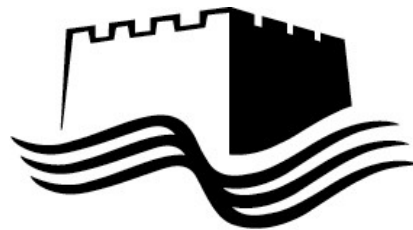


**Improving Disabled and Ethnic Minority staff representation at the  
senior manager (LP07+) level**

**Scrutiny Challenge Session Report**



**TOWER HAMLETS**

**London Borough of Tower Hamlets  
March 2016**

## **Chair's Foreword**

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### **Councillor Maium Miah, Scrutiny Lead for Resources**

The council is committed to ensuring that its workforce is reflective of the community and has rightfully set targets for its senior management in terms of women, disability and ethnicity (specifically ethnic minorities). This scrutiny challenge session looked at the progress at senior management level that the council has made in this area and recommends areas for improvement.

The review invited staff forum representatives from the BAME staff forum, Disabled staff forum, HR officers and Councillors with an interest in developing a workforce to reflect the community, to evaluate the council's performance to date and foster improvement. Additionally, statements from the council's external recruitment agencies were also sourced.

Since 1998 the council has had a commitment to having a senior management team that reflects the community and has progressed in terms of representation of women. However, progress towards having an ethnically diverse senior management and representative levels of disabled senior managers has been challenging and not as rapid as hoped. This Challenge Session is a small but positive endeavour to boost the efforts and rejuvenate the focus on this important area.

More than two thirds (69%) of the borough's population belong to minority ethnic groups. Having a senior management and workforce that reflects the local community is important to ensure local needs, perspectives and priorities are addressed by the council and enable the council to deliver services that are appropriate and effective to improve outcomes for local people. It was clear throughout the challenge session that further work is needed to achieve a workforce to reflect the community particularly at senior management level. I hope that the recommendations outlined in this report are turned into reality.

I would like to thank everyone who participated in this challenge session, particularly the staff members who shared their perspectives, and the officers that supported the challenge session and helped inform the recommendations outlined in this report.

Cllr Maium Miah  
Canary Wharf ward  
07983 798 791

## Summary of recommendations

### **RECOMMENDATION 1:**

The council should adopt a new talent management process for all staff to replace Navigate and actively promote the scheme to ethnic minority and disabled staff through all available communication channels.

**RECOMMENDATION 2:** The council to ensure that all HR schemes and policies to improve ethnic minority and disabled staff representation at the senior manager level include clear objectives and intended results. These need to be communicated to all staff. Additionally, the impact of any implemented scheme and policy will need to be monitored.

**RECOMMENDATION 3:** The council should reinvigorate the BAME and disabled staff forums and ensure that they are fit for purpose, are representative, are led by effective chairs and have senior champions whose roles are communicated clearly to all staff.

**RECOMMENDATION 4:** The council undergoes an organisational culture audit focusing on diversity and inclusion. Specific areas of focus should include line management practice; talent management processes; the effectiveness of current equality and diversity training and staff engagement.

**RECOMMENDATION 5:** The council should roll out a survey for all staff to provide their views on career development and any barriers, if any, that are perceived. The survey should seek a representative response, including from BAME and disabled staff.

**RECOMMENDATION 6:** The council's HR service to provide a detailed action plan on how they will address any concerns raised through the survey with regular performance monitoring reports provided to the Tower Hamlets Equality Steering Group.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. Tower Hamlets is one of the most diverse boroughs in the country with over half of residents in the borough from an ethnic minority background. Since 1998 the council has prioritised having a workforce that reflects the community (WFTRC). Strategic targets for senior managers (LP07) were developed for disabled, women and ethnic minority staff.
- 1.2. WFTRC is a key activity in the council's single equality framework and strategic plan. Having a workforce that reflects community ensures that council services are delivered appropriately for the community and local needs are fully understood.
- 1.3. The aim of the challenge session was to explore ways in which the council can improve ethnic minority and disabled staff representation at the senior management level (LP07+)
- 1.4. The session was underpinned by the following core questions:
- Is there a perception of a glass ceiling for ethnic minority and disabled staff?
  - Are there any positive action schemes in place and if so, are they having any effect?
  - How do we manage talent within the council?
- 1.5. The session was chaired by Councillor Maium Miah (Scrutiny Lead Resources) on Wednesday 10<sup>th</sup> February 2016. The session took the form of a presentation by the Service Head for HR and Workforce Development and the Senior HR Manager, a statement from one of the procured recruitment agencies, Green Park, and a roundtable discussion.
- 1.6. The session was attended by:

Councillor Maium Miah	Scrutiny Lead Resources
Councillor Amina Ali	Vice-Chair of the Somali Taskforce and Chair of Health Scrutiny Panel, LBTH
Councillor Oliur Rahman	LBTH
Simon Kilbey	Service Head, HR and Workforce Development, LBTH
Corinne Hargreaves	Senior HR Manager, LBTH
Leo Nicholas	Senior Strategy, Policy and Performance Officer, LBTH
Assan Ali	Staff forum representative, LBTH
Lorina Dujon	Staff forum representative, LBTH

Sarla Meisuria	Staff forum representative, LBTH
Ali Khan	Advisor to the Independent Group, LBTH

## **2. THE COUNCIL'S COMMITMENT TO A WORKFORCE TO REFLECT THE COMMUNITY (WFTRC)**

### **Context of a WFTRC**

- 2.1 The Council's Workforce to Reflect the Community Strategy was introduced in 1998 to:
- Make positive steps towards combating poverty in the borough by opening up job and training opportunities to local people, particularly targeting those groups within the community who are under-represented in the workforce.
  - Work towards more responsive service delivery by employing more local people from under-represented groups.
  - Promote the Council as a responsible employer.
- 2.2 Targets were set for the percentage of top 5% earners, senior managers (LP07+), who are disabled, women or from an ethnic minority. Additionally, targets for the total workforce were set. These targets have featured in the council's strategic priorities since the strategy was introduced in 1998.
- 2.3 In 2014/15 the council set a target for 50% of senior managers (LP07+) to be women, this target was essentially reached, in 2014/15 49.89% of top earners were women.

### **Current performance for ethnic minority and disabled managers**

- 2.4 Currently 26.85% of top earners are from an ethnic minority. A target of 30% has been set for 2015/16. However, 49.3% of the working age population in the borough is from an ethnic minority.
- 2.5 The disabled target for top earners within the council is 11.8%, which is the same as percentage of the working age population with a disability in the borough according to the 2011 Census. Currently 8.17% of top earners within the Council have a disability.

### **Legislation**

- 2.6 The council's commitment to having a senior management that reflects the community is supported by two pieces of legislation. The Equality Act 2010 and the Local Government and Housing Act 1989.
- 2.7 Under the Equality Act 2010, the council must in the exercise of its functions, 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;

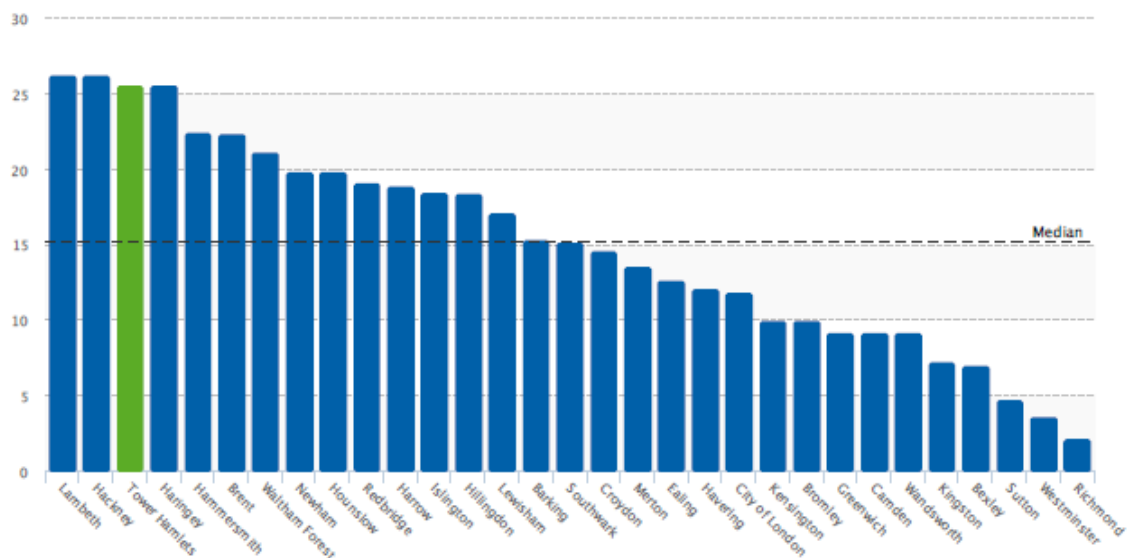
- Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic<sup>1</sup> and persons who do not share it.
- 2.6 Section 7 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 provides that all appointments should be made on merit; however section 159 of the Equality Act 2010 allows employers to use positive action on a case by case basis when recruiting and promoting. Additionally, the Act makes it lawful to select the candidate from a disadvantaged or underrepresented group where two candidates are both ‘as qualified’ as each other.

### Performance in comparison to other local authorities

2.7 The tables below show Tower Hamlets’ performance against other local authorities when comparing the number of ethnic minority and disabled top 5% of earners. Tower Hamlets is one of the highest performing local authorities; however data showing each local authorities performance against their community is not available. Tower Hamlets council appears to be the only local authority in London with a commitment to having a workforce that reflects the community as a strategic priority.

Ethnicity - Percentage of top 5% earners: BAME

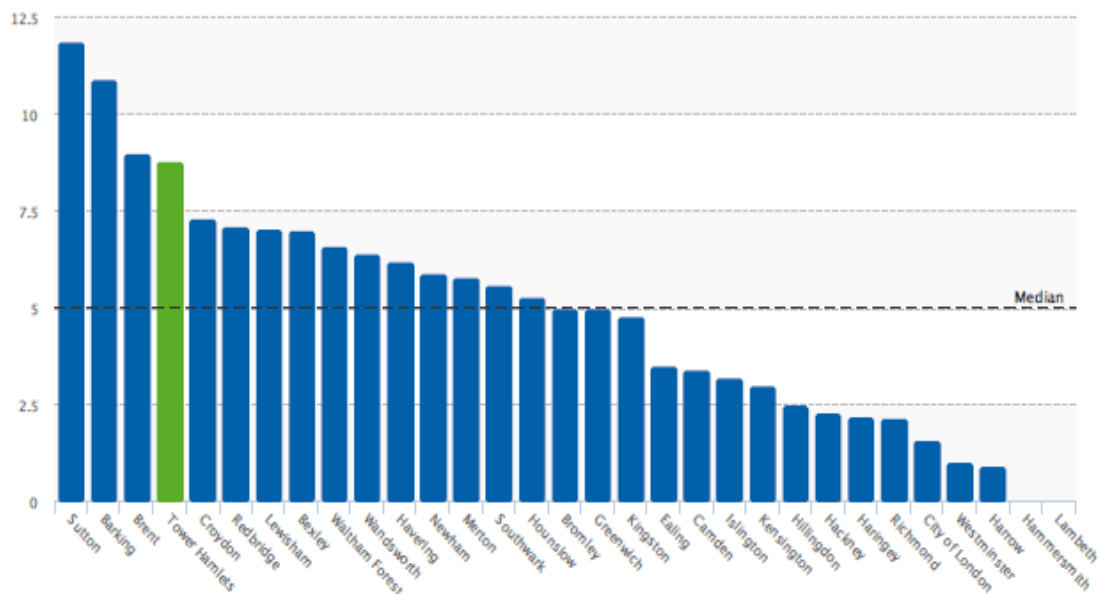
*The following analysis excludes Councils that have not yet submitted data for this metric, ie: Barnet, Enfield.*



<sup>1</sup> There are nine protected characteristics defined by the Equality Act 2010. They are: pregnancy & maternity; age; disability; gender reassignment; race; religion or belief; sex; sexual orientation and marriage & civil partnership.

## Disability - Percentage of top 5% earners who are disabled

The following analysis excludes Councils that have not yet submitted data for this metric, ie: Barnet, Enfield.



### The council's policy – positive action

- 2.9 Since 2006 the council has phased out all positive action schemes (the last positive action scheme was suspended in 2010); with all activities open to all staff, with targeted promotion to encourage take up from certain groups of staff, including ethnic minority and disabled staff members.
- 2.10 Current activities in place which are advertised to ethnic minority and disabled staff include:
- Mentorwise - a staff development opportunity to support individual career aspirations. The council has joined the London mentoring network MyMentor, which provides an online matching system for mentees to identify suitable mentors. The system also allows staff to have access to a wide and diverse pool of potential mentors in different public sector organisations, should an internal mentor not be available.
  - Disability awareness days – staff and managers are provided with information on supporting staff with disabilities. External organisations are invited to provide talks. Information on reasonable adjustments, flexible working and access to work payments are made readily available.
  - Navigate – the council's internal talent management scheme. Its aim is to develop potential leaders and managers of the future and support progression. Participants receive development in the form of psychometric assessments; in-depth 1-2-1s; coaching and secondment and/or shadowing opportunities.



## **The council's policy – internal recruitment of senior managers**

- 2.11 The council has several policies in place to ensure that the recruitment and selection processes for senior management vacancies are fair and robust. These processes are managed and monitored by the council's HR and workforce development service and in the case of Service Heads and above, by a Member level HR Appointment Committee.
- 2.13 Recruitment training – in order for a staff member to sit on a recruitment panel, mandatory recruitment licensing training must be completed. This training covers the council's duty in the Equalities Act; unconscious bias; the council's policy on discrimination and the recruitment process.
- 2.14 Elected Members sit on the recruitment panels for vacancies that are Service Head level or above. They undergo mandatory recruitment training and are supported by the Service Head for HR and Workforce Development. Recruitment panel selections are ratified by the HR appointments committee.
- 2.15 Recruitment panels – All recruitment panels for council vacancies must be diverse with an expectation that panel members represent a range of the protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010. A member of HR is required to sit on the panel for vacancies that are LP07 and above. It is their responsibility to ensure that the panels are diverse.
- 2.16 Internal recruitment first – all vacancies are advertised internally, vacancies that are below Service Head level are exclusively advertised internally and are only put out for external advertisement should the role not be filled internally.
- 2.17 'Take a Chance' scheme – this scheme is a new approach. The aim is to offer an individual who comes close to being offered a job the chance to be permanently appointed following a six month 'probationary' period supported by a programme of development. The scheme applies to posts PO3 and above (to the service manager level) that are advertised internally.

## **The council's policy – external recruitment, Service Head and above**

- 2.16 Vacancies that are for Service Head and above are advertised internally and externally, in order to ensure the best person for the senior leadership role is found. Recruitment agencies are used to source suitable candidates for these posts.
- 2.17 The council has a procurement framework in place to undertake the recruitment of Service Head and above positions. The framework is

made up of 4 organisations and an equalities statement is submitted as part of the tender quotation for each post.

- 2.18 The quotation evaluation criteria that is used during the external recruitment process is detailed below, “evidence of identifying and sourcing diverse candidates’ has the second highest score weighting.

<b>Quality Criteria</b>	<b>Criterion weighting (multiplier x)</b>
<b>Knowledge of role</b>	4
<b>Knowledge of Tower Hamlets</b>	1
<b>Market Knowledge</b>	2
<b>Experience in recruiting to similar role</b>	4
<b>Experience in recruiting for other London boroughs or similar organisations</b>	1
<b>Evidence of innovative solutions in addressing market challenges</b>	1
<b>Evidence of innovative solutions in improving decision-making</b>	1
<b>Evidence of identifying and sourcing diverse candidates.</b>	3
<b>Evidence of commitment to Equality and Diversity in recruitment processes</b>	1
<b>Resources Allocated (named consultants)</b>	1
<b>Flexibility in pricing and cost in line with expectations and budget.</b>	2

### **Penna’s external recruitment process**

- 2.19 Penna, the main recruitment agency that the council uses for external posts (at Service Head and above level), provided a submission of their recruitment processes.
- 2.20 Penna focus on attracting a diverse readership by advertising in media (both on and offline) that have a highly diverse readership. This includes mailing up to 100+ diversity groups across London that circulates vacancies to their networks and communities.
- 2.21 Where appropriate, they also undertake a targeted search into markets/sectors which have high levels of diversity in their workforce and good transferable skills. This ensures that the application and selection processes are highly accessible; meet best practice standards and do not consciously or unconsciously disadvantage any candidate.

### **3. KEY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 3.1 The session began by exploring HR's efforts to reaching a senior management that is representative of the ethnic minority and disabled communities in Tower Hamlets. The Service Head for HR and Workforce Development and the Senior HR Manger provided a presentation.

#### **Talent Management**

- 3.2 The session initially focused on talent management and the process of developing staff who will eventually become the senior leadership within the council. The challenge session noted these are challenging times for the council, with government funding reductions and a shrinking pool of senior manager posts. However, it was felt that developing staff, middle managers and team leaders in particular, should still be a priority.
- 3.3 It was noted that the council has a talent management scheme in place called 'Navigate'. The scheme is linked to the PDR process and open to all staff. The scheme offers coaching and tuition but its impact on progression was questioned. Navigate as a scheme is advertised to all staff but attendees from the BAME and disabled staff forums felt that the approach to enrolment should be specifically targeted towards ethnic minority and disabled staff members.
- 3.4 HR confirmed that a review focusing on the impact of Navigate and its reach is being undertaken. Attendees agreed with the need for a review and suggested a new talent management scheme is developed to replace Navigate.

#### **RECOMMENDATION 1:**

**The council should adopt a new talent management process for all staff to replace Navigate and actively promote the scheme to ethnic minority and disabled staff through all available communication channels.**

#### **Existing HR policies and their impact**

- 3.5 The session considered the impact of existing HR policies on representation of ethnic minority and disabled staff at the LP07+ level. It was felt by attendees that HR had implemented a large number of policies and schemes in order to facilitate an improvement but these were poorly understood by managers and staff and there is a need for clearer outcomes.
- 3.6 The HR Senior Manager confirmed that there was concern about the low number of staff being promoted through the "Take A Chance" initiative and only a handful of recruiting managers had used the scheme. Additionally, it was confirmed that all managers were given

essential training in 2014/15 which focused on the importance of equality and diversity within teams, the benefits of a diverse workforce and best practice when recruiting.

- 3.7 Attendees felt that HR's approach to recruiting a diverse senior management was welcomed but there were some crucial aspects missing. Staff forum members felt that managers' understanding of HR policies and schemes needs to be improved. There was a feeling that junior staff members were not progressing due to poor managerial understanding about schemes such as 'Take A Chance' and 'Navigate'. It was felt that clear expected outcomes need to be communicated to staff before a policy and/or scheme is implemented. Additionally, there is a need to monitor the impact of these schemes and whether they are contributing to increased levels of ethnic minority and disabled staff within the senior management cohort.

**RECOMMENDATION 2: The council to ensure that all HR schemes and policies to improve ethnic minority and disabled staff representation at the senior manager level include clear objectives and intended results. These need to be communicated to all staff. Additionally, the impact of any implemented scheme and policy will need to be monitored.**

#### **The role of the staff forums**

- 3.8 It was recognised by session attendees that the staff forums have a significant role to play in having a senior management with good representation of disabled and ethnic minority staff. Forum representatives felt that the disabled and BAME staff forums needed a clearly defined role and purpose.
- 3.9 It was brought to the meeting's attention that the disabled staff forum needed a chair and issues such as representation of disabled staff at the senior management could not be discussed without some sort of leadership in place for this forum.
- 3.10 The Service Head for HR and Workforce Development highlighted the diversity of CMT and the strength of the council's leadership as a consequence. Attendees felt that CMT should be portrayed as role models to staff forum members and their role as senior champions for ethnic minority and disabled staff should be communicated to the workforce clearly and routinely.

**RECOMMENDATION 3: The council should reinvigorate the BAME and disabled staff forums and ensure that they are fit for purpose, are representative, are led by effective chairs and have senior champions whose roles are communicated clearly to all staff.**

## Organisational culture audit

- 3.11 Attendees felt that the organisational culture within the council needed to be addressed. It was noted that although the number of ethnic minority senior managers had improved year on year, progress was slow. Additionally, awareness around employees with a disability could be improved.
- 3.12 Issues such as managerial understanding about: reasonable adjustments in the workplace; access to work support for disabled staff; flexible working arrangements; the importance of development opportunities and training and the benefits of recruiting a diverse workforce need to be addressed.
- 3.13 The session received a statement from Green Park, one of the recruitment agencies used to externally recruit Service Heads and above. Green Park reiterated their belief in the robustness of the council's recruitment processes but a possible barrier to having a senior management that is representative of the local disabled and ethnic minority communities could be the organisational culture and this should be explored further.
- 3.14 Attendees from the staff forums were in agreement. A member of the BAME staff forum confirmed that the forum has always had ethnic minority representation at the senior management level as one of the forum's priorities. Forum members felt that staff need to be consulted on the barriers to progression for disabled and ethnic minority staff and how these could be overcome.

**RECOMMENDATION 4: The council undergoes an organisational culture audit focusing on diversity and inclusion. Specific areas of focus should include line management practice; talent management processes; the effectiveness of current equality and diversity training and staff engagement.**

**RECOMMENDATION 5: The council should roll out a survey for all staff to provide their views on career development and any barriers, if any, that are perceived. The survey should seek a representative response, including from BAME and disabled staff.**

**RECOMMENDATION 6: The council's HR service to provide a detailed action plan on how they will address any concerns raised through the survey with regular performance monitoring reports provided to the Tower Hamlets Equality Steering Group.**