

Extract from draft minutes of People and Health Overview Committee – 14 December 2020

Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Strategy and action plan

The Committee considered a report by the Chief Executive on the draft Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy and Action Plan.

The Strategy and Action Plan would be considered by Cabinet in January 2021. The Strategy had been drafted in order to have a clear and cohesive strategy across all Council services. The recent murder of George Floyd in America and the spread of Covid and its impact on vulnerable communities had added urgency to the Strategy's development. The voluntary and community sector, partners, Trade Unions, the Forum for Equality and Diversity, Dorset Race Equality Council and residents had all been involved in its development. In particular the Committee were asked to consider whether the Strategy needed greater cohesion, whether anything was missing, whether any additional recommendations should be made to Cabinet and how it could be embedded within the Council's culture.

Members then discussed the Strategy and action plan in detail. Comments and suggested amendments included:

- what did good look like and what targets should be included;
- members would have had more time to consider the four areas if they had been given them prior to the meeting;
- the need for organisations the Council worked with to have similar equality standards;
- the Strategy referred to Covid and its effect on the older population but young people and those of working age had been affected by lockdown too and this was not included;
- Covid had also affected people's mental health and finances which was also omitted;
- health inequalities needed to be addressed within the Strategy;
- the current workforce did not represent the wider community;
- negative and positive discrimination and the need for appointments to be made on merit;
- the Nepalese population and their families, veterans and ex-service men did not feature within the Strategy;
- the need for the use of plain English so that the Strategy was easily understandable to the public;
- the Strategy needed to make reference to the style guide which needed to be updated to reflect Black and Minority Ethnicity and other protected characteristics;

- that the emphasis on young people, health inequalities and links to the armed forces covenant be strengthened in the Strategy.

Although cultural change was difficult to monitor, the Pulse and Hive surveys undertaken by staff gave an indication of changes. The Corporate Director for HR&OD would arrange for a member seminar to be scheduled on this.

In view of their involvement in the Strategy it was suggested that a member of the Public Health Team be invited to the meeting when the Strategy was next reviewed.

Members noted that discussions were IT were under way to develop the action plan as a live document so that people could input directly into it.

A member seminar on leadership, employer of choice and the use of plain English would be held during the first part of 2021.

Having discussed the Strategy in full, the Committee:-

Recommended

That Cabinet adopt the draft equality, diversity and inclusion strategy and action plan (attached at appendix 1);

Reason for Recommendation:

As a public body, we have both a legal and a moral duty to promote equality, diversity and inclusion.

Decisions

1. That the findings of the public consultation be noted.
2. That the timetable for decision-making by Cabinet in January 2021 be noted.
3. The Corporate Director for HR&OD would arrange a member seminar on the Pulse and Hive surveys.
4. A member of the Public Health Team be invited to the meeting when the Strategy was next reviewed.