing these objectives and publish the objectives in a reasonably accessible format either as an individual document or as part of another report. The draft equality objectives will be shared with the EB and CMT as above

4.2 The draft equalities objectives for 2022/26 are at Appendix 3.

5 Projects

5.1 Medpay review

5.1.1 The review will start during the financial year 2021/22 and will include reviewing professional frameworks, competencies, job profiles and behaviours. A paper will be presented to CMT later in the year.

5.2. Values and behaviours

5.2.1 The Head of Human Resources (HR), Head of Corporate Performance and Business Intelligence (HCPBI) and Head of Marketing and Communications are working together to incorporate the Council Plan values into Medway Council's culture and behaviours to assist services and individuals understand how they contribute to them. The Head of HR is also developing a people's promise to further develop an employee value proposition which will attract and retain colleagues that are aligned to Medway's culture and values.

5.3 Equalities Training

5.3.1 At the Equalities Board on 30 March 2021, Workforce Development provided an update on equality's training and mandatory equalities training for staff - e.g. unconscious bias. Anyone completing interview panels should complete this training before taking part in the interview process.

5.3.2 Further training has been commissioned around deaf awareness and neurologic awareness.

5.4 Gender and ethnicity Pay gaps

5.4.1 The Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties and Public Authorities) Regulations 2017 requires all employers with more than 250 employees to report annually on their Gender Pay Gap. The results will then be published on the Council's public website and on the Government dedicated Gender pay gap reporting website annually.

5.4.2 In terms of the gender pay gap, both the Mean and Median Hourly Rate gaps widened between the years 2017 to 2019, however there has been a significant drop in 2021. This appears to be due to an increase in the number of women working in the upper pay bands coupled with a decrease in the number of men. There are also proportionately more men working in the lower pay bands than the previous year.

5.4.3 To further explore the gap, we are working with Trade Union colleagues in Unison on a pilot, this will expand into ethnicity pay gap reporting. Further reports will be made available for discussion at the EB, CMT and EMC ahead of publication.

6 Risk management

6.1 Risk management is an integral part of good governance. The Council has a responsibility to identify and manage threats and risks to achieve its strategic objectives and enhance the value of services it provides to the community.

Risk	Description	Action to avoid or mitigate risk	Risk rating
Inequality	Residents and staff not being treated equally	The Council's governance process requires a diversity impact assessment to be completed when developing or changing strategy, policy, procedures and service operations.	DIII(Low/Marginal)

Risk	Description	Action to avoid or mitigate risk	Risk rating
		<p>Equalities training is completed at induction and identified through the PDR process.</p> <p>The council refreshes its equalities objectives every four years.</p> <p>The annual equalities report is published on 1 January each year</p>	

7 Financial implications

7.1 There are no financial implications associated with this report.

8 Legal implications

8.1 The Council has a duty under the Equalities Act 2010 to have due regard to consider all individuals when carrying out our day-to-day work, whether it is shaping strategy and policy, delivering services or in relation to its employees.

8.2 Failure to comply with the act could result in legal challenge, reputational damage and Council decisions being reversed.

9 Recommendation

9.1. Members are asked to note the report.

Lead officer contact

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Head of HR

Appendices

Appendix 1 Equalities Board Terms of Reference

Appendix 2 Medway employee data

Appendix 3 Draft equalities objectives 2022/26

Background papers

None