

# North Somerset Council

## Report to the Partnerships, Corporate Organisation and Overview Management Policy and Scrutiny Panel

**Date of Meeting: 21 July 2022**

**Subject of Report: Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Update Report**

**Town or Parish:**

**Officer/Member Presenting: Cllr Bridget Petty and Amy Webb, Director of Corporate Services**

**Key Decision: No**

**Reason:**

For information and discussion only

**Recommendations**

- Members note the progress with specific projects listed in the update
- Members note the proposal to continue to work with Black, Asian and Minority led organisations to develop the Council's Anti-Racist Action Plan, and to accept a further item for discussion on progress towards the plan at 10<sup>th</sup> November 2022 meeting.

**1. Summary of Report**

This report aims to provide an update on a number of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion matters that are of either a statutory nature or have been identified as key projects for the Council. It includes:

- A position on the diversity of our workforce
- The Council's Gender Pay Gap
- Disability and Well-being Report
- Engaging with Employee Groups
- Our statutory duty to publish Equality Objectives and Information
- An update on our work following the adoption of an Anti-racist Motion for the council
- Our plans for our Inclusion Calendar of Events

**2. Policy**

The Equality Act 2010 (Section 149) sets out public sector equality duties, which elected Members must consider. Members will recall that the general duties are to have due regard to the need to:

1. Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act.

2. Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
3. Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

Advancing equality of opportunity involves having due regard to the need to:

- remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by persons who share a relevant protected characteristic that are connected to that characteristic;
- take steps to meet the needs of persons who share a relevant protected characteristic that are different from the needs of persons who do not share it;
- encourage persons who share a relevant protected characteristic to participate in public life or in any other activity in which participation by such persons is disproportionately low.

The item at 3.2.2 is in response to the approval of an Anti-racist Motion by Full Council on 12<sup>th</sup> April 2022.

### **3. Details**

#### **3.1 Workforce Matters**

##### **3.1.1 The diversity of our workforce**

A recent review of the diversity of the council's employees demonstrates that:

- Women make up 74% of our employees and 60% of our senior leadership team.
- 12.90% of our employees have declared that they are a disabled person, 20% of our Senior Leadership Team have also declared they have a disability.
- People from an ethnic group other than 'White British' make up 13.80% of our employees, a similar level of 13.30% within our Senior Leadership Team.
- 68.7% of our workforce are aged 41 and over, 80% of our Senior Leadership Group are from the same age groups. 12.5% of our employees are aged 30 and under.

We continue to monitor the demographic profile of our employees and compare against the profile of people living in North Somerset. We are currently waiting for the release of the 2021 Census data to analyse this current comparison.

The data we analyse about our workforce is included in the development of the [People Strategy](#) and People Strategy Action Plan.

Employees have the option to include information about their religion or belief or none and their sexual orientation within our HR systems, to date this information is not robust enough to enable an analysis. Work is planned to encourage more employees to input this information with the aim of helping us better understand the needs and the diversity of our workforce.

The council's workforce report can be found on the council's [website](#).

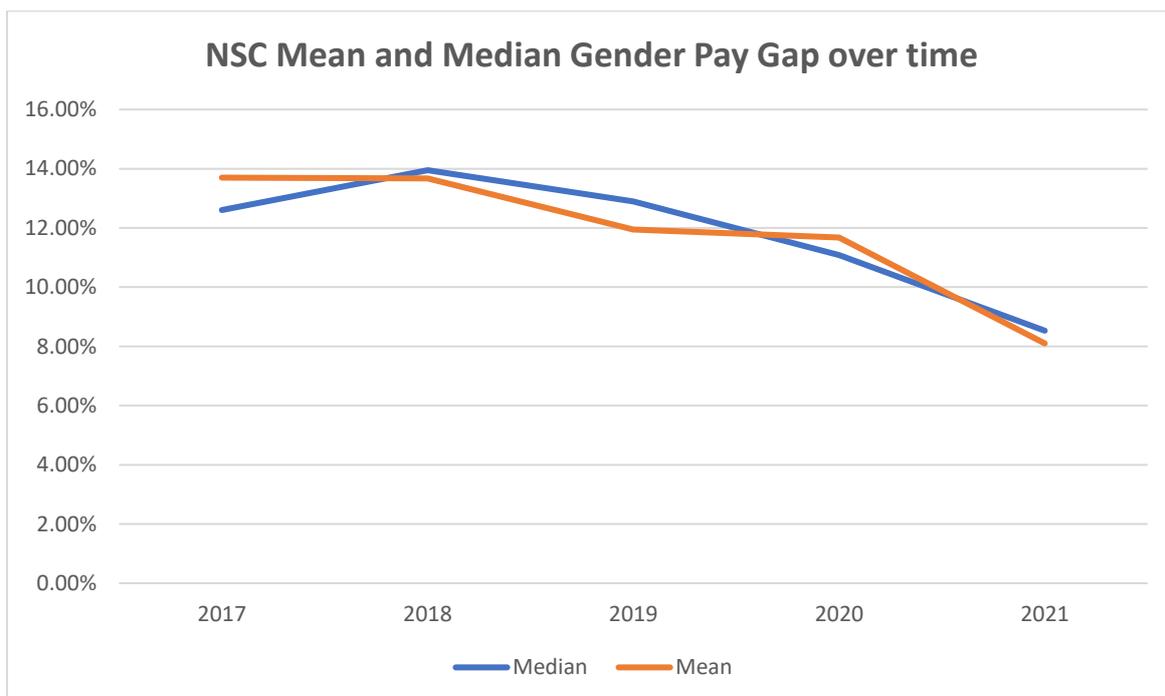
### 3.1.2 Gender Pay Gap

As well as a regular review of the diversity of our workforce the council is also required, by law to publish its Gender Pay Gap.

The figures included within this year's report have been taken from employee data on 31st March 2021.

The analysis of the gender pay reporting information indicates that there is a mean gender pay gap of 8.10% in favour of men; the mean hourly rate for men is £17.30 and for women £15.90. The median gender pay gap 8.53% in favour of men; the median hourly rate for men is £16.24 and for women £14.85.

We are pleased to report that this figure has seen an overall reduction since the requirement to publish figures in 2017.



Our work to continue to reduce the Gender Pay Gap includes:

- Continue to take a fair and consistent approach to pay and grading through robust job evaluation processes
- Promotion to encourage all employees to take advantage of arrangements that enable them to fulfil their caring responsibilities, such as shared parental leave, flexible working, home working etc.
- Continuous review and improvements to our recruitment process
- Analysis of our employee data, including starters and leavers to establish any trends
- Monitor exit interview data and identify any trends to understand common reasons for leaving
- Annual analysis of the results of our staff survey to review if there are any inequalities as a result of gender

More information about the Council's Gender Pay Gap Report can be found on our [website](#).

### 3.1.2 Disability and Well-being Report

In October 2022 the Council re-qualified as a [Disability Confident Leader](#). As a Disability Confident Leader we are committed to:

- Ensuring our recruitment process is inclusive and accessible
- Offering an interview to disabled people, who meet the essential criteria for a job role
- Anticipating and providing reasonable adjustments as required
- Supporting existing employees who acquire a disability or long-term health condition, enabling them to stay in work
- Taking additional action to improve access to employment for disabled people. This includes offering work experience, apprenticeships and other development opportunities.

As a large employer we champion the importance of ensuring disabled people have what they need to enable them to do their jobs well. An important part of being a Disability Confident Leader is analysing and understanding the experiences of the disabled people who work for North Somerset Council. Whilst disabled people make up 12.90% of our workforce, we also know from our 2021 staff survey that :

- 81% of disabled staff think that their manager treats staff fairly, regardless of race, sexuality, religion, age, gender, disability or any other aspect of diversity
- 82% of disabled staff feel that the council is committed to treating staff fairly, regardless of race, sexuality, religion, age, gender, disability or any other aspect of diversity.
- 73% of disabled staff feel the council is committed to ensuring equality in the development of all staff

More information about the Council's Disability and Well-being Report can be found on our [website](#).

### 3.1.4 Engaging with Employee Groups

The council is committed to developing a workforce which embraces and values diversity and fosters a welcoming culture of inclusion, ensuring all staff feel safe and valued.

Building an inclusive organisation is therefore essential, ensuring the provision of a working environment where all our staff feel safe and confident about being their 'true selves'.

The diversity of our workforce is a great strength, and fully supporting, valuing and celebrating the differences in our workforce will support the Council in delivering its ambitious vision and aims. We facilitate a range of staff groups to:

- Provide staff with an opportunity to seek peer support
- Enable staff to provide their views and experiences, and to identify opportunities for the council to improve its diversity and enhance the experience of working for the council
- Work in partnership to assist the council in its vision of developing a value driven, engaged, agile and motivated workforce

The council has 5 Staff Groups:

	<b>Recent areas of focus</b>
<b>Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Staff Group</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strengthening the council's confidence and ability to lead on race related matters through the provision of manager and staff training and a reverse mentoring pilot for our senior leaders</li> <li>• A review of the representation of ethnic minority employees across the workforce</li> <li>• Improve visibility of racial inclusion and equality, including the celebration of Black History Month</li> </ul>
<b>Carers Forum</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Raising awareness of the need for flexible working and understanding of the issues faced by carers at work</li> <li>• Providing peer support</li> </ul>
<b>Disabled Staff Forum</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Looking at the impact of changes to the way we work (working from home and then a return to the office environment)</li> <li>• Improving the consistency of management support for disabled people at work by supporting the delivery of a workshop for managers</li> </ul>
<b>LGBTQ+ Staff Group (Newly formed in May 2022)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improving visibility of LGBTQ+ matters in the workforce and the community</li> <li>• Celebrating Pride Month</li> </ul>
<b>Young Staff Forum (Newly formed in May 2022)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establishing the experience of Young Staff (those aged under 30 and under) at NSC</li> </ul>

In addition to the 5 groups listed above the Inclusion and Corporate Development Team also facilitate a Menopause Café for those experiencing the menopause with the aim of coming together for mutual support and to improve the council's understanding of the issues faced at work.

The council's People Strategy Board will receive an annual update from the staff groups presented in December 2022, to ensure that key issues are being considered in the development of our HR policies and plans.

## **3.2 Work to promote Equality, Diversity and Inclusion**

### **3.2.1 Statutory Duty to publish Equality Objectives and Equality Information**

The specific duties of the Equality Act 2010 requires public sector bodies to publish information about their employees and their community. This information can be found on the [council's website](#).

There is also a requirement for the council to publish its Equality Objectives (at least every 4 years). Recognising the significance of fairness for all we have taken the approach to include our equality objectives as a part of our [Corporate Plan](#). North Somerset is a diverse place and we want to make sure that people are able to live, work and enjoy North Somerset regardless of their background, needed or characteristics.

We consider the diversity of our communities and our equality duties across all of our priorities, but there are some commitments in our Corporate Plan that are particularly relevant from an equality, diversity and inclusion perspective.

We regularly monitor the achievements against the priorities set in the Corporate Plan. More information on progress against these priorities can be found on the [council's website](#).

### **3.2.2 An Anti-racist Motion for North Somerset Council**

On 12<sup>th</sup> April 2022 the council unanimously voted in support of adopting an Anti-Racist Motion for the council. The commitments in the motion include:

1. To stand together unreservedly with Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic people in North Somerset.
2. To work to eradicate racism, xenophobia, Islamophobia, Antisemitism, and discrimination which impact the entire community and blight our society.
3. To establish further initiatives to ensure North Somerset is actively inclusive and anti-racist.
4. To ensure Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic members of our community are involved in any reviews of our processes, policies and organisational attitudes, hold listening and engagement events seeking their views on the issues they face in North Somerset, and work with and support Community groups, youth groups, and places of worship in engaging with these issues.
5. To evaluate our progress against the Equality Framework for Local Government, ensuring race equality is at the heart of the review and produce an action plan addressing improvements identified, and the matters raised through our engagement with the Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic communities in North Somerset.
6. To provide training on race equality and what it means to be anti-racist, which will be mandatory for staff and expected for all councillors.
7. To recognise the rich cultural diversity of our employees and positively support their engagement in activity to address systemic racism wherever it occurs, and to make a commitment to work with organisations from the wider ethnic minority communities in North Somerset.

The adoption of the motion recognises that the council has completed a range of work in this area, including:

- Setting up a Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Staff Group; established for peer support and to be a consultation group for corporate actions. CEO has attended the group to show senior leadership support.
- Strengthened our information for staff about the support that is available for those who experience racism at work, also facilitated empowerment sessions to support staff raising any concerns
- Introduced 2 E learning modules – The Uncomfortable Truth and The Uncomfortable Conversation for all staff that focus on raising awareness of racial inequality at work

- Provided Inclusion Leadership Development Training – Focus on Race Equality for staff with a line management responsibility, approximately 120 staff attended so far. Similar sessions held for elected members in June 2022, 19 elected members attended.
- In January 2022 we began a reverse mentoring pilot. All members of our Corporate Leadership Team have a mentor from the Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Staff Group.
- Focused work in service areas such as libraries, early years and children’s centres to review their approach to the promotion of race equality
- As HR and Equalities policies are being reviewed, cultural considerations are being included, for example recent review of our bereavement policy following consultation with Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Staff Group.
- We are regularly reviewing our recruitment data and a review of the council’s recruitment process will include the consideration of accepting CVs, anonymous application forms, images on our website etc.
- A Community Listening Event, hosted by the Chief Executive and the Leader to listen to understand the experiences of Black, Asian and Ethnic Minorities living and working in North Somerset, to share thoughts and ideas on how we can work together to be active champions for anti-racism in North Somerset.

Following this Listening Event and the adoption of the Ant-racist Motion an Anti-racist A Plan is being produced in consultation with Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic led groups across North Somerset. It is anticipated that this action plan will be shared with Partnerships, Corporate Organisation and Overview Management Policy and Scrutiny Panel in November 2022.

### **3.2.3 Inclusion Calendar of Events**

Promoting equality of opportunity and fostering good relations between our communities are key elements of the council’s [Public Sector Equality Duties](#).

An element of our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion work includes a focus on promoting the equality issues that resonate most in our communities. We have developed a programme of awareness events throughout the year to enable us to champion and amplify to raise awareness and promote understanding and inclusion within our communities.

There are many awareness days / weeks / months and events throughout the year which highlight and champion different equalities and inclusion issues. So many in fact that to highlight them all would be detrimental, our messages of support would be diluted and lose their impact. Instead, we want to focus on the equalities issues that are most significant in our community and increase awareness and understanding more effectively.

If you would like any further details about any of the areas listed in this report or have any comments please contact [louise.roberts@n-somerset.gov.uk](mailto:louise.roberts@n-somerset.gov.uk) , Inclusion and Corporate Development Manager

#### **4. Consultation**

This report provides an overview on the council's staff engagement groups and our plans to consult further with Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic led organisations in the development of an Anti-racist Action Plan for the council.

#### **5. Financial Implications**

This report is for progress update only, there are no financial implications

#### **6. Legal Powers and Implications**

This report is for progress update only, there are no legal implications

#### **7. Climate Change and Environmental Implications**

None specific to the items listed in this progress update.

#### **8. Risk Management**

Failure to comply with the Public Sector Equality Duties (as set out in Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010) could result in legal challenge through judicial review.

#### **9. Equality Implications**

The details in this report relate directly to the delivery of the council's responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010 and the council's recent adoption of an Anti-Racist Motion.

#### **10. Corporate Implications**

Fairness is a central element of the council's vision and impacts on all of the council's activities including employment and the delivery and commissioning of services. Considering the equality impact of any project, policy or service should be a key consideration across all directorates.

#### **11. Options Considered**

N/A

#### **Author:**

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#### **Appendices:**

[Click here to enter Appendices]

#### **Background Papers:**

[Click here to enter Background Papers]