

LEICESTERSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

EQUALITIES BOARD

**Minutes of the meeting held on Monday 16th September 2019,
Goscote Room, County Hall, at 10:30am**

Equalities Board members / representatives	
Gordon McFarlane	Assistant Director, Corporate Services, Corporate Resources (Chair)
Ian Vears	Assistant Director, Environment & Transport
Christine Collingwood	Lead Commissioner, Adults & Communities
Lindsey Kirby	Head of Business Services, Children & Family Services
Mo Seedat	Head of Democratic Services, Chief Exec's
Anthony Stone	Chair of DWG
Liz Biswas	Co-Chair of LGBT+ Staff Network
Rabinder Lail	Chair of BWG
Kaye Aris	Unison
Supporting officers	
Mark Foote	HR/OD Business Partner, Corporate Resources
Richard Wilding	Service Delivery Business Partner, Strategic & Business Intelligence
Zafar Saleem	Head of Communities, Policy & Resilience, Chief Exec's
Donna Worship	Policy Manager, Chief Exec's
Andrew Jeffreys	Policy Officer (Equalities), Chief Exec's
Also attending	
Lee Adams	Business Manager Operations, Children & Family Services
Leon Charikar	Consultation and Engagement Manager, Chief Exec's
Apologies	
Mike McHugh, Paula Sumner, Kate Revell, Mandy Baughurst	

Agenda Item	Discussion	Action by
1	Welcome – present and apologies (GMcF) See above.	

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Equality Strategy 2020-24 Engagement Session (DW)

The Board was asked to consider a revised approach to 2020-24 that simplified the Council's equality aims into an internal focus on improved processes and ownership of equalities, and an external focus on the outcomes that matter to residents and communities through better service user experience, satisfaction and participation in public life. Specific objectives developed around these aims could include improving LCC's knowledge and understanding of communities' and service users' needs, aligning outcomes to more evidence-based decision-making, demonstrating leadership both individually and collectively, and supporting the workforce so they are better equipped to respond to equalities issues experienced as employees and in delivering services. Actions would be developed to reflect internal and external stakeholder engagement being carried out in parallel with a three-month public consultation and feedback from it so that a final draft Strategy for 2020-24 can be taken through Scrutiny and Council reporting processes for approval by the Cabinet in Spring 2020. The refresh process would build on the good work and commitment of staff demonstrated by previous strategies as well as enabling processes to be critically reviewed to ensure they are both proportionate and prioritised against risks.

Points raised in discussion on the proposed **Aims** were:

- Opportunity to use the internal focus in positive ways around leadership and best practice to reflect previous good work and our ambition despite reduced resources
- Being clear about the benefits of the external focus to build meet the ongoing challenges LCC faces and how to respond to them without emphasising the negatives.
- Securing more member involvement whether through training – previous sessions had been held with Cabinet and Scrutiny Chairs and Spokes – or other appropriate opportunities such as the County Council elections in 18 months' time
- Using the effectiveness of senior management communications and conference / events to deliver clear messages to key audiences within LCC
- Possible focus in future on community leadership – what's happening in their communities and how LCC can support this

Points made in discussion on the proposed **Objectives** were:

- Ensuring that these also apply to colleagues as well as customers and communities so that the “people we serve” is inclusive
- How to promote the evidence and other management information products being developed by Business Intelligence
- Building relationships is a two-way process – there is a need to do more on community liaison and how to bring people together
- How to share learning from EHRIAs, whether from external views

	<p>such as the High Court judgment on SEND or internal views such as the review of the template in Childrens' and Family Services, across LCC</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Also understand how members used the information from the E&T EHRIA to make their decision – ie: to understand the whole process in demonstrating “due regard” • Improve internal engagement and consultation with colleagues to supplement formal consultation and governance processes 	
3	<p>Minutes of Equalities Board held on Monday 16th September 2019</p> <p>i. Accuracy – the Minutes were accepted as correct.</p> <p>ii. Matters arising</p> <p>a. Mandatory training – HR had taken a report to CMT.</p> <p>b. Web accessibility – update to be taken to next Board meeting (16th December)</p>	AJ
4	<p>Equality & Diversity Performance Update Q1 2019-20 and Workforce Diversity (RW)</p> <p>Performance against most indicators compared to Q4 2018-19 has been relatively good with the proportion of BME employees at grade 13 and above stabilising and the proportion of disabled employees and those willing to declare their sexual orientation now exceeding targets. Against this, there has been a small slippage in the percentage of disabled employees declaring a disability and those at grade 13 although both indicators remain on track. Mandatory training figures have improved by over 7% for the ‘Promoting Fairness and Respect’ course with completion of the ‘Managing Diversity’ and associated refresher courses also improving more incrementally. Hate crime monitoring continues to show an increase in reported incidents, mostly on racial or sexual orientation grounds, above the previous year although the Community Insights Survey results show a 5% increase in the number of respondents agreeing that the Council treats all types of people fairly.</p> <p>It had been noted that there was some fluctuation in declaration rates by staff withdrawing some of the details in their profile. MF responded that, when the new Oracle system goes live in 2020, this would be accompanied by a campaign for staff to update their information.</p>	
5	<p>Workforce Diversity Targets to 2021-22 (RW)</p> <p>The employment equality targets based on the combined Leicester City and Leicestershire County local labour market that were agreed by the Board in 2016 are coming to an end. Maintaining a three-year cycle of targets for 2019/20, 2020/21 and 2021/22 will mean that, by the end of the period, the Census 2021 results will become available to inform the subsequent set of targets. The most relevant protected characteristics for workforce diversity purposes are Race, Disability, Gender and Sexual</p>	

	<p>Orientation and the proposed targets reflect performance over the past three years as well as LCC's position compared to other local authorities (where up to date information is available).</p> <p>The proposed approach is to continue to set appropriate levels of incrementally rising targets for these four indicators both across the whole workforce and, in the case of Race, Disability and Gender, by the proportion of employees at junior management level (grade 13) and, for Sexual Orientation, by the proportion of employees declaring as LGB. Progress towards the current targets has been maintained or is stable for most indicators by group except for both Disability indicators and BME staff at grade 13 although LCC is performing slightly better than other two-tier authorities for the BME indicators and Disabled staff at grade 13. Conversely, LCC is amongst the lowest authority for the proportion of women in the workforce but this figure is affected by employment status and higher levels of female staff in some departments than across LCC as a whole. Specific indicators are not proposed for Age (Under 25 and Over 65) or Religion & Belief except for monitoring trends which have, apart from the proportion of employees aged 65 or more, increased over the last three years.</p> <p>In discussion, maintaining incremental targets was thought to be appropriate and sufficiently flexible to reflect unforeseen changes such as the impact of MTFS. Continuing to provide development opportunities to underrepresented staff so they could step up and want to take on management roles was necessary to build on the improvements made so far. A critical focus on known barriers – BME progression was not being hampered by a shortage of applicants but by selection and interview processes – is also needed including whether external support could be commissioned to support the interventions already made to improve this indicator.</p> <p>Decision: Agreed by Board</p> <p>Action: Seek appropriate consultants / specialist expertise in BME recruitment and progression.</p>	<p>AJ / DW</p>
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6	<p>Spring Board / Forward Evaluation (RW and NB)</p> <p>This had been requested by the Equalities Board to see whether the positive action in removing barriers to progression within LCC for specific groups of staff had been achieved. The Spring Board course supports female employees in non-managerial roles while the Spring Forward course is aimed at male and female managers identifying as BME, LGBT+, Disabled or as a Carer. Both courses are personal development programmes which focus on appropriate communication, learning and support techniques to enable participants to identify actions to meet their individual goals. 432 employees from all departments have attended since the programme started in 2010 with an average attendance against the total number of female employees across LCC of 9.6%.</p> <p>An online survey was conducted between February-March 2019 to obtain attendee feedback on the which 141 responses were received out of 318 current staff members who had attended the courses. Respondents were mainly female, aged between 35-54, of White ethnic background, Heterosexual, and had worked for LCC for over 11 years. Respondents who identified as Disabled, BME or LGBT / Other were above the respective declaration rates for these protected characteristics across LCC. Spring Board was the most attended course by just over half of the respondents compared to Spring Forward while a small number of staff (3%) had attended both.</p> <p>Overall responses on the extent to which the courses had achieved a range of objectives including personal effectiveness, improving practices and confidence were positive. In terms of progression, just under half of attendees had moved role since the programme with 72% of these also achieving some form of promotion. The proportion of respondents with line management responsibilities increased from 26% before or during the programme to 33% after.</p> <p>The Board welcomed the positive benefits the Spring programme had brought to participants in terms of improved development, progression and legacy effects and whether any comparative programmes were available for other protected groups.</p> <p>Action: Establish Task & Finish Group to identify and promote Spring courses for wider benefit, eg: BME, LGBT+, DWG</p>	DW / AJ
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7	<p>Interpretation and Translation Contract Report: The Big Word (DW)</p> <p>A new Interpretation and Translation services contract provided by The Big Word commenced on 1st September following expiry of the last</p>	
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	<p>permitted annual extension under the old contract. The new contract likewise operates on a 12-month rolling basis with up to three extensions by agreement. The recommissioning and direct award process was informed by prior feedback from departmental users so that, as far as practicable, service-specific and operational requirements could be reflected in the new specification and procurement framework – the need to meet occasionally very short notice needs or external timescales were identified as examples. The new contract will include migration in due course to an easier to use portal for all Interpretation and Translation services including Video interpretation.</p> <p>Although LCC was a relatively small customer for The Big Word, overall spend on Interpretation & Translation had gradually increased. Overall service performance was good with fulfilment rates under the old contract exceeding targets and complaints / issues over interpreter availability and capacity reducing. As the main users of the service are Adults & Communities and Children & Family Services departments, it is recommended that administrative arrangements should change to direct invoicing to departments instead of the current centralised reconciliation and recharging process through Chief Executive's.</p> <p>LK asked about the possibility of using staff members to improve flexibility and reduce costs. DW said that this was not Council policy as there were risks in specific situations of not using independent and professionally trained interpreters.</p> <p>Decision: Agreed by Board</p> <p>Action: Departments to feedback focal point for invoicing to CEx Business Support</p>	All
8	<p>Policy Officer (Equalities) Update (AJ)</p> <p>The date for the Leicestershire Inter Faith Forum had been agreed as 10th October with the Bishop of Loughborough as the keynote speaker on issues of identity and integration. The Lead Member for Equalities will close the event and also draw Forum members and attendees' attention to the forthcoming consultation on the Council's Equality Strategy 2020-24.</p> <p>Other faith work included the potential for reinstating links between the Forum and Leicestershire SACRE, and participation in a telephone interview with the Christian thinktank, Theos, which is carrying out research on the role of churches in promoting social cohesion.</p> <p>LCC's Stonewall submission was submitted through the online portal by the 9th September deadline. LCC will also participate in the pilot LGBT+ Inclusion Award scheme which has been developed by Leicester Shire Equality Forum partners in conjunction with the Leicester LGBT+ Centre.</p>	

	<p>Mentee managers have been identified to support the six LCC staff members taking part in the Better Care Together reverse mentoring programme.</p> <p>Decision: Agreed by Board</p>	
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9	<p>Update from Workers' Groups</p> <p>Black Workers' Group –</p> <p>Disabled Workers' Group – the annual event is being planned for 3rd December on the theme of seeking out hidden disabilities. Sessions include Autism and Pain Management by external presenters, and Stress by Wellbeing support by HR.</p> <p>LGBT+ Staff Network – Leicester Pride was well attended by staff at all levels including the Director of Children & Family Services (Jane Moore) and two elected members (Cllrs Bedford and Eynon). The LCC stand was centred on the Fostering & Adoption bus.</p>	
10	<p>Any other business</p> <p>LC asked about arrangements for communicating major religious festivals to staff. LB responded that Comms use the Equality & Diversity Network UK calendar, which can also be accessed on the LCC website, to ensure that a representative range of festivals are commemorated.</p> <p>KA raised the issue of lone working practices and what protection was available to staff in the event of experiencing discriminatory behaviour from service users.</p> <p>Action: Policy Officer (Equalities) to review and advise</p>	AJ
	<p>Date and time of next meeting: Monday 16th December at 10:30am in Gartree Committee Room</p>	
	<p>Minutes to: Equalities Board, John Sinnott, Cllr. Louise Richardson</p>	