

Committee: CABINET	Date: 08 April 2009	Classification: Unrestricted	Report No: CAB 144/089	Agenda Item:
Report of: Deb Clarke, Joint Director of Human Resources Originating officer(s) Mark Grimley, Joint Assistant Director, Organisational Development, Workforce Strategy & Equalities		Title: Workforce to Reflect the Community 2009/10 Wards Affected: ALL		

1. Summary

- 1.1 The Council has long been committed to achieving a workforce that reflects the community of Tower Hamlets, and has made year on year progress to achieving that aim.
- 1.2 The attached strategy sets out progress over the last year, highlights priorities for the coming year and identifies a series of actions aimed at accelerating the scale and pace of progress.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 Cabinet is recommended to
 - 2.1.1 Note the performance of the council on its Workforce to Reflect the Community Strategy
 - 2.1.2 Agree the strategy and action plan set out in Appendix A

3. Background

- 3.1 Over recent years, the council has made significant progress in employing and developing talent from our local community. As at January 2009, the council had a workforce with a 48% representation of BME Groups.
- 3.2 Overall, the Bangladeshi group represents 19.3% of the workforce, an increase of 0.7% in the past year (equivalent to 40 people). This is more than double the increase of any other BME group.

- 3.3 Other key successes in the past year include:
- Entry-level programmes have successfully increased the number of younger people from BME backgrounds in the council to 63% of 19-29 year olds. Across the same age range, 48% of the workforce is Bangladeshi.
 - We have undertaken an intensive study of workforce progression and found that the council provides equality of opportunity for development across all equality strands.
 - Recent recruitment at 2 director-level positions has improved senior representation of BME groups at CMT.
- 3.4 The Council agreed a refreshed Joint Workforce to Reflect the Community Strategy last year, which, for the first time, set out clearly a focus on the different ethnic groups that make up the population of Tower Hamlets, rather than focussing on 'BME' overall, and which identified the working age population of Tower Hamlets. This had the effect of clearly showing the under representation of the Bangladeshi community particularly, both overall and at senior levels in the organisation, which has been a helpful focus for activities over the past year.
- 3.5 The report also clearly identified that people with disabilities were under represented throughout the workforce and at senior levels. The situation has worsened over the past year.
- 3.6 Finally, the Council has benefited from strong managerial and political leadership on this issue which has driven a greater understanding of the imperatives and service benefits of our strategy. This has had a twin effect:
- Firstly of leading us to evaluate our current schemes for recruiting and developing a diverse workforce, with recommendations to change some of the focus of our activities which are set out in this report
 - Secondly of now driving the target setting process and accountability for delivery through the organisation, meaning that each directorate has now agreed in principle targets and schemes aimed at embedding the workforce to reflect the community strategy in day to day delivery and management. These targets and schemes are set out later in the strategy.

4. Comments of the Chief Financial Officer

- 4.1 The actions set out in the Strategy can be met from within existing resources, which includes £1m allocated from Area Based Grant as a result of decisions taken in setting the 2009/10 budget.

5. Concurrent Report of the Assistant Chief Executive (Legal)

- 5.1 Cabinet is asked to agree the attached Workforce to Reflect the Community Strategy and action plan. The strategy and action plan expressly address the composition of the workforce by reference to race, disability and age.
- 5.2 The Council has legal duties regarding race and disability to promote equality of opportunity, good relations and positive attitudes as well as eliminating harassment and unlawful discrimination. There is not presently a similar general duty upon the Council in respect of age, but this should not prevent the Council from addressing representation in the workforce in lawful ways.
- 5.3 The Race Relations Act 1976 specifically permits positive action on the grounds of race where monitoring shows under-representation in the workforce. Such positive action should offer only training or encouragement designed to help create a level playing field and not employment.
- 5.4 The Employment Equality (Age) Regulations 2006 permit positive action on the grounds of age where it reasonably appears to the Council that it prevents or compensates for disadvantages linked to age suffered by persons of that age or age group doing that work or likely to take up that work. The positive action that is permitted is as follows: (a) affording persons of a particular age or age group access to facilities for training; or (b) encouraging persons of a particular age or age group to take advantage of opportunities for doing particular work.
- 5.5 The Disability Discrimination Act 1995 does not contain a similar provision permitting positive action, but does impose a broad general duty on the Council as referred to above. The general duty requires the Council, amongst other things, to have regard to the following in carrying out its functions: (a) the need to promote equality of opportunity between disabled persons and other persons; and (b) the need to take steps to take account of disabled persons' disabilities, even where that involves treating disabled persons more favourably than other persons. The general duty would appear to be broad enough to support the actions proposed in relation to employees with disabilities.

6. One Tower Hamlets Considerations

- 6.1 Developing a workforce that is reflective of our community supports the Council's strategic objectives. Through attracting and developing local talent into the workforce we contribute to supporting community cohesion, developing a prosperous community and, through allied strategies for the workforce, support objectives for training and skills,

improved health and well-being and developing stronger partnerships with local organisations.

7. Sustainable Action for a Greener Environment

- 7.1 Locally employed people reduce the number of journeys required in and out of the borough through local people living closer to their place of work.

8. Risk Management Implications

- 8.1 The council's risk register identifies workforce planning as key to ensuring the council has a skilled workforce to meet the needs of service delivery. The Workforce to Reflect the Community supports under-represented groups in the workplace through identifying where skills and career opportunities exist and developing employees to ensure that can undertake the duties required.

9. Efficiency Statement

- 9.1 The Workforce to Reflect the Community Strategy contributes to reducing vacancies and developing staff in hard-to-fill positions reducing the need for agency staffing and targeted recruitment at the local community – further reducing the cost to recruit.
- 9.2 The annual report will set out value for money and efficiency considerations.

Local Government Act, 1972 Section 100D (As amended) List of "Background Papers" used in the preparation of this report

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1 – Workforce to Reflect the Community Strategy 2009/10