

# Report of the Director of Human Resources to the meeting of Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee to be held on 8 December 2022

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## Subject:

The Stonewall Workplace Equalities Index submission.

## Summary statement:

The Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee, in the meeting on the 13 October 2022, requested a further report on the Stonewall Workplace Equalities Index submission. The Committee requested that the report should specifically focus on the process; costs relating to the submission; details of the reasons for the Stonewall submission; questionnaire details and methodology; and responses to the Stonewall report.

This report provides the information requested.

## 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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Anne Lloyd  
Director of Human Resources

### 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 UK Workplace Equality Index (WEI).
- 1.2 The Council decided to make the submission because we know we have progress to make in our LGBTQ+ inclusion agenda. Only 21% of the Council workforce declare their sexual orientation and those identifying as LGBTQ+ account for 0.6% of the Council workforce. This is a significantly lower declaration rate than for any other protected characteristic across the Council.
- 1.3 The Council wanted to use a recognised and well established benchmarking tool, which would provide comparator benchmarking against other local authorities as well as wider public and private sector organisations with coverage across the UK.
- 1.4 The Stonewall 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 Process, Questionnaire details and Methodology**

- 2.1.1 The Stonewall WEI assesses organisations' work by asking a series of questions about things they might have done. The questions are split across different sections – employee policy, the employee lifecycle, staff network groups, allies and role models, senior leadership, monitoring, procurement, and customers, service users and clients. Stonewall have developed their questions based on years of experience working with employers.
- 2.1.2 The membership included access to support, WEI questionnaire, staff survey and supporting inclusion tools available, and to receive a report and feedback.
- 2.1.3 The Stonewall WEI submission consisted of 63 questions in eight sections, and it also included a staff survey, which 587 staff completed. The eight sections cover the following: -
  - Standard 1: Policies and Benefits
  - Standard 2: The Employee Lifecycle
  - Standard 3: LGBT Employee Network Group
  - Standard 4: Empowering Individuals
  - Standard 5: Leadership
  - Standard 6: Monitoring
  - Standard 7: Supply chains
  - Standard 8: External Engagement and Service Delivery

2.1.4 Appendix D contains the Stonewall Workplace Equality Index and CMBDC responses and Appendix B is the Staff Survey Feedback.

2.1.5 Stonewall recommend that the outputs of the submission are used as a development framework for organisations.

## **2.2 Feedback and our intended actions**

2.2.1 The benchmarking has helped us know what we are doing well and where we can improve. The Stonewall Feedback Report is at Appendix C, and the Response Action Plan which is broader in scope to cover all protected characteristics is contained at Appendix A. The report and actions are grouped into the eight sections of the WEI, and there are up to 4 actions in each section.

2.2.2 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.

2.2.3 Feedback from the 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.

### **2.2.4 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

2.2.5 Following the feedback a draft response action plan that has been broadened to address and make improvements across LGBTQ+ and all protected characteristics has been developed, this is at Appendix A. The actions in this plan have been considered against the Council Equalities Objectives to 2024 and are aligned with the Council's current refreshed equality objectives that sit under the following headings.

- Objective 1: An equal, diverse and inclusive workplace
  - Objective 2: Inclusive and accessible services
  - Objective 3: An inclusive economy
  - Objective 4: Inclusive Communities
- 2.2.6 The feedback, and follow up Council action plan will also address some of the intersectionality issues and supports a cross-cutting Equality Diversity and Inclusion position that has been fed into the Council Equality Objectives and broader Council Equalities work.
- 2.2.7 Some actions have been concluded, some actions progressed, such as the internal monitoring system for staff that has been changed to capture the spectrum of LGBTQ+ identities. The induction programme has been reviewed, and some actions progressed around policy review and development and across procurement.
- 2.2.8 The refresh of the Council Equalities Plan Objectives has included the need for equalities as an indicator when developing new services and in service delivery. As a result, a service by service review on what data is currently being held and what intelligence is collected and where it is stored was undertaken and a minimum data set and measures for each service is being developed to better understand the different protected characteristics of service users.
- 2.2.9 Our Workforce Learning and Development team have considered Equality Impact Assessment against the recommendations and actual actions proposed in the plan and then further consulted with the Council's Equalities Lead. The next step is to engage and/or consult with our staff networks, cross Council Equalities Group, and trade unions. Everything that is suggested in the plan is going to positively impact on our people across the different protected characteristics (age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation) and enhance our work on inclusion.

### **3. OTHER CONSIDERATIONS**

- 3.1 Bradford Council is committed to promoting equality, diversity and inclusion and tackling inequality both in our communities and the workplace, recognising that this is critical to unlocking the District's full potential. The Council leader has made clear our commitment to securing a level playing field for people to succeed and to addressing structural inequalities that limit opportunity for many people.
- 3.2 Bradford District is synonymous with diversity in all its forms and while this represents a significant asset, inequality and discrimination continue to hold people back. There are some stark disparities in outcomes including wide differences in life expectancy between the richest and poorest areas, a third of children living in poverty, low wages, high rates of youth unemployment. Bradford was disproportionately hit by COVID-19 which impacted some groups more than others: BME communities, young people, migrants, people with disabilities and/or existing conditions, people on low incomes. Post-pandemic, those groups are among the most vulnerable to the current cost of living crisis. Many local people are affected by multiple factors influencing inequality and we are working to better understand these intersectional impacts.

- 3.3 Strengthening the work we do across the Council on LGBTQ+ issues is a priority area in delivering inclusion and our equality objectives. The 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 is being used to inform our approach in achieving this.
- 3.4 The priority that we attach to equalities is evident in our Council Plan in which it acts as a guiding principle informing all that we do and in our Equalities Objectives and Equality Plan that set out our key priorities and actions to 2024. It is evident in our work with partners to develop District and system wide evidence led approaches, in the investments we have made in our workforce and stronger communities teams, our adoption of low income as a protected characteristic and our success in securing City of Culture 2025.

#### **4. FINANCIAL & RESOURCE APPRAISAL**

- 4.1 The cost to be part of the WEI Stonewall Diversity Champions Membership for the period 29 March 2021 – 28 March 2022 was £2,500.
- 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.

#### **5. RISK MANAGEMENT AND GOVERNANCE ISSUES**

- 5.1 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 is required by law to comply with the Equality Act 2010, both as an employer and in respect of the Public Sector Equality Duty.

Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 (the public sector equality duty) provides that:

- (1) A public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to—
- (a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;
  - (b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
  - (c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.
- (2) A person who is not a public authority but who exercises public functions must, in the exercise of those functions, have due regard to the matters mentioned in subsection (1).

(3) Having due regard to the need to advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it involves having due regard, in particular, to the need to—

(a) remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by persons who share a relevant protected characteristic that are connected to that characteristic;

(b) take steps to meet the needs of persons who share a relevant protected characteristic that are different from the needs of persons who do not share it;

(c) encourage persons who share a relevant protected characteristic to participate in public life or in any other activity in which participation by such persons is disproportionately low.

(4) The steps involved in meeting the needs of disabled persons that are different from the needs of persons who are not disabled include, in particular, steps to take account of disabled persons' disabilities.

(5) Having due regard to the need to foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it involves having due regard, in particular, to the need to—

(a) tackle prejudice, and

(b) promote understanding.

(6) Compliance with the duties in this section may involve treating some persons more favourably than others; but that is not to be taken as permitting conduct that would otherwise be prohibited by or under this Act.

(7) The relevant protected characteristics are—

age;

disability;

gender reassignment;

pregnancy and maternity;

race;

religion or belief;

sex;

sexual orientation.

## **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 our recognised Trade Unions. Workforce policy development, both new and refreshed are consulted upon with our Trade Unions in accordance with the provisions of the Council's Industrial Relations Framework.

#### **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**

Appendix A – Response Action Plan

Appendix B – Staff Survey Feedback

Appendix C – Stonewall Feedback Report

Appendix D – Stonewall Workplace Equality Index – CBMDC responses