

# Personnel Committee

13 July 2023



**Reading**  
Borough Council  
Working better with you

<b>Title</b>	EDI Strategy and the whole Council Engagement Exercise
<b>Purpose of the report</b>	To note the report for information
<b>Report status</b>	Update for Personnel Committee
<b>Report author</b> (name & job title)	Kathryn Cook Assistant Director HR&OD
<b>Lead Councillor</b> (name & title)	Councillor Terry, Deputy Leader
<b>Corporate priority</b>	Our Foundations
<b>Recommendations</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Note the process for the development of RBCs EDI strategy and plan including a whole council engagement exercise</li><li>2. Note that the EDI strategy and plan will be drafted by September 2023 and will go through formal governance processes, culminating in Personnel Committee in November 2023</li></ol>

## 1. Executive Summary

This report sets out how we will develop RBC's EDI strategy and plan. We will be using a whole council engagement exercise to inform both the strategy and the plan. The strategy and plan will be drafted by September 2023 and will go through the required governance processes after this including going formally to Personnel Committee for agreement on 16<sup>th</sup> November 2023.

## 2. Policy Context

- 2.1. On 20 October 2020, Council agreed a motion on Tackling Employment Inequality – appendix 1. In response the Council commissioned Business in the Community (BITC) to review the Council's approach to EDI. The findings from this review resulted in a formal action plan. The recommendations outlined in the Council Motion and those proposed by BITC have largely either been implemented or are in progress.
- 2.2. The work to develop a formal EDI strategy builds on these foundations. The EDI Strategy will set out the Council's aims and ambitions for becoming a more diverse and inclusive organisation, our priorities for achieving this and how progress and success will be measured

## 3. Background

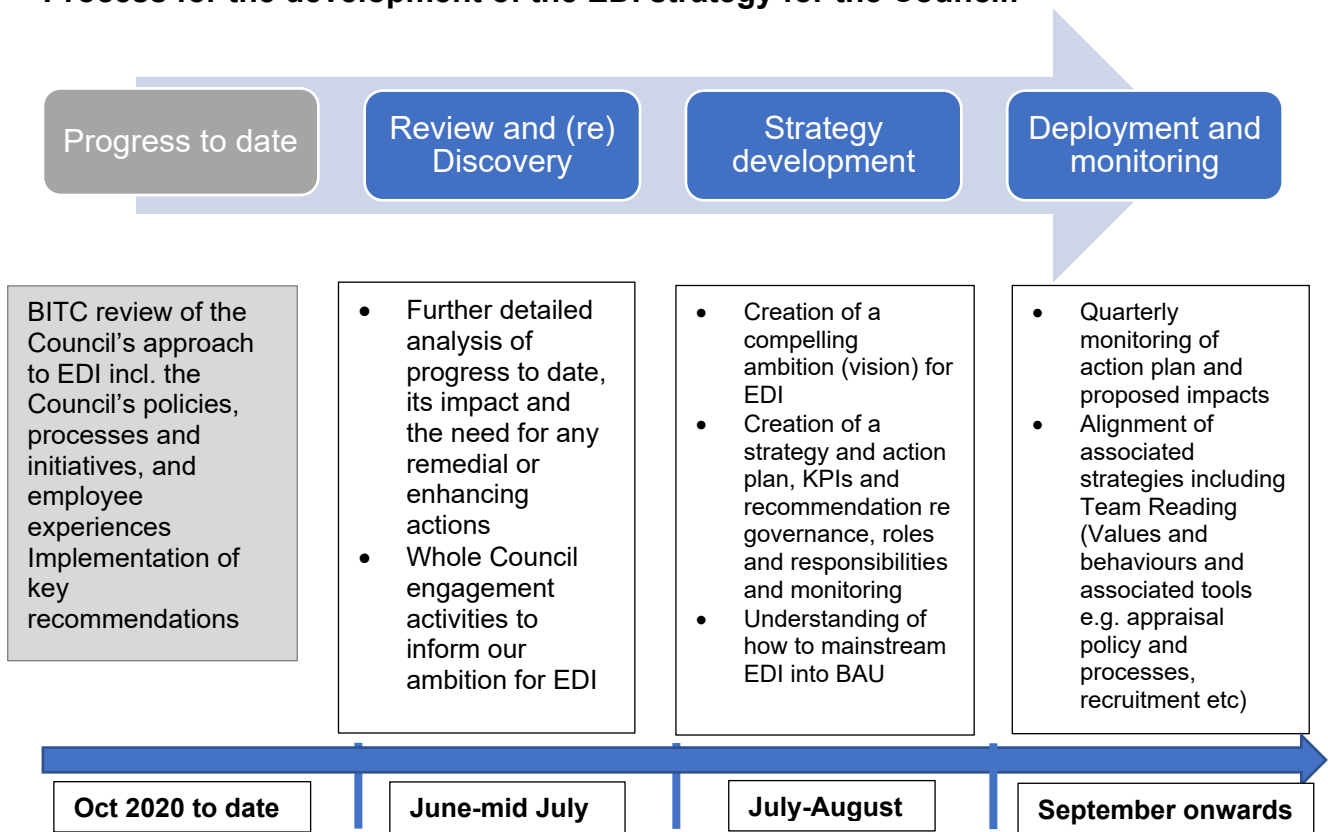
- 3.1 The aim of the EDI programme is to create a diverse and inclusive workforce where everyone, regardless of their background, level or vocation, can thrive and reach their full potential. Although the initial focus was on race, the scope of this aim encompasses all inequalities with a focus on all protected characteristics.
- 3.2 Work on the EDI agenda has been underway since late 2020 and tangible progress has been made - particularly in terms of the equality and diversity agenda - including a steady increase in the ethnic diversity of staff and a more representative senior leadership team

(RSM group). Work to fully embed the actions already taken is continuing. Given progress has been made on some fronts, it is appropriate to now take stock and consider our longer-term aspirations for equality, diversity and inclusion - moving from focussing on the basics to developing a compelling longer-term ambition for equality, diversity and inclusion within the Council.

3.3 Early discussions with senior officers on what their ambition was for EDI going forward show:

- There is a strong feeling that we need to move on from ‘the basics’ of EDI (important as they will continue to be) towards an ambition grounded in how the organisation should feel- quotes from the recent SLG EDI workshop included “we need RBC to be an organisation that feels inclusive, where we belong and is diverse” and “where everyone can thrive and reach their full potential”
- That to fully develop our ambition in a meaningful way, rather than develop our EDI strategy top down, we should involve as many people as possible across the organisation in its development including engaging with teams, staff groups, ambassadors, trades unions etc

**Process for the development of the EDI strategy for the Council:**



### 3.4 Whole council engagement exercise

- We know from research that engaged employees produce better outcomes and are less likely to leave – our people (the majority of whom live in the Borough – or close by) want purpose and meaning from their work and one aspect of the ‘psychological contract’ we have with them centres on making sure their voices can be heard, that they feel that they can contribute and that their opinions count. Communications and surveys can go some way to providing channels to do this but true engagement (and certainly engagement that actively fosters the use of discretionary effort) requires more – it requires that we find ways to engage with them at a deeper level eg through active staff groups; through champions/ambassador groups, through being asked to help shape things that matter to them. It is undoubtedly the case that equality, diversity and inclusion matters to staff and therefore engaging with them as we develop our EDI strategy is essential.
- A structured engagement exercise will take place through multiple channels (face to face, workshops, intranet discussions etc) with multiple stakeholders including leadership and management groups (CLT, SLG and Team Reading), individual teams, staff groups, unions etc. It will focus on a small number of 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?
- A thematic analysis of responses to the questions asked will be carried out to help us to identify areas of focus for the strategy and its enabling action plan - the act of involving people in developing this important agenda *through involving them in its development* is equally important

### 3.5 Strategy development

The whole council engagement exercise will provide valuable insight into priorities and actions in relation to the EDI agenda and additional external consultancy support will be used to enable the development of the EDI strategy – based on the findings of both the review of data/impact and the whole council engagement exercise. The consultancy support is expected to cost in the region of £35k.

The strategic ambition for EDI is expected to have implications for a range of key HR policies and processes including Team Reading values, our approach to recruitment, our strategy for apprenticeships and appraisal. The EDI strategy will require a thorough review of all of these areas and a conscious decision about how EDI will be supported and mainstreamed going forward.

### 3.6 Deployment and Monitoring

The delivery plan for our EDI strategy will need to be monitored quarterly with relevant metrics included in our performance reporting process.

### 3.7 Conclusion

We have the opportunity to re-energise our approaches to EDI – learning from what’s been achieved so far, addressing gaps and most importantly setting a clear strategic vision for taking this important agenda forward. This paper outlines a process for doing so which is both inclusive and which will seek and secure appropriate specialist input to what is a complex, multi-faceted area of work.

#### **4. Contribution to Strategic Aims**

- 4.1. The work to develop an EDI strategy and plan for RBC will enable the Council better to reflect the Borough and its residents, providing opportunities and support for diverse recruitment, development and progression.

#### **5. Environmental and Climate Implications**

- 5.1. There are no environmental or climate implications arising from the work to develop the Council's EDI strategy and plan as this focuses on existing and future staff of the Council.

#### **6. Community Engagement**

- 6.1. N/A

#### **7. Equality Implications**

- 7.1. This work is founded in a commitment to improving our equality, diversity and inclusion as an employer. It will reflect all relevant legislation including the Equality Act 2010, including Section 149, which requires a public authority ... in the exercise of its functions, [to] have due regard to the need to—
- eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;
  - advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
  - foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

#### **8. Other Relevant Considerations**

- 8.1. N/A

#### **9. Legal Implications**

- 9.1. N/A this paper is a briefing paper for Strategic Briefing

#### **10. Financial Implications**

Costs are anticipated to be c £35k for specialist consultancy support to assist with the creation of the strategy.

#### **11. Timetable for Implementation**

The draft strategy and plan will be produced in September 2023 and will go through the required governance processes after this including going formally go to Personnel Committee for agreement on 16<sup>th</sup> November 2023.

#### **12. Background Papers**

- 12.1. There are none.

### **Appendices**

1. Council motion on Tackling Employment Inequality (20/10/20)

## FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The financial implications arising from the proposals set out in this report are set out below:-

### 1. Revenue Implications

Use this Table in the report or as an Appendix to set out the revenue implications:

	2023/24 £000	2024/25 £000	2025/26 £000
Employee costs (see note1)	35,000		
Other running costs			
Capital financings costs			
<b>Expenditure</b>	35,000		
Income from:			
Fees and charges (see note2)			
Grant funding (specify)			
Other income			
<b>Total Income</b>			
Net Cost(+)/saving (-)	35,000		

### 2. Capital Implications

Capital Programme reference from budget book: page line	2023/24 £000	2024/25 £000	2025/26 £000
Proposed Capital Expenditure	N/A		
Funded by			
Grant (specify)			
Section 106 (specify)			
Other services			
Capital Receipts/Borrowing			
<b>Total Funding</b>	N/A		

**Note:** where more than one option /proposal is being made it may be easier to set out the above information in an Appendix.

### 3. Value for Money (VFM)

The cost of specialist consultancy support to develop the EDI strategy are subject to a competitive tender. This specialist support will be limited to those areas where internal capability is not available.

### 4. Risk Assessment.

Risks exist around not developing an EDI strategy – through its development (and the creation of a plan to deliver it) we will better reflect the residents of the borough and provide opportunities to all to progress and develop.

## Appendix 1:

### Tackling Employment Inequality – Motion to Council (20 October 2020)

Proposer: Cllr Challenger  
Seconder: Cllr James

This Council notes that:

- Just 52 out of the 1099 most powerful roles in the country are held by People of Colour, or 4.7% of the total number compared to the 13% proportion of the UK population (Colour of Power report 2020).
- There are 56 Unitary Authorities in the UK, currently only two Chief Executives identify as BAME.
- 3.3% of local government staff are Black in the South East compared to over 10% of the population.
- Progression remains important to BAME employees across the UK, with 70% saying that career progression is important to them, compared to only 42% of White British employees. However, over half of BAME employees (52%), believe that they will have to leave their current organisation to progress in their career, in contrast with 38% of White British employees who believe this.
- The evidence clearly shows that the workforces and institutions of the UK and our region are not reflective of their stakeholders.
- Many of the recommendations in the Lammy Review (2017), the Dame Angiolini Report (2017), the Windrush Lessons Learned Review (2018), the McGregor-Smith Review (2017), and the Macpherson report (1999) have not been implemented by Government.
- Reading Borough Council commits to being an anti-racist organisation – one that does not just tackle inequality, but actively fights racism in the Borough.
- Work is already being undertaken at the Council to identify the gaps and long-term solutions to fix the inequalities in our community and workforce, focusing on the understanding of the causes and consequences of inequality

This Council resolves to:

- Ask officers to bring forward plans to improve the diversity of the Council's senior leadership by instigating inclusive leadership training and seek to achieve the 'excellent' rating in future Local Government Equality Framework peer challenges.
- Develop an apprenticeship scheme that commits to increasing the number of black employees across the Council in a range of roles.
- Work with partners to improve diversity across the public sector.
- Request that the Corporate Management Team to identify a Lead Officer at Executive Director level to champion equalities work across the borough.
- Publish Ethnicity Pay Gap reporting on an annual basis and lobby Government to make such reporting mandatory for all organisations.
- Improve transparency in our recruitment, retention and progression data of Black/BME colleagues and develop an Action Plan.
- Become a signatory to Business In The Community's Race at Work Charter.
- Engage with any future Government commissions on racism in the UK and lobby the Government to implement outstanding recommendations in existing reviews.