

PROCEEDINGS OF THE LOCAL JOINT FORUM – 15 JUNE 2023

Present:

Councillors Brock and Ennis

K Magee

Unite

A McNamara

National Education Union (NEU)

M Palfrey (In the Chair for items 3 onwards)

Unison

Ian Newnham

Unite

Rob Stirling

GMB

Kathryn Cook

Assistant Director of HR and Organisational Development

Julie Quarmby

Committee Services

Apologies:

Councillors Mitchell and Terry

1. ELECTION OF CHAIR

Councillor Terry had been appointed to serve as Chair at the Annual General Meeting of the Council on 24 May 2023 (Minute 11 refers).

2. APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIR

Miriam Palfrey was appointed to serve as Vice-Chair of the Forum for the Municipal Year 2023/2024.

3. PROCEEDINGS OF THE LOCAL JOINT FORUM MEETING HELD ON 24 FEBRUARY 2022

The proceedings of the Local Joint Forum meeting held on 11 October 2022 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

4. EQUALITY, DIVERSITY & INCLUSION STRATEGY AND THE WHOLE COUNCIL ENGAGEMENT EXERCISE

Kathryn Cook Assistant Director HR & OD, submitted a report that set out details of the whole Council engagement exercise that would be used to inform the Council's Equality, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI) Strategy and Plan, which was due to be submitted to Personnel Committee on 16 November 2023.

The report explained that, further to a motion agreed at Council on 20 October 2020, (Minute 7 refers) attached to the report at Appendix 1, the Council had been working to develop a formal EDI Strategy setting out the Council's aims and ambitions for becoming a more diverse and inclusive organisation, the priorities for achieving this and how progress and success would be measured. Whilst the initial focus of the EDI was on race, the scope would encompass all inequalities with a focus on protected characteristics.

The report noted that achievements to date included a steady increase in the ethnic diversity of staff, a more representative senior leadership team (RSM Group) and work

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to embed the actions. The report also set out a timetable for the development of the Strategy. In order to fully develop the Council's ambition in a meaningful way to improve EDI, it would be necessary to involve as many people as possible across the organisation in the development of the EDI, including teams, staff groups, ambassadors, trades unions etc in a Whole Council engagement exercise. This would be a structured engagement exercise, including the Big Conversation, through multiple channels with multiple stakeholders focussing on the following core questions:

- What do you think our equality, diversity and inclusion priorities should be?
- How do you want the Council to *feel* in the future?
- What would help your voice to be better heard?

Whilst this exercise would initially be limited to RBC staff, Kathryn Cook explained that officers were talking to Brighter Futures for Children about engaging their staff, including those working in schools.

The responses would then be analysed to identify areas of focus and external consultancy support would be used to enable development of the EDI Strategy. The EDI Strategy would have implications for a range of HR policies and processes requiring both a thorough review of these areas and a conscious decision about how the EDI Strategy would be supported going forward.

The Forum discussed the report and noted that some teams were notoriously difficult to engage with, especially those that worked out of doors. Kathryn Cook explained the measures that would be put in place to try to maximise engagement and explained that the Trades Unions would be key to achieving this.

AGREED –

- (1) **That the process for the development of the Council's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Strategy and Plan including a whole Council engagement exercise be noted;**
- (2) **That the submission of the EDI Strategy and Plan to the Personnel Committee meeting to be held on 16 November 2023 be noted.**

5. HR POLICY CHANGES UPDATE

Kathryn Cook Assistant Director HR & OD, reported that the Domestic Violence and Smoking Policies would be submitted to Personnel Committee on 13 July 2023. Further work was needed on the Employment Break Policy and Flexible Workstyles Framework before they were submitted to the appropriate Personnel Committee meeting.

AGREED: That the position be noted.

6. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Alison McNamara, NEU, suggested that the Local Joint Forum receive the proceedings of the Corporate Health & Safety Group and the Trades Unions Group, as information items.

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AGREED: That the proceedings of the Corporate Health & Safety Group and the Trades Unions Group be added to the agenda as standing information items.

(The meeting opened at 5.00 pm and closed at 5.30 pm).