
EXCERPT FROM THE MINUTES OF THE HEALTH AND WELLBEING SCRUTINY PANEL HELD ON 2 SEPTEMBER 2021

HWSP.57/21 ANNUAL EQUALITY REPORT 2020/21 AND EQUALITY ACTION PLAN 2021

The Policy and Performance Officer submitted the Annual Equality Report 2020/21 and the Equality Action Plan 2021 (PC.29/21). The report set out: key data - workforce profile; Employee support; Training and Development; Recruitment and Selection; Equality Impact Assessment, consultation and engagement; Partnership working and service provision; Customer Satisfaction; Complaints; Equality Objectives 2020-24.

In considering the report, Members raised the following questions and comments:

- In relation to staff appraisals: how many had been carried out in the preceding year; what was the ratio of one to one versus team appraisals; could further detail be provided regarding the review of the current system?

The Policy and Communications Manager explained that the review was mainly focused on the paperwork used in the process to ensure it was appropriate for all teams, he undertook to provide further detail on the matter in a written response to the Panel, as well as the other questions raised by the Member.

- Did the Council operate a guaranteed interview scheme for those applying for a job who had a disability and if so, what proportion of those applicants were subsequently employed at the authority?

The Policy and Performance Officer confirmed that a guaranteed interview scheme was in operation for job applicants with a disability who met the essential criteria for the role. During 2020/21 the Council had taken on 47 new employees, 2.1% of whom had declared a disability.

- The Chair considered that the recruitment statistic indicated a low level of diversity.

The Policy and Performance Officer responded that the authority's profile was likely to be reflective of the wider district, however, that may alter once the latest Census data was available. The data contained in that section of the report had only begun to be collected two years ago, in order for trends to become identifiable three year's data was required. The area would be analysed in greater depth when sufficient data was available.

- Was the increased number of applications for jobs in the past year a result of Covid 19?

The Policy and Performance Officer considered Covid 19 to be a factor in the uptake of applications, a comparison with the coming year's data would confirm whether that was the case.

- Had any responses been received in relation to the online consultation on the Carlisle Investment Plan?

The Policy and Communications Manager confirmed that responses had been received and that they would be considered as part of the development of the Plan.

- Regarding the Next Steps Accommodation Funding a Member asked: how many unsuccessful applicants there had been, and was a profile breakdown of those in the age 16- 24 years old, and over 24 years old available?

The Policy and Performance Officer undertook to provide a written response on the matter.

- Was the Council's support to Community Centres driven by need identified by the Council or from the Centre and its surrounding residents?

The Health and Wellbeing Manager responded that as Community Centres were independent organisations, the support required from the Council was identified by the Centres themselves.

The Deputy Chief Executive added that in addition to the support provided by the Health and Wellbeing team, the Council also acted as landlord to the Community Centres and so addressed issues such as building maintenance.

- What was the timescale for the completion of the SharePoint site including the Council's Equality Objectives?

The Policy and Communications Manager advised that work had commenced on the project and it was expected to be delivered by 2022.

- How near completion was the Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment?

The Policy and Performance Officer undertook to provide a written answer.

- Did the Council undertake benchmarking of equality data with other local authorities?

The Policy and Communications Manager responded that the Performance Report (later on the agenda) comprised benchmarking data. Given the government's decision to implement unitary Councils in Cumbria, benchmarking with Allerdale Borough and Copeland Borough Council would be a useful activity.

- The Action Plan made reference to different groups: was it timely, given the situation in Afghanistan to include refugees as a category? The City had a history of supporting refugees and celebrating their contributions to the district.

The Communities, Health and Wellbeing Portfolio Holder agreed that there was a long tradition of providing support to refugee communities. She noted that Cumbria County Council was the Lead Authority for that area and explained that refugee placements across the country were managed by a quota system. Information on the level of refugees that would be received in the county as a result of the situation in Afghanistan had yet to be advised, but it was expected that they would be provided with the necessary support.

- A Member congratulated Officers on achieving the Gold Better Health at Work Award, and asked whether the outcome of the next steps in the Defence Employer Recognition Scheme (DERS) were known.

The Policy and Performance Officer understood that the bid to secure the next step in the DERS had been unsuccessful. She undertook to provide written confirmation of the matter.

The Member noted that the Armed Forces Bill was currently progressing through parliament, and suggested that the Executive be asked to monitor its progress. The Panel indicated its assent.

The Chair proposed that benchmarking data be incorporated into future Annual Equality reports. The Panel indicated its assent.

RESOLVED - 1) That benchmarking data be incorporated into future Annual Equality reports.

2) That the Executive be asked to monitor the progress of the Armed Forces Bill through Parliament.

3) That the Policy and Communications Manager provide a written response regarding: the review of the appraisal process; the number of appraisals completed in 2020/21; and, the ration of one to one versus team appraisals.

4) That the Policy and Performance Officer provide written responses in respect of:

- The number of unsuccessful applicants for the Next Steps Accommodation Funding, and the a breakdown of those in the age 16- 24 years old, and over 24 years old;
- The stage of completion of the Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment;
- The outcome of the application in respect of the Defence Employer Recognition Scheme: