

Minutes of a meeting of the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on Thursday, 13 October 2022 at 5.00 pm in the Banqueting Hall - City Hall, Bradford

Commenced 5.05 pm
Concluded 6.30 pm

Present – Councillors

LABOUR	CONSERVATIVE	LIBERAL DEMOCRAT
Azam Nazir D Green Arshad Hussain Wood	F Ahmed Nazam	Stubbs

Apologies: Councillor J Clarke

Councillor Azam in the Chair

18. DISCLOSURES OF INTEREST

No disclosures of interest in matters under consideration were received.

19. INSPECTION OF REPORTS AND BACKGROUND PAPERS

There were no appeals submitted by the public to review decisions to restrict documents.

20. REFERRALS TO THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

There were no recommendations referred to the Committee.

21. THE STONEWALL SUBMISSION

This Committee at its meeting held on 14th of October 2021, requested a report on the Stonewall Workplace Equalities Index submission.

The Human Resources Director submitted a report (**Document “N”**) which outlined the process and purpose of the Stonewall submission.

In consultation with the LGBTQ+ Staff Network, Champions and Senior Leaders both internally and across the district, the Council decided to make a submission for the Stonewall Workplace Equality Index (WEI).

The WEI is a benchmarking tool for organisations to measure their progress on lesbian, gay, bi and trans inclusion in the workplace. Work on the submission has proven invaluable in checking that our organisational policies are communicated using appropriate language and we believe that the submission will secure positive change as part of our equality, diversity and inclusion commitment that will benefit the organisation, its employees and the public and assist us in our journey to a workplace that is fully inclusive of all staff irrespective of their gender, sexuality or any of the other protected characteristics under the Equality Act.

During the discussion, a Member expressed concerns and ascertained why it had taken over a year for a report to be submitted, following a specific request from this Committee, adding that the report submitted lacked any detail. In response it was stated that given the volume of work in the equalities area, a report had not been produced and that a suitable date to bring a report back to Committee had not been identified.

The Member added that although the questions from Stonewall were detailed in the report, the responses to those questions were not contained in the report. In response it was stressed that the responses were still being finalised and once ready they will be detailed and shared in a report to this Committee.

The Member highlighted that many of the issues contained in the report still needed political as well as public discussion, prior to their adoption, as many of them were open to interpretation, depending on which side of the fence you were sitting on, such as the concerns and debate around single sex spaces and their safety. The Councils' response to the questions posed was therefore crucial.

He added that spending £2,000 on the submission and going to an organisation that had a very specific remit had to be questioned; and that this report in no way reflected what the Committee had asked for a year ago, including details around the process and finances. In response it was stated that benchmarking had been undertaken and that all the issues raised would be subject to the normal political processes as well as legal appraisal, prior to adoption of any of the standards.

A number of Members expresses similar concerns as already outlined above and that the report posed more questions than it answered, and that it was imperative that a more comprehensive report was submitted to this Committee in due course which addressed all the issues raised at today's meeting and at the meeting 12 months ago.

It was stressed by a Member that a number of organisations had withdrawn from

the Stonewall scheme following concerns, and so the question was why were still using Stonewall? In acknowledging the concerns, it was stressed that a decision had been made to pursue with the submission, however has had been indicated, no decision had been taken to adopt the standards at this stage, and that further discussions will also be had with the LGBTQ+ network.

Resolved –

This Committee requests that a detailed report relating to the Stonewall Submission be presented to the committee by the end of this year, which specifically focuses on:

- **The process;**
- **Costs relating to the submission;**
- **Details of the reasons for the Stonewall submission;**
- **Questionnaire details and methodology;**
- **Responses to the Stonewall Questionnaire.**

ACTION: Strategic Director, Corporate Resources

22. REPORT ON THE REFRESH OF THE EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION PLAN 2022-25

The Assistant Director, Office of the Chief Executive submitted a report (**Document “O”**) which asked Members to consider and comment on the draft plan, prior to it being finalised, and before it is presented to Executive for approval in December.

In November of 2021, the Council invited the Local Government Association (LGA) to peer review the work and approaches to equality. Their external scrutiny recommended areas of development for the Council. One of the recommendations was to refresh the Equalities Objectives and Equality Plan.

In taking this opportunity to refresh the Equalities Objectives and Equality Plan, the recommendations of the review have been considered, and a comprehensive consultation process with our staff had been carried out, as well as with internal teams and external stakeholders in the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) and the public sector.

The refreshed Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Plan 2022-25, is more reflective of the wider protected characteristics and low income groups, has synergy with our Council Plan, and states our approach to meeting our legal duties under the Equality Act 2010.

During the discussion, a Member questioned how the wider equalities plan would be delivered and why quarterly reports to this Committee had not been submitted for scrutiny. In response it was stated that further information would be shared with this Committee in due course.

A Member stated that issues around disability, such as how we manage

employees with Epilepsy was not detailed here, and furthermore what training and education is provided to employees to deal with colleagues with such a condition. In response it was acknowledged that these were the type of issues that needed further work to be developed around.

A Member stressed that it was important to create a safe space to allow individuals to ask frank questions around equalities. In response it was stated that in asking questions, respect had to be maintained at all times as not to cause offence.

In response to a question around how you develop the equalities agenda fairly across the board, it was stated that the updated equalities plan being considered by this Committee in due course will contain further details.

In response to a question on benchmarking, it was stated that some benchmarking was being undertaken, however further was required to roll this out across the piece.

The Chair stated that the concerns and information asked for by this Committee should be followed up in the subsequent report.

In response to a question regarding monitoring of the equalities data, it was stated that the data was produced monthly and shared with the Portfolio Holder and the Leader, as well as with the Council's Equalities Group and across Council departments.

A Member stated that this information also needed to be shared with this Committee, so that the relevant data can be scrutinised accordingly.

In response to a question on how staff were allowed to voice their concerns, it was stated that staff feedback was crucial in developing the plan, and to this end, the advocated programme and the staff survey were important vehicles to garner staff opinion.

Resolved –

The Committee requests that the progress against the Equality Diversity and Inclusion Plan 2022-25, be presented to this Committee, at its meeting in March 2023.

ACTION: Strategic Director, Corporate Resources

**23. CORPORATE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK
PROGRAMME FOR 2022/23**

The Chair of the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee submitted a report (**Document “P”**) which included proposed items for the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee work programme for 2022/23.

Resolved –

Members discussed and amended the work programme.

ACTION: Overview and Scrutiny Lead

Chair

Note: These minutes are subject to approval as a correct record at the next meeting of the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee.