

Adult Social Care & Health and Communities Joint Overview & Scrutiny Committee

25th November 2020

Meeting the needs of our Black, Asian and Minority Communities in Warwickshire

Recommendations

- 1 The joint committee consider the current position and recommend further activity to ensure Warwickshire County Council (WCC) continues to meet the needs of Black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) communities within Warwickshire and the Council's workforce.

1.0 Context and background

- 1.1 At the September 2020 meeting of Full Council, it was requested that an interim report be presented to a joint meeting of the Adult Social Care & Health and the Communities Overview & Scrutiny Committees.
- 1.2 The request specifically asks the joint committee to consider the continuing work and the establishment of a task and finish group to investigate and to report back on race inequalities across Warwickshire both internally at WCC and externally in relation to meeting the needs of Black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) communities within Warwickshire.
- 1.3 This report provides the joint committee with an outline of current activity, together with proposals for how to maintain momentum and move forward.
- 1.4 Reflecting the cross-cutting nature and importance of the subject matter this is a joint report of all Strategic Directors. The session will also be supported by a range of lead officers from the respective service areas.
- 1.5 Whilst we use the acronym BAME throughout this report, we recognise its limitations as a term that combines and therefore dilutes the experiences of Black, Asian and other minority ethnic groups.

2.0 Focus and approach

- 2.1 Equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) is a theme that underpins everything we do for our staff, customers and residents. The Covid-19 Pandemic has brought into stark relief deep and longstanding structural inequalities, in particular affecting BAME communities and individuals, which the data on disease incidence and deaths bears out.

- 2.2 As a community leader, the County Council must exemplify the EDI agenda in everything it does, so that Warwickshire is an inclusive county for all, where there are no hidden or structural barriers for any resident, community or member of staff to be the best that they can be.
- 2.3 EDI cannot be seen as a 'tick box' compliance issue; rather, we see it as a fundamental enabler of a better county and a better organisation. Most importantly, EDI will enable the Council to be a high performance organisation enabling all of its staff to bring their whole selves, and the best of themselves, to work, and through their diversity better serve all of our diverse communities. This will require sustained investment in change, building on many areas of existing good practice, integrated as part of our wider Council Change programme and a bedrock of our Covid-19 recovery plan.
- 2.4 Our Council Plan 2025 is the first point of reference. It provides the framework for any analysis of our approach on EDI. Our vision to make Warwickshire the best it can be is supported by two outcomes: -
- Warwickshire's communities and individuals are supported to be safe, healthy and independent; and
 - Warwickshire's economy is vibrant and supported by the right jobs, training, skills and infrastructure.

Together with the commitment to *make the best use of our resources* these outcomes provide the long-term context for all our work.

- 2.5 Similarly the recently published Covid-19 Recovery Plan (September Cabinet) provides a more immediate focus and opportunity to explore equality as a fundamental element of both organisational change, economic and community recovery. This is further supported by the work of the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA), and their work related to Covid-19 response and recovery.
- 2.6 A further opportunity exists to capitalise on the learning from other cross-cutting themes and policy areas. Climate change is one such example where the declaration of a Climate Change Emergency in 2019 has been followed with establishment of dedicated cross-party Member working groups, actioning planning and a clear commitment within the Council Plan 2025.
- 2.7 Within this context the report will also draw upon good practice from other areas and organisations to support thinking on next steps and opportunities for further work.
- 2.8 The session will focus on the following areas: -
- Public Health and health equality
 - Education equality
 - Economy, skills and training
 - WCC's internal approach

2.9 To complement our approach to strategy development the session will focus on sharing current outcomes, activity and approaches, giving Members the opportunity to: -

- Make sense - understand the current position and landscape
- Make relevant - draw out key themes and issues
- Make happen - consider proposals for next steps and action

3.0 Options and next steps

3.1 This report provides a summary of the current position in relation to BAME related activity. Based upon discussion at the meeting the joint committee are asked to consider next steps which ensure a continued focus and momentum is maintained on EDI and the needs of our BAME staff, customers and residents in Warwickshire.

3.2 Given the nature of the subject it will be important to be practice in influencing and integrating EDI into existing structures and frameworks wherever possible as well as creating dedicated work where necessary. These could include, but not be limited to: -

Maintaining momentum:

- Consider alignment to existing Member-led task and finish groups related to inequality and/or creation of a dedicated group to champion the policy area and explore in more detail in line with the recommendations of the cross-party member groups on Climate and Covid-19 Recovery.
- Consider the inclusion of an expressed focus on BAME and Equality within the refreshed future Council Plan for 2021 onwards
- Consider the creation of a dedicated Equality and BAME action plan that works across WCC policy areas

Strengthening understanding:

- Develop a register of best practice from other organisations and local authorities, to address inequalities within our communities and also to use the EDI agenda as a key strategic enabler of a more inclusive and high-performance culture within the County Council. This might include significant changes in our workforce planning, recruitment and development processes
- Maintain a scan on activity and approach within the county, regional and nationally to inform our approach
- Develop and maintain a robust evidence base through Business Intelligence function

Building Engagement:

- Development of robust staff and community engagement mechanisms including the link to the Residents Panel capability approved by Cabinet in September

Strengthening integration and join up:

- Influencing the way, we commission services, especially in relation to the Voluntary & Community Sector and EQUIP
- Integrating equality requirements in strategy and business planning
- Incorporate activity to support BAME work into core strategies, both published and emerging, including Health & Wellbeing, Economic Growth, and Education Strategies
- Develop headline measures for EDI within the Council's future performance framework

3.3 The joint committee will consider these options on the day. Recommendations from this committee will be consolidated and taken forward as required.

4.0 Financial Implications

4.1 None.

5.0 Environmental Implications

5.1 None.

Appendices - None

Background papers - None

Background papers	Name	Contact Information
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The report was circulated to the following members prior to publication: Cllr Golby Chair of the Communities Overview & Scrutiny Committee & Cllr Redford Chair of the Adult Social Care & Health Overview & Scrutiny Committee.

Local Member(s): None

Other members: None