

Report of the Human Resources to the meeting of Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee to be held on 13 October 2022

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Subject:

THE STONEWALL SUBMISSION

Summary statement:

The O&S Committee, in the meeting on the 14th of October 2021, requested a report on the Stonewall Workplace Equalities Index submission.

This report outlines the process and purpose of the Stonewall submission.

EQUALITY & DIVERSITY:

The outcome of this work will positively contribute to the workforce objectives in the Council's Equality Action Plan and therefore has equalities and diversity hardwired into its purpose.

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Portfolio:

Corporate

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Overview & Scrutiny Area:

Corporate

1. SUMMARY

- 1.1 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).
- 1.2 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.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The Stonewall Submission consists of 63 questions in eight Sections that cover the following: -

- Section 1: Policies and Benefits
- Section 2: The Employee Lifecycle
- Section 3: LGBT Employee Network Group
- Section 4: Empowering Individuals
- Section 5: Leadership
- Section 6: Monitoring
- Section 7: Supply chains
- Section 8: External Engagement and Service Delivery

It also included a Staff Survey with 587 staff completing this.

- 2.2 Stonewall recommend that the outputs of the submission are used as a development framework for organisations. The benchmarking will help us know what we are doing well and where we can improve.

Submission Feedback

The Council was awarded Bronze accreditation for its significant contribution to external and internal communications to LGBTQ+ significant dates and events to staff and members of the District. Also included in this accreditation was the work of the LGBTQ+ Staff Network in promoting inclusion.

Feedback from the Summary Report highlighted that as an employer, we need to refresh some of our policies to ensure inclusive language is used, especially for trans employees. While recognising our strong internal communications, in the employee lifecycle more focus needs to be put on LGBTQ+ inclusion when entering and exiting employment at the Council. The RESPECT Programme was acknowledged for the development of an Allyship Programme but further evidence was needed on how this would empower change. We were praised for having strong appraisal and recruitment questions which clearly ensure that leaders are

aware and engaging in wider Equality Diversity and Inclusion work. Feedback stated our monitoring processes are outdated and should be more reflective of the whole spectrum of LGBTQ+ identity. Further work is required to seek assurance on our procurement processes, in the context of accepting that organisations/suppliers themselves must provide assurance as part of any procurement activity.

Follow up actions and next steps

Following the feedback, the internal monitoring system for staff has been changed to capture the spectrum of LGBTQ+ identities. The refresh of the Council Equalities Plan Objectives has included the need for equalities as an indicator when developing new services.

Importantly, a full Equality Impact Assessment of the recommendations needs to take place, in line with our Public Sector Equality Duty before actions are progressed and plans develop.

Survey Highlights

- 48% of LGBTQ+ staff say that the workplace culture in my organisation is inclusive of me as an LGBTQ+ person
- 28% of LGBTQ+ staff say they feel comfortable expressing my LGBTQ+ identity at work to managers/senior colleagues
- 89% of non-LGBTQ+ staff support LGBTQ+ equality in the workplace

3. OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

- 3.1 Strengthening the work we do across the Council on LGBTQ+ issues is a priority area in delivering inclusion and our equality objectives. The recent LGA (Local Government Association) Equalities Peer review highlights the need for us to have a wide focus on equalities across all protected characteristics, in particular LGBTQ+ and disability issues. The feedback from the WEI will be used to inform our approach in achieving this.

4. FINANCIAL & RESOURCE APPRAISAL

- 4.1 The cost to be part of the WEI and access the support, survey and tools available, and receive a report and feedback to employers was £2,000. The Council committed to and approved this spend through the Council's established schemes of delegation.
- 4.2 An independent review from an established independent organisation with national reach has been crucial to enable the Council to benchmark against other public and private sector organisations and consider strategies to be an inclusive organisation and employer to LGBTQ+ staff and the communities we support. The feedback, Equality Impact Assessment and follow up plan (when developed) will also address some of the intersectionality issues and supports a cross-cutting Equality Diversity and Inclusion position that will also feed into the Council Equality Objectives.

5. RISK MANAGEMENT AND GOVERNANCE ISSUES

- 5.1 There has been national coverage around trans and women's rights. The Council sought views from our LGBTQ+ Staff Network, allies and partners who were unanimously supportive of continuing with the WEI submission because of the wide equality, diversity and inclusion benefits that will be available from the outputs of the benchmarking. The Council will continue to review the effectiveness and appropriateness of all equality, diversity and inclusion work and is committed to inclusion for all.

6. LEGAL APPRAISAL

The Council must legally comply with its obligations under the Equalities Act 2010 and its Public Sector Equality Duty.

Any formulated action plan and next steps needs to be appraised alongside the Equality Impact Assessment to ensure the Council is legally compliant in fulfilling these duties.

7. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

None.

7.1 SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS

None.

7.2 GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS IMPACTS

None.

7.3 COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

None.

7.4 HUMAN RIGHTS ACT

None.

7.5 TRADE UNION

The Council's Equality Objectives and workforce information are shared and consulted upon accordingly with Trade Unions.

7.6 WARD IMPLICATIONS

None.

7.7 AREA COMMITTEE ACTION PLAN IMPLICATIONS (for reports to Area Committees only)

N/A.

7.8 IMPLICATIONS FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

Inclusion is for everyone. Our work on LGBTQ+ and wider diversity and equality matters seeks to ensure that everyone belongs no matter what their background or protected characteristic. This is important for children and young people and their experiences.

7.9 ISSUES ARISING FROM PRIVACY IMPACT ASSESMENT

None.

8. NOT FOR PUBLICATION DOCUMENTS

None.

9. OPTIONS

None.

10. RECOMMENDATIONS

That the committee notes the contents of this report and agrees that further updates on LGBTQ+ representation are provided as part of wider equalities reporting and updates presented to the committee.

11. APPENDICES

Stonewall Workplace Equality Index 2022 – Questionnaire