

Report to Cabinet
10 March 2021
Report of Chief executive officer
Subject Improving the diversity of the Council's workforce

Item

5

Purpose

To outline a strategy and action plan to improve the workforce diversity profile of the council in respect of those from Black, Asian, and other Minority Ethnic (BAME) background, in order to better reflect our communities.

Recommendation

To note and comment on the outline strategy and action plan which aims to improve the ethnic diversity of the council's workforce over time. To also note the data in respect of the Council's BAME workforce profile and how this compares to the data in relation to the city.

Corporate and service priorities

The report helps to meet the corporate priorities Inclusive economy and People living well

Financial implications

Any costs that cannot be contained within existing budget will be supported through the new Business Change reserve following approval of an appropriate business case.

Ward/s: All Wards

Cabinet member: Councillor Waters - Leader

Contact officers

Stephen Evans, Chief Executive Officer

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Background documents

None

Report

Background and context

1. The Equality Act 2010 provides the legal framework to protect the rights of individuals and advance equality of opportunity for all. The key provisions came into effect in October 2010 and introduced 9 protected characteristics.
2. The Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) was created under the Equality Act and came into force in 2011. It places specific duties on public bodies to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, to advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between different communities.
3. The Council has a strong commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion both as an employer and as a service provider. This is demonstrated in the Council's corporate priorities and in the Norwich 2040 City Vision.
4. The 2011 Census indicated that 9.1% of the economically active population of Norwich City are from a Black, Asian and other Minority Ethnic (BAME) background. This is significantly higher than other Norfolk local authority areas which range from 1.6% to 3.4 % of the population.

Monitoring the diversity of our employees

5. Information on the diversity of the workforce is included in the annual Equality Report which was agreed at Cabinet on 20 January this year. In addition, workforce metrics have been produced quarterly since 2011 and include the monitoring of the diversity of the workforce. The diversity of the top 5% of earners is reported to Cabinet as part of the corporate key performance indicators.
6. The current workforce profile is representative of communities in some protected characteristics. We are not complacent about this and will continue to take action to work towards our workforce being representative across all protected characteristics.
7. However, a clear area of where the workforce of the city council is out of step with the wider community we service is in relation to the proportion of employees from a Black, Asian or other Minority Ethnic (BAME) background.
8. Based on data at 31 December 2020, 3.4% of the Council's workforce are from a BAME background, compared to 9.1% of the City population. The number of BAME employees in the top 5 % of earners at the Council is 5.4%.
9. Analysis of the data collected since 2011 indicates that, although overall there have been slight improvements since data collection commenced, figures have generally remained relatively static. The most significant change has been in the number of employees who have not updated their equality data or have indicated they prefer not to say. This currently represents 7.7% of the workforce.
10. Whilst it is not uncommon for Government departments and local authorities to have workforce diversity numbers which are out of step with the communities

they serve, it is something that the city council is determined to address. Improving workforce diversity – not only in respect of ethnicity but across a range of areas – creates a greater richness of views, increases inclusion, and makes the council more representative of the wider city.

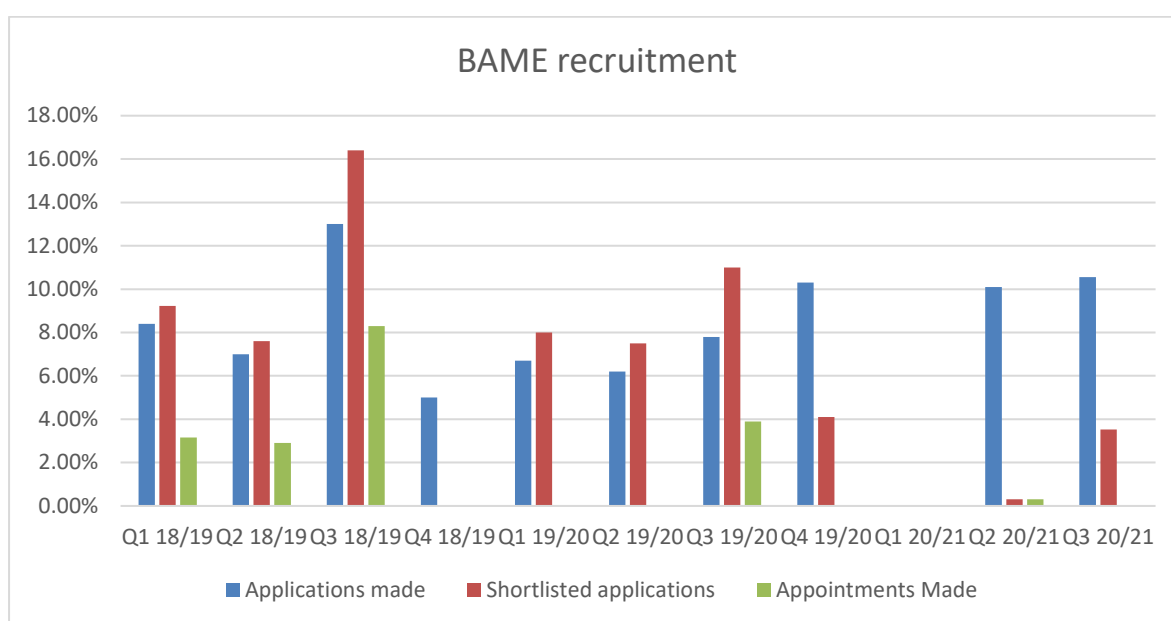
11. Improving the diversity of the Council's workforce will not happen overnight – it will require a sustained approach over the medium to long term, but it is important – both for the organisation and for the city we serve – that incremental progress is made. With that in mind, this report sets out the main elements of the Council's proposed approach.

Monitoring the diversity of job applicants

12. The table and bar chart below show the proportion of BAME candidates who have applied for jobs with the council, the proportion who were shortlisted and the proportion who were appointed for the period April 2018 to December 2020.

	2018/19				2019/20				2020/21*	
BAME	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q2	Q3
Applications	8.40%	7.00%	13.00%	5.00%	6.70%	6.20%	7.80%	10.30%	10.10%	10.56%
Shortlisted	9.23%	7.60%	16.40%	0.00%	8.00%	7.50%	11.00%	4.10%	0.30%	3.53%
Appointment	3.16%	2.90%	8.30%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	3.90%	0.00%	0.30%	0.00%

*no recruitment activity in Qu1



13. In four of the ten quarters reviewed, the number of applicants from a BAME background exceeded 9.2%. During this period, conversion of BAME candidates to shortlist is also positive in six of the ten quarters. However, the drop off rate at appointment stage is concerning and it is important that we understand why in more detail.

Priorities and actions

14. The benefits of having a diverse workforce, which reflects the communities it serves are widely recognised. We aim to build a workforce that is fully representative of our communities and to realise the benefits that this will bring in terms of diverse viewpoints and perspective, increased innovation and better understanding of the issues that affect our citizens.
15. Generally turnover in the Council's workforce is relatively low at around 10% per annum. Due to Covid, turnover has reduced in the last year and is currently projected to be 7.3% for 2020/21.
16. This low level of turnover will have an impact on our ability to change our workforce profile at pace. Therefore, the aim is to develop a strategy and action plan to improve diversity over time.
17. Increasing diversity alone doesn't address equality, personal bias or a culture of exclusion in the workforce and it is recognised that an inclusive culture is also needed to give diversity real impact. The aim is to build an inclusive workplace that ensures we both attract and retain diverse talent.
18. We recognise that we are not currently a diverse group and we will identify exemplars of best practice and those we need to engage with in our communities who can support our improvement journey.

Key priority areas to increase diversity of the workforce

19. The following key themes have been identified as being crucial to our strategy for increasing workforce diversity:
 - a) Ensuring our recruitment practices and processes are designed to attract a diverse candidate pool
 - b) Building an inclusive workplace and creating a culture where people from all backgrounds feel included and valued
 - c) Embed effective and objective workforce and succession planning to support the retention and progression of talented employees.
20. As a first step, it is important to take action to improve how people from BAME backgrounds view the Council and to identify opportunities to better connect with a greater diversity of people in the local community and more widely - so that we can increase the number of people who see the Council as a potential career choice. We have a number of partners in the local community who can support this approach. Increasingly, recruitment agencies are developing their approaches to attracting a greater diversity of candidates which is something we can tap into.

21. It will be important to communicate effectively with a more diverse number of prospective employees and target our approach to advertising future roles accordingly – looking beyond the usual channels to connect with those who might not immediately be attracted to – or even be aware of – a role at the city council.
22. As well as doing more to increase the diversity of the potential candidate pool, we also need to improve our processes and insight in order to identify why those who apply are not successful in securing roles through various steps of the recruitment process.

Actions

23. Against these key themes, there are a number of actions we will take to begin to make progress. The list below gives a sense of the sort of action we intend to take – this is not exhaustive and further work is being taken forward to embed this approach into our policies, practices and procedures.

	Action
1	Work with employees to increase recording of protected characteristics to improve our data. This will enable us to better understand our workforce profile which will inform actions and interventions to address under representation.
2	Review exit questionnaires and incorporate specific questions around discriminatory practice in reasons for leaving. Increase the number of completed exit questionnaires received. Act on all questionnaires when unacceptable actions, culture and practice is reported.
3	Carry out more detailed analysis of our workforce and recruitment diversity data to better identify where barriers to appointment and progression exist.
4	To ensure our commitment to a diverse and inclusive workplace is heard and unacceptable behaviours are called out.
5	Refresh our current offer of equality and diversity training for all employees and for managers in leading diversity – training to be mandatory. It is anticipated that this will be beneficial in both our role as an employer and a service provider.
6	Roll out mandatory unconscious bias training for all employees
7	Recruitment and selection training to incorporate discrimination and bias in the recruitment process and best practice to address it.
8	Equality and diversity training to be available to elected members

	Action
9	Increase the diversity of our recruitment panels, where possible.
10	Review and embed diversity and inclusion in all stages of the assessment and selection process and review our current assessment methods to identify if they create disadvantage.
11	The Council previously adopted the practice of blind sifting of applications to reduce unconscious bias. Due to a change in recruitment system this ceased at the end of December 2019. We will review the impact of blind sifting of applications and reintroduce if found to have had a positive impact.
12	The majority of council vacancies are advertised on the Council website, which is cost effective. To increase the number of applicants from underrepresented groups we will review where job advertisements are placed and the media used.
13	Review and rewrite job descriptions and person specifications and remove non-essential requirements to eliminate any disadvantage.
14	Continue to offer feedback to every job applicant.
15	Extend the equality check carried out at shortlisting stage in respect of candidates with a disability to include race/ethnicity.
16	Refresh our recruitment website and include a clear, positive leadership message about diversity and inclusion. Include a diversity values statement on job advertisements. Adopt the principle of positive action to address the issue of under-representation of BAME people in our workforce.
17	Ensure meaningful consultation with our workforce on diversity issues to inform decision making.
18	Assess the need for specific employee support networks and provide appropriate support to enable them to thrive and have a voice.
19	Continue to measure attitudes towards equality, diversity and inclusion in employee engagement surveys.
20	Honour religious and cultural practices.
21	Equality impact assessments are carried out on all employment policies. Implement a programme of periodic reviews and update equality impact assessments for all employment policies.
22	Ensure service reviews don't disproportionately affect under-represented groups through completion of equality impact assessments prior to finalising organisational restructures.

	Action
23	It isn't currently mandatory to report on ethnicity pay gap. From April 2021 we intend to commence ethnicity equality pay gap reporting to start to put measures in place to address any pay inequality.
24	Analysis of organisational culture to identify underlying themes that may impact on inclusivity.
25	Identify and address any barriers to progression for BAME employees
26	Monitor and evaluate impact of the agreed actions and interventions.

Next steps and monitoring progress

24. Improving the diversity of the Council's workforce and the impact of the actions identified will not be immediate but will be realised over time. It is anticipated that further actions and interventions will evolve as progress is made.

25. In terms of the next steps, the council will:

- Develop a detailed action/activity and resource plan which will include the priority and timeframes for each action.
- Assess which actions will have the most impact in the short to medium term and start to implement them.
- Communicate the council's intentions and commence engagement on workforce diversity with the existing workforce.
- Report progress against the actions; including the progress made in changing the workforce diversity profile to the corporate leadership team on a quarterly basis as part of quarterly assurance reporting.
- Update Cabinet on a six monthly basis on progress made against the key themes and actions.
- Monitor and report to Cabinet on an annual basis the impact of the actions and interventions.

Integrated impact assessment



NORWICH
City Council

The IIA should assess **the impact of the recommendation** being made by the report
Detailed guidance to help with the completion of the assessment can be found [here](#). Delete this row after completion

Report author to complete

Committee:	Cabinet
Committee date:	10 March 2021
Director / Head of service	Annabel Scholes/Dawn Bradshaw
Report subject:	Improving the diversity of the councils workforce
Date assessed:	17 December 2020

	Impact			
Economic (please add an 'x' as appropriate)	Neutral	Positive	Negative	Comments
Finance (value for money)	X	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Other departments and services e.g. office facilities, customer contact	X	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
ICT services	X	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Economic development	X	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Financial inclusion	<input type="checkbox"/>	X	<input type="checkbox"/>	Improving employment prospect of underrepresented groups is likely to impact on individual financial wellbeing
Social (please add an 'x' as appropriate)	Neutral	Positive	Negative	Comments
Safeguarding children and adults		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
<u>S17 crime and disorder act 1998</u>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Human Rights Act 1998	<input type="checkbox"/>	X	<input type="checkbox"/>	Article 14: right not to be discriminated against
Health and well being	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

	Impact			
Equality and diversity (please add an 'x' as appropriate)	Neutral	Positive	Negative	Comments
Relations between groups (cohesion)	<input type="checkbox"/>	X	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Eliminating discrimination & harassment	<input type="checkbox"/>	X	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Advancing equality of opportunity	<input type="checkbox"/>	X	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Environmental (please add an 'x' as appropriate)	Neutral	Positive	Negative	Comments
Transportation	X	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Natural and built environment	X	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Waste minimisation & resource use	X	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Pollution	X	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Sustainable procurement	X	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Energy and climate change	X	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
(Please add an 'x' as appropriate)	Neutral	Positive	Negative	Comments
Risk management	<input type="checkbox"/>	X	<input type="checkbox"/>	Potential to mitigate against discrimination claims

Recommendations from impact assessment
Positive
Better representation of people from a BAME background in the workforce, reflecting our communities
Negative
Neutral
Issues