

Committee: Overview and Scrutiny Commission

Date: 28 April 2021

Subject: Demographic profile of councillors and senior officers update

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Recommendations:

That the Overview and Scrutiny Commission review the information below and take a decision on whether it wishes to undertake further scrutiny of this issue and if so, how.

1 PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1. Appendix A provides tables setting out the demographic profile of the population of Merton, of councillors and of council staff and senior officers. The information has been updated, where possible, at the request of the Commission so that it may review the situation and decided whether it wishes to undertake further scrutiny of the under-representation of certain demographic groups amongst councillors and senior managers.
- 1.2. However, this work is incomplete. See points 1.3 to 1.6.
- 1.3. HR can only provide a demographic profile of Council Managers but not Councillors.
- 1.4. HR input indicated that there is a large element of double handling here in terms of Committees, because all these issues are discussed at the JCC who receive regular reports.
- 1.5. Electoral Services Team undertook a survey of Councillors last year to provide the data but unfortunately, due to the tight turnaround between meetings and the pre-election period, they did not have time to conduct such a survey of Councillors this year.
- 1.6. Electoral Services have requested we review this subject again after the 2022 elections, as currently the only change from last year's Membership is that we have one less Councillor now due to the vacancy in St Helier ward.

2 DISCUSSION

- 2.1. The Commission is asked to discuss and decide whether it wishes to undertake further scrutiny and, if so, how and when. In particular, the Commission may wish to follow up on the under-representation of young people and women amongst councillors and of black and minority ethnic communities amongst senior managers.
- 2.2. **Updates received from HR;**
- 2.3. HR report regularly back to the JCC on all matters relating to RACE. A specific concern of the JCC has been the under-representation of BAME communities amongst senior managers.
- 2.4. The following actions are underway.

- In the year 2020/21 39% of applicants for posts graded MGA and above were BAME, 43% of those shortlisted were BAME yet only 29% of those appointed were BAME. It should be noted that there were just 17 appointments and with such a small cohort variances of +/- one person can cause large percentage differences. It is a council requirement that all panel members and chairs who take part in the recruitment and selection process must have undergone the relevant recruitment and selection training; regularly refreshing their skills every 2 years. It is the responsibility of the 'chair' of the panel to check that all panel members have attended such training. In the case of member-level appointments (Director and Chief Executive posts) training is provided to all panel members. The recruitment and selection training has been reviewed and new on line modules have been bespoke for Merton use. The new modules will be available at the end of April and all recruiting managers and councillors will be asked to undertake this training.
- Managers will be required to refresh this training every 2 years.
- CMT have recently approved that all Senior appointments will have a BAME member on the final panel and within all final recruitment panels held within the Council we actively encourage and support diverse panels.
- A new annual Equalities in Employment report which will be produced at the end of April each year will look at more in-depth data across all protected characteristics. This information will be a public document once approved by CMT. The Equality Steering Group will work with HR to identify a suitable action plan for recommendation to CMT.
- The bi annual survey has just concluded and results available. The results are broken down by across the protected characteristics and analysis of these findings will be presented to CMT at the end of April and the Equality Steering Group in May and any actions identified will feed into the overall Equality action plan which will be regularly monitored by the Equality Steering Group and progress reported back to CMT on a regular basis
- Merton have successfully been accepted as part of the WRES pilot. The WRES focuses on the social care workforce but Merton will be following the WRES standards and applying them across the whole of the workforce.
- HR and Communications are working proactively with the Race Equality Network (REN) to identify, whether there is a requirement for a specific pulse survey on RACE and if agreed that one would be beneficial what questions should be asked.
- L&D have produced training pathways so staff and managers are able to identify the Core, Optional and Specialist training required for themselves/ their teams.
- HR continue to ensure that when appointing agencies for senior recruitment that we ask them to demonstrate their track record in

producing BAME candidates and the number of successful BAME appointments. This is a practice that will continue.

2.6 The following further actions are also being taken:

- The BAME profile amongst senior managers is still below that of the whole workforce. Therefore, actions are being taken to ensure we have good practices in place and that these are adhered to.
- Sample checks will be introduced to ensure all shortlisting and interview panel members have up-to-date recruitment and selection training. This check will be undertaken in all cases for appointments at MGC and above. This training will include awareness of unconscious bias in the recruitment process.
- In addition to actions being developed at departmental level, L&D have developed a training programmes to support diversity and cultural awareness programme including “Unconscious Bias”, Anti-Racism training and have recently engaged 10 pairs of mentors/mentees supporting a 6 months pilot programme of Mutual Mentoring with the aim to achieve a more cohesive workforce able to serve our communities better.
- Where external recruiters are used for senior appointments – they are instructed to conduct additional searches and through their channels encourage applications from BAME candidates.
- The Council will seek to introduce diversity in panel representation for senior appointments and this can be done by panel participation or introducing stakeholders’ panels.
- During 2019/20, the L&D worked with CMT to review its leadership development offer and delivered a four moduled programme of training. The module on Talent Management and Coaching has recently been extended to all managers in the business to support the proactive and inclusive development of all staff. will
- HR will continue to remind and encourage staff twice yearly to update their personal equality data on iTrent so that our monitoring can be 100% accurate.

3 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

The Commission can choose its preferred approach to any future scrutiny, subject to officer resources being available to support the work.

4 CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN OR PROPOSED

4.1. Not applicable.

5 TIMETABLE

5.1. Not applicable.

6 FINANCIAL, RESOURCE AND PROPERTY IMPLICATIONS

6.1. There are no property or resource implications at this time.

7 LEGAL AND STATUTORY IMPLICATIONS

7.1. None for the purposes of this report.

8 HUMAN RIGHTS, EQUALITIES AND COMMUNITY COHESION IMPLICATIONS

8.1. The Commission is asked to discuss the report and decide whether it wishes to undertake further scrutiny or to receive further information.

9 CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

9.1. None for the purposes of this report.

10 RISK MANAGEMENT AND HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

None for the purpose of this report.

11 APPENDICES – THE FOLLOWING DOCUMENTS ARE TO BE PUBLISHED WITH THIS REPORT AND FORM PART OF THE REPORT

None

12 BACKGROUND PAPERS

12.1. Appendix A – Updated demographic data available

12.2. Appendix B OSC January 2020 Demographic profile report.

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