

Staff & Pensions Committee

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Developments

12 March 2020

1. Recommendation(s)

- 1.1 That the Committee notes and comments on the developments in Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) across the Council.
- 1.2 That the Committee supports the Council signing up to the West Midlands Combined Authority Inclusive Leadership Pledge.
- 1.3 That the Committee approves the Council's formal adoption of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) definition of antisemitism (**Appendix A**) and applies it on all appropriate occasions.

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1 The Staff and Pensions committee considers the Council's Equality and Diversity Annual Workforce and Gender Pay Gap Report, as required since 2012 under the Equality Act 2010, to demonstrate its compliance with the general equality duty.
- 2.2 This report updates the committee on developments in EDI across the Council, which aims to have a positive impact on the Council's workforce data and gender pay gap. It also recommends that we adopt the West Midlands Combined Authority Inclusive Leadership Pledge as part of our approach to EDI.
- 2.3 Linked to our approach we have considered the issue of discrimination and the request from Government for Councils to formally adopt the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) definition of antisemitism, supported by the agreed working examples (**Appendix A**).
- 2.4 The definition is not legally binding but is considered an invaluable tool for public bodies to understand how antisemitism manifests itself in the 21st century.
- 2.5 It is recommended that the Council formally adopts the IHRA definition of antisemitism supported by the working examples and applies the definition on all appropriate occasions, such as in education, awareness-raising and for monitoring and responding to manifestations of antisemitism. Information on the Council's adoption of the IHRA definition will be held on the Council's external website under the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion page.

3. Developments in EDI

- 3.1 Over the past several years there has been solid evidence to support the narrative that EDI is good for business. An example, as recent as 2017 from McKinsey analysis, found that more gender diverse companies are more likely to outperform others by 17% and more ethnically diverse companies are 33% more likely to outperform others.
- 3.2 Other examples of benefits to the business include:
 - Increased pool of talent to recruit from
 - Reduced staff absence / turnover
 - Increased productivity, creativity, innovation and problem solving
 - Improved customer relations and public reputation
 - Increased commercial income by being better at meeting need
 - Improved performance and engagement through increased employee satisfaction
 - Avoids legal proceedings
- 3.3 Warwickshire County Council (WCC) not only recognises that EDI is the right thing to do but understands that it is good for business. The Council also has legal duties under the Equality Act 2010 and Public Sector Equality Duty.
- 3.4 EDI plays an important role in delivering the Our People Values and Vision of Warwickshire County Council; “a great place to work, with outstanding leadership, and a talented, agile workforce”, as well as outcomes of the Our People Strategy such as a “Workforce that displays our values and behaviours” and “We have a diverse and highly engaged workforce”. EDI also plays an important role in the delivery of Our Council Plan for 2020-25.
- 3.5 The effective delivery of EDI within WCC is everybody’s business, but specific responsibility rests with Elected Members, Senior Leaders and Line Managers. For WCC to reap the full benefits of EDI, the Council needs to take a strategic approach by providing clear leadership in our approach and vision and building this into the way we work and our culture. The strategic EDI agenda is guided by Corporate Board and the Corporate EDI group will ensure this agenda is translated into practice.
- 3.6 Our Senior Leaders will drive this agenda linking to Our Behaviours and Our People Strategy. In support of this we plan to include a specific diversity and inclusion project within the Change Programme. Current diagnostic work taking place and employee insight will inform the scope and plan.
- 3.7 Existing support for staff includes the following staff networks; Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Trans (LGBT+), Carers and Religion or Belief, as well as the Councils’ new initiative Listening Mates (launched January 2020), who are trained staff volunteers who provide support to colleagues who feel that something is wrong at work.

- 3.8 A wide range of training and guidance is also available for staff, with the EDI team running a range of diversity and inclusion campaigns and conferences in response to data and trends throughout the year.
- 3.9 WCC is also a Level 2 Disability Confident Employer and a member of Inclusive Employers. In October 2019 the Council participated in the National Inclusion Standard in which we received Bronze, alongside 70% of other organisations who also took part. This is a positive base on which to grow and we have evidence of how we can progress to the next level and beyond.

4. Inclusive Leadership Pledge

- 4.1 The West Midlands Combined Authority Inclusive Leadership Pledge was launched by businesses in response to the Leadership Commission's call to realise a leadership that better represents the diversity of the West Midlands.
- 4.2 Designed for employees, the Pledge asks organisations and senior leaders to commit to promoting diversity and embedding inclusion. It is deliberately flexible so that signatories can tailor their pledges to the specific strengths and challenges of their organisation.
- 4.3 The aim is to build a movement for inclusive leadership: spreading the message of why diversity and inclusion matters, sharing success stories and supporting change.
- 4.4 Organisations that have already made their pledge include; University of Birmingham, West Midlands Fire Service, Coventry & Warwickshire Local Enterprise Partnership, The Royal Wolverhampton NHS Trust, KPMG and many more.
- 4.5 To increase commitment through the organisation as an important practical step, starting at the top, the Council and Senior Leaders will sign up to the Inclusive Leadership Pledge as a launch pad for a 2020 focus on diversity and inclusion; "We/I pledge to embed inclusivity in our organisation's ethos and culture, so that every employee has a fair opportunity in recruitment, promotion and progression. We/I pledge that under-represented groups will be actively supported so that we can collectively make a difference to the leadership of the West Midlands."

5. The IHRA definition of Anti-Semitism

- 5.1 WCC has legal duties under the Equality Act 2010 and Public Sector Equality Duty to, in the exercise of all its functions, have due regard to the need to:

- a) Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act
- b) Advance equality of opportunity, and;
- c) Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

5.2 As part of our approach EDI we have considered the IHRA definition of antisemitism; “Antisemitism is a certain perception of Jews, which may be expressed as hatred toward Jews. Rhetorical and physical manifestations of antisemitism are directed toward Jewish or non- Jewish individuals and/or their property, toward Jewish community institutions and religious facilities”, including the agreed working examples (**Appendix A**).

5.3 The IHRA brings together governments and experts to strengthen, advance and promote Holocaust education, research and remembrance and adopted the definition of antisemitism on 26 May 2016. The United Kingdom has been member of the IHRA since it was founded in 1998. The Government has approached all Councils seeking their commitment to formally adopt the IRHA definition.

5.4 WCC has a valuable role to play in tackling all forms of hate crime, harassment and discrimination. Home Office official statistics from October 2019 show that 18% of religiously motivated hatred is targeted at Jewish people – up from 12% in 2018 – and that, per capita, Jewish people were most likely to report experiencing hatred.

5.5 Adoption of the IRHA definition, which is recommended, would support our commitment to challenging discrimination, advancing equality of opportunity and promoting good relations within our communities. The IHRA has also published examples to guide organisations on the implementation of the definition, these are set out in **Appendix A** and are considered to be essential supporting elements of the working definition.

6. Financial Implications

None.

7. Environmental Implications

There are no specific environmental implications from this report. However, this will be kept under review as the change project on EDI is developed and evolves.

8. Timescales associated with the decision and next steps

The decision will have effect immediately and our approach to EDI will be communicated at the Senior Leadership Forum on 31st March 2020 to further shape how we deliver EDI moving forward.

Appendices

Appendix A - IHRA definition of antisemitism and working examples

Background Papers

None.

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Other members: