

Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Wednesday 25 November 2020

Minutes

Attendance

Committee Members

Communities OSC

Councillor Clare Golby (Chair)
Councillor Jenny Fradgley
Councillor John Holland
Councillor Andy Jenns
Councillor Keith Kondakor
Councillor Andy Sargeant
Councillor Bhagwant Singh Pandher

Adult Social Care & Health OSC

Councillor Wallace Redford
Councillor Helen Adkins
Councillor Jo Barker
Councillor Margaret Bell
Councillor Mike Brain
Councillor John Cooke
Councillor Judy McDonald (North Warwickshire Borough Council)
Councillor Penny O'Donnell (Stratford on Avon District Council)
Councillor Pamela Redford (Warwick District Council)
Councillor Kate Rolfe
Councillor Jerry Roodhouse
Councillor June Tandy (Nuneaton & Bedworth Borough Council)

Portfolio Holders

Councillor Les Caborn – Portfolio Holder for Adult Social Care & Health
Councillor Andy Crump – Portfolio Holder for Fire & Community Safety
Councillor Kam Kaur – Portfolio Holder for Customer & Transformation
Councillor Isobel Seccombe – Leader of the Council
Councillor Heather Timms – Portfolio Holder for Environment, Heritage & Culture

Officers

David Ayton-Hill, Assistant Director - Communities
Aoife Barror, Public Health Registrar
Ian Budd, Assistant Director – Education Services
Craig Cusack, Assistant Director – Enabling Services

Dr Gordana Djuric, Consultant Health Improvement Commissioning and Performance
Sarah Duxbury, Assistant Director – Governance & Policy
Allison Lekhy, Service Manager - HR Enabling
Nigel Minns, Strategic Director for People
Isabelle Moorhouse, Trainee Democratic Services Officer
Rob Powell, Strategic Director – Resources
Louise Richardson, Policy Lead
Keira Rounsley, EDI Practitioner
Mark Ryder, Strategic Director for Communities
Sushma Soni, Lead Commissioner
Paul Spencer, Senior Democratic Services Officer
Gereint Stoneman, Strategy and Commissioning Manager (Corporate Policy)

Others present

Chris Bain, Healthwatch Warwickshire

1. Election of Chair for the Joint OSC

Councillor Wallace Redford nominated Councillor Clare Golby to chair the meeting. This was seconded by Councillor John Cooke.

There were no other nominations.

Resolved

That Councillor Clare Golby is appointed Chair of the Joint Communities and Adult Social Care & Health OSC.

2. General

The Chair reminded the committee that this Joint OSC meeting was requested following the approval of a motion during the County Council meeting in September 2020, which focused on the needs of the Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) communities. Given the broad spectrum of issues which could be raised she asked members to focus their questions to be pertinent to the scope of the item.

(1) Apologies

Councillors Sally Bragg – Rugby Borough Council, Jeff Clarke, Dave Shilton and Andrew Wright

Dr Shade Agboola (Director of Public Health) and Catherine Shuttleworth (Public Health Principal) who was substituted by Aoife Barror (Public Health Registrar)

(2) Member's Disclosures of Pecuniary and Non-pecuniary Interests

None.

(3) Chair's Announcements

None.

3. Public Speaking

None.

4. Meeting the needs of our Black, Asian and ethnic minority Communities in Warwickshire

Mark Ryder, Strategic Director for Communities introduced this item, outlining the four topics that would be covered during the meeting. Each would be delivered by a presentation with the opportunity for members' questions and discussion on next steps. The work was split into three sections:

- 'Make sense' – to give members an opportunity to consider the position of EDI (Equality, Diversity and Inclusion) in terms of education, health, economy and organisation.
- 'Make relevant' – to give members an update on the latest activity in Warwickshire.
- 'Make happen' – to enable members to decide what next steps should be taken.

Mark Ryder provided context on the demographic data for Warwickshire from the 2016 census. He added that amongst younger age groups there was a higher percentage of ethnic diversity, which indicated a change in demography and that policies needed to be adapted. Inequalities had been brought into sharp focus through the UK's exit from the EU, the impact of Covid-19, exposing pre-existing inequalities and the growing needs of BAME communities in terms of equality of access to services, future opportunities and outcomes. He reminded members of the Council's EDI vision agreed in August 2020 and the aims for the County Council to be a place where everyone felt valued, included, safe, supported and welcome. There were specific strands for employees, communities and members. Mark Ryder stated that all communities should feel comfortable contacting the council's services and members should feel supported by the council too as well as be aware of the EDI Action Plan. The introduction was followed by four thematic presentations.

Health

Dr Gordana Djuric (Consultant Health Improvement Commissioning and Performance) presented the health aspect and raised the following points, initially on the evidence base and intelligence:

- Addressing health inequalities remained a big part of Public Health England's (PHE) work. This included the BAME communities and the impact of Covid-19.
- People of BAME groups were more likely to contract and die from Covid-19.
- People of Bangladeshi ethnicity had around twice the risk of death than people of White British ethnicity. People of Chinese, Indian, Pakistani, Other Asian, Caribbean and Other Black ethnicity had between 10 and 50% higher risk of death compared to White British.
- This analysis did not account for the effect of occupation, comorbidities or obesity, which were important factors associated with the risk of acquiring or dying from Covid-19. Other evidence showed that when comorbidities were included, the difference in the risk of death among hospitalised patients was greatly reduced.
- The report made seven recommendations for implementation, including "support community participatory research to understand the wider determinants of Covid-19 in BAME communities, and to develop readily implementable and scalable programmes to reduce risk and improve health outcomes".
- In October the ONS (Office of National Statistics) conducted further analysis which included looking at whether pre-existing health conditions could explain the differences between ethnicities. This analysis found:

- When adjusting for age, rates of death involving Covid-19 remained greater for most ethnic minority groups, and most notably so for people of Black African, Black Caribbean, Bangladeshi and Pakistani ethnic background.
- Statistical modelling showed that a large proportion of the difference in the risk of Covid-19 mortality between ethnic groups could be explained by demographic, geographical and socioeconomic factors, such as home location and occupation.
- It also found that specific pre-existing conditions placed people at greater risk of Covid-19 mortality but did not explain the remaining ethnic background differences in mortality.
- The health presentation concluded with actions being taken. As part of the Covid-19 recovery plan an action had been included to implement recommendations from the PHE review outlined above. A bid of £400k was applied for through the Council's Sustaining Prevention Investment Fund to deliver this recovery plan objective, through a project which aimed to work with the BAME community in Warwickshire to mitigate the elevated risks of Covid-19 mortality and morbidity experienced by them.
- The two main objectives of the project were:
 1. Commission a collaborative research project to understand the wider determinants of Covid-19 in BAME communities in Warwickshire.
 2. Run a grants process for BAME communities to access funding for projects that link to the findings of the research, to help to address health and social inequalities, particularly in relation to Covid-19.
- The project would be collaborative involving the council and the Benn Partnership.

In response to Councillor Keith Kondakor's queries about engaging the BAME community in more physical activities, Dr Gordana Djuric spoke about the benefits in reducing comorbidities and the challenges in motivating behaviour changes amongst some people. The project would aim to engage local communities to see what activities they would like to engage with. Councillor Les Caborn (Portfolio Holder for Adult Social Care & Health) raised a related point on physical activity levels in different age groups of BAME communities and younger age groups tended to participate more.

Education

Ian Budd (Assistant Director – Education Services) presented the education aspect and raised the following points, commencing with the evidence base and intelligence:

- The EDI toolkit and audit for schools recommended publishing a range of policies on equalities, bullying, admissions/selection, exclusions and progress & performance Information (including achievement/ attainment levels of pupils). Ian Budd added that education settings would become more diverse and autonomous, so the correct governance arrangements needed to be implemented for performance monitoring.
- Evidence of advancing equality of opportunity included: staffing information, training records, extra curricula activities, gender pay gap information.
- Fostering good relations. This included information on overall pupil profile data, community cohesion activities, evidence of curriculum covering issues such as tackling prejudice, understanding diversity and cohesion, information on engagement and parent and pupil surveys.
- Local governing bodies would have regular reports from the school's leadership teams around how they supported their community including staff, pupils and their families.

- They must track pupils' progress and whether they were achieving their potential, intervening where it was required.
- Health e.g. attendance and regular reporting of curriculum contents were important for schools.
- Data slides were provided on ethnicity and pupil attainment against expected levels at both the primary and secondary school key stages for the years 2017-19.
- Comparing the data between 2019, 2020 and onwards to 2021 was challenging because of not only the Covid-19 pandemic, but also the different methods for assessing grades/attainment in each of those years.
- The different methods of assessment would raise questions across each cohort and setting on whether pupils were achieving their potential.
- The presentation then focussed on actions. It remained important to address the education gap between pupils, especially following the closure of schools in 2020. The safety of staff and pupils was ensured by giving advice on risk assessments, action plans and operating as safely as possible during the pandemic.
- Further guidance had been provided specifically for the BAME community.
- If a child or young person was identified as vulnerable, both education settings and the local authority had worked hard to maintain contact with them during the first lockdown.
- Education settings had worked with vulnerable pupils to assess their learning gap and missed social skills as part of a recovery plan and to address this gap, which had widened due to the pandemic. Examples were given of the measures which could be implemented including the 'Warwickshire Challenge' project at key stage three.
- Academies were responsible for their own curriculum, and for maintained schools there was a national curriculum in place. Anti-racism strategies were in place in every school setting and all incidents were investigated.
- The 'Responding to Racism' curriculum resource was set up with faith groups to tackle racial injustice and to educate on black history.

The Chair read a question from Councillor Helen Adkins, which concerned improving communication with families from BAME communities, where English was not their first language. Ian Budd provided context on the number of maintained schools which the County Council was directly responsible for. Academy schools had to fulfil their responsibilities to a reasonable standard. The key message was to help with communication through a variety of formats and to provide translation services. The council could advise academies of the required standards, but they had to implement them. A further area discussed was the data sets on attainment across the different ethnic groups and traveller communities.

Economy & Skills Equality

David Ayton-Hill (Assistant Director – Communities) presented the section on the wider economy, with available data on employment and economic activity. It was difficult to obtain quality data due to the employment and economic activity being a small cohort. The presentation commenced with the evidence base and intelligence:

- Employment rates amongst ethnic minority groups in Warwickshire were above the national average in 2020 but below the overall employment rates for the county. Similarly economic inactivity rates were higher amongst ethnic minority groups when compared to all people in the county.

- National data showed that the BAME community were more likely to be in low paid flexible contract jobs.
- Nationally, BAME communities had a lower propensity to start and run a business. The BAME community made up 14% of the of the country's population but accounted for only 5% of business owners. There were known challenges around access to finance and raising finance from mainstream sources.
- A slide showed work that was underway, comprising generic business support, support to young people, sector specific support and the opportunities to do more.
- This included aspects on business, employment support, apprenticeships and skills development together with the support offer to those wanting to start a business.
- The economic and employment skill sectors would link up with wider research with the BAME communities to promote entrepreneurship, careers and apprenticeships.
- Work on inclusivity would examine how to engage more effectively with the BAME communities.

Councillor Kam Kaur (Portfolio Holder – Customer & Transformation) considered that promoting apprenticeships to the BAME communities was an important action both within the council and through other businesses in the county. During the first lockdown, there had been good engagement with community leaders from different minority ethnic groups and faiths to spread key messages on Covid-19, staying safe and addressing language barriers. There was comprehensive directory of volunteer contacts in communities who could assist in breaking down language barriers and connecting with communities.

Councillor Kondakor sought data on working hours, long and unsociable hours and breaches of the minimum wage payments. David Ayton-Hill confirmed that officers could not get local data regarding anti-social hours and zero-hour contracts. National data could be provided, but this would be difficult to disaggregate for Warwickshire. Trading Standards would be contacted to see if they could add anything further.

Equality, Diversity & Inclusion

Keira Rounsley (EDI Practitioner) and Allison Lekhy (Service Manager - HR Enabling) presented the Equality, Diversity & Inclusion aspect on Warwickshire County Council's workforce and raised the following points:

- Equality reports were presented to Staff and Pensions Committee on a regular basis.
- The EDI agenda remained an integral part of the council's people strategy; a refreshed people strategy would be presented to the December 2020 Staff and Pensions Committee and the Resources and Fire & Rescue OSC.
- A data slide showed ethnicity information from the 2011 census, for the county council and each directorate.
- Reference to the focussed work to refresh EDI networks, which fed into the council plan and people strategy.
- Since 2017-18, ethnic diversity had increased (from 1.3% to 2.9% amongst Black and Black British employees), but there was a lower ethnic diversity in some areas such as Fire & Rescue. A community engagement officer had been employed to increase the diversity of applicants, with an outline of the engagement work undertaken.
- There was a year-on-year increase in staff disclosing their ethnicity, currently being 86.7%, and continual efforts to increase this further, an example being modifications to the 'Your HR' IT system to be more inclusive.

- 2020 was the first year that the council had voluntarily reported its ethnicity pay gap, but as it was voluntary there was no benchmarking information. The presentation slide drew out key highlights from the 2019/20 report.
- There was a -2.6% pay gap between the mean hourly rate for BAME employees non-BAME employees.
- Further work would be undertaken to explore and break down the ethnicity pay gap data, including a dashboard to provide live data rather than an annual report.
- On employee engagement, slides showed data from the 2019 annual staff survey and more recently from check in surveys as well as focus groups. Engagement took place with services which scored poorly with EDI and wellbeing questions. The aim was to secure both qualitative and quantitative data. The sample sizes of some groups was small.
- The 2019 and 2020 check-in surveys asked staff the council's strengths and weaknesses. Staff were encouraged to disclose their ethnicity in the check in surveys and it was recognised that there was a need to build trust within the workforce.
- The surveys found that staff recognised the importance of EDI but did not know how to embed it in their workplace. As a result, the equality impact assessment process was reviewed, the diversity and inclusion hub of resources created and training offered to work with staff to create the council's EDI vision collaboratively.
- The EDI project was supported by the People Strategy and 2020-2025 Council Plan.
- Further slides gave an outline of key work areas.
- The county council had received a bronze award from the Inclusive Employers Standard.
- Focus groups were set up with ethnically diverse employees; an outcome from this was to find correct alternative terms other than using BAME in communications. The EDI team would like to work with communities to gain wider viewpoints and to create a guide on terminology.
- The BAME staff network was engaged with the EDI project and was contributing to formation of its priorities.
- Reference to black history month and the webinars provided, to the work with foster carers to support them to become more culturally competent and to the Warwickshire Children & Families Anti-racism Strategic Plan.
- The County Council commissioned the charity EQUIP to work towards elimination of unlawful discrimination and to promote equality of opportunity and good relations between people of different protected characteristics as set out in the Equality Act.
- Regular input to the senior leadership forum was carried out to educate on inclusivity too.

Councillor Kondakor asked about the impact of geography as many council staff would be Coventry residents, which had a more diverse ethnicity. He asked where vacancies were advertised and the potential benefits from remote working. Keira Rounsley agreed that the shift to flexible working expanded the talent pool and promoted job applications from further away. Warwickshire County Council wanted to show it employed a diverse range of staff and for prospective applicants to see the benefits of working for the council. Tailored advertising and platforms were also used. Keira Rounsley agreed follow up a suggestion with the Business Intelligence team regarding the potential to compare ethnicity data against where the staff lived.

Next Steps

Mark Ryder spoke to a final slide on options for next steps with four key areas:

- Maintaining momentum and support
- Building Engagement

- Strengthening understanding and best practice
- Strengthening integration and join up

The information provided in the meeting would be used to focus on areas where the council could make improvements, promote inclusivity and meet the needs of diverse communities. Rob Powell (Strategic Director – Resources) stated that the EDI agenda was not only the right and proactive thing to do but it was fundamental to the council’s aims as an inclusive employer and central to its Our People Strategy. This concerned creating the right culture, policies, processes and enabling conversations to meet the council’s aims and objectives. This agenda would feature prominently in the Covid recovery plan and assist effective engagement and communication with all of Warwickshire’s communities, to understand their needs and to influence behaviours. He concluded that the EDI agenda would never be complete, and the Council would continually strive to do more. Member feedback was welcomed on the proposed direction and any further areas they wished to see included.

Councillor John Holland acknowledged the work undertaken. He suggested that there were further areas to explore, perhaps via this joint OSC or through a task and finish group (TFG). Such a group could focus on the detail, specific actions and priorities. He noted the ‘miss-match’ between priority areas on inequalities reported in today’s session on health and a recent session on social services, which needed to be aligned. He concluded that a TFG should be established to take this forward.

Councillor Margaret Bell spoke on the suggestion for a TFG, advising that the Adult Social Care & Health (ASC&H) OSC had recently appointed a TFG. Due to the amount of work the council was undertaking, she queried if another TFG would be useful or could contribute anything further. The Chair agreed that TFGs needed to add value. From the evidence submitted, a lot of work was ongoing and priority areas had been established. She suggested that the joint OSC reconvene in the future rather than establish another TFG. Mark Ryder added there was a need for an ongoing dialogue to keep members informed. Additionally, this agenda needed to be included in other established TFGs.

Nigel Minns (Strategic Director – People) confirmed the remit of the TFG appointed by the ASC&H OSC, which would commence in the New Year. The areas covered today were so broad, spanning many areas and making it difficult to focus on a set of urgent priorities. Other areas referenced were the covid response, health inequalities more generally, the health and wellbeing strategy and the multi-agency Health and Wellbeing Board. He agreed that the joint committee being reconvened periodically would be helpful. The Council was an influencing organisation, as a commissioner of services and could use this role to influence other organisations. This extended to other ‘anchor’ institutions in the public sector working collectively.

Rob Powell agreed that it was important to work with external bodies in all sectors to tackle anti-inequality. The Council’s performance measurement framework was being refreshed with metrics on EDI, which would assist member scrutiny. He spoke of the external review of the scrutiny function, which was nearing conclusion and there was a need for cross cutting themes like EDI to be woven in to their work programmes.

Councillor Redford concurred with earlier speakers on the need for TFGs to add value. Given the current response to Covid-19 which was adding significantly to officer workloads, he was hesitant to suggest any additional TFGs, especially given the broad remit of this area. He clarified the role of the ASC&H TFG and need to ensure this did not duplicate other ongoing work. He also

suggested that this joint OSC should meet again but was mindful of the county council elections in May 2021. In the meantime, briefing notes could be used to provide updates. Councillor Caborn supported the suggestion to retain the joint OSC to keep an oversight of work taking place in other organisations. He used an example of work in a district council on fuel poverty, which could be shared across all areas of the county. Perhaps an information source of ongoing activity would help to avoid duplication.

Councillor Kaur thanked officers for their presentations and the information provided, which showed the extent of work underway across the county council. She was keen to see the revised performance frameworks and ensure that the various streams linked together within the Council Plan. This would provide assurance for members of the cross-cutting work taking place.

Resolved

The Joint Communities and Adult Social Care & Health OSC:

1. Considers the current position and recommends further activity, as shown in resolutions 2 and 3 below, to ensure Warwickshire County Council continues to meet the needs of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic communities within Warwickshire and the Council’s workforce.
2. Notes the information provided and requests a follow up Joint OSC meeting on a date to be confirmed in 2021.
3. Requests that briefing notes be shared with members providing updates of the work undertaken by the council on the topics covered in the meeting.

The meeting rose at 15:47

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Chair