

# **OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY BOARD**

## **EQUALITIES TASK GROUP**

### **FINAL REPORT**

**January 2021**



**Bromsgrove**  
District Council  
[www.bromsgrove.gov.uk](http://www.bromsgrove.gov.uk)

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# **MEMBERSHIP OF THE TASK GROUP**



**Councillor Peter McDonald (Chairman)**



Councillor Andrew Beaumont



Councillor Malcolm Glass



Councillor Helen Jones



Councillor Adrian Kriss



Councillor Harrison Rone-Clarke



Councillor Caroline Spencer



Councillor Jo-Anne Till

**SUPPORTING OFFICER DETAILS**

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## **Foreword from the Chairman**

The aims of the Equalities Task Group were to ensure that every employee has access to the same opportunities and the same, fair treatment. That if you actively promote equality and diversity (and have a policy to match) then the Council will thrive, and people of all backgrounds can come together for the benefit of those they serve.

We feel the recommendations the Task Group are putting forward will enhance an inclusive culture to ensure that employees are valued and have the same access to all opportunities whatever their differences.

**Councillor Peter McDonald  
Chairman, Equalities Task Group**

## Summary of Recommendations

After consideration of the evidence available and interviewing witnesses the Task Group have proposed the following recommendations, supporting evidence can be found under the relevant chapters within the main body of this report.

### **Chapter 1 – The Council’s Equalities Strategy**

<b>Recommendation 1</b>
That an annual Equalities Report be prepared for 2021 and annually thereafter.
<b>Financial Implications for recommendations:</b> There are no direct financial implications in relation to this recommendation.
<b>Legal Implications for recommendations:</b> There are no direct legal implications in relation to this recommendation.
<b>Resource Implications:</b> Officer time in preparing the report.

<b>Recommendation 2</b>
That a question in respect of IOS certification (or equivalent) is included in the Contractors’ Questionnaire in respect of Equalities.
<b>Financial Implications for recommendations:</b> There are no direct financial implications in relation to this recommendation.
<b>Legal Implications for recommendations:</b> There are no direct legal implications in relation to this recommendation.
<b>Resource Implications:</b> Officer time in checking the response.

## **Chapter 2 – Human Resources**

<b>Recommendation 3</b>
That when the new ERP system is in use, the data collated by it in respect of HR issues be considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Board.
<b>Financial Implications:</b> There are no direct financial implications in relation to this recommendation.
<b>Legal Implications:</b> There are no direct legal implications in relation to this recommendation.
<b>Resource Implications:</b> Officer time.

  

<b>Recommendation 4</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>a) That clear guidelines are put in place in respect of the secondment process (which would include some sort of appeals process) and made accessible to all staff; and</li><li>b) That a formal progression policy be put in place and made accessible to all staff.</li></ul>
<b>Financial Implications:</b> There are no direct financial implications in relation to this recommendation.
<b>Legal Implications:</b> There are no direct legal implications in relation to this recommendation.
<b>Resource Implications:</b> Officer time.

### **Chapter 3 – Community and Engagement Strategy**

<b>Recommendation 5</b>
a) That a specific section on Equalities be included within the annual Community Survey; and b) That the Overview and Scrutiny Board (or Members of the Equalities Task Group) are involved in the preparation of the questions to be included.
<b>Financial Implications:</b>  There are no direct financial implications in relation to this recommendation.
<b>Legal Implications:</b>  There are no direct legal implications in relation to this recommendation.
<b>Resource Implications:</b>  Officer time.

## **Background Information**

Councillor H. Rone-Clarke, together with a representative from within the local community, presented a topic proposal form containing proposed terms of reference for a Task Group entitled Identifying and Addressing Racial Disparities within Bromsgrove District Council's operations. Councillor Rone-Clarke highlighted the importance of the authority, constantly looking within itself and identifying issues with regards to race and striving to make improvements. It was highlighted that this was not a political venture, but one of constant self-improvement.

Following consideration of the topic proposal at its meeting on 7<sup>th</sup> July 2020, the Board agreed that a Task Group should be set up and appointed Councillor P. McDonald as its Chairman at that meeting and requested that the Group report back with its findings within 6 months.

At the August meeting of the Board, the membership of the Task Group was confirmed. Due to the interest shown in the Task Group and recognising that it was sometimes difficult to organising ad hoc meetings that were convenient for everyone, it was agreed that there would be a quorum set to ensure that those who had put their names forward were committed to the work of the Task Group.

Following its initial meeting on 10<sup>th</sup> August, the Task Group also agreed to amend the Terms of Reference to include all those protected characteristics covered by the Equalities Act 2010. The changes were reported back to the main Board at its meeting in September, when it was agreed that the name of the Task Group would be updated to simply "the Equalities Task Group". At its initial meeting the Task Group also recognised that the scope of the Task Group was wide reaching and therefore it was agreed that it would concentrate on three particular areas within the Council and these are reflected in the chapters within this report.

The Task Group has held 8 meetings in total since that date and held discussions with a number of key witnesses. The Task Group has reviewed a number of the Council's policies and largely concentrated its investigation on issues which impacted on its staff. This was to ensure that everyone was treated fairly from an equalities perspective and that those policies were readily available for staff and reviewed on a regular basis. The Task Group also briefly looked at community engagement and how this could be improved to ensure that all residents had the opportunity to feel comfortable and be treated fairly, when dealing with the Council and when giving their views.

# Chapter 1

## **The Council's Equalities Strategy**

One of the first documents the Task Group reviewed was the Council's Equalities Strategy, as it was keen to ensure that this was both regularly reviewed and updated and easily accessible to everyone.

Following the review of that document the Task Group prepared a number of questions for the Policy Manager to respond to at its next meeting. Those questions covered a number of areas and are detailed below for information.

- a) You have provided data for those with protected characteristics and ethnicities working at the Council. Please advise how often this was updated and whether historic data was available for comparison purposes.
- b) How the Council gave due regard to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation in order to advance equal opportunities and foster good relations within the Council.
- c) How the Council ensures that any contractors it uses adhere to the Equalities Act.
- d) Whether the Council produced an Annual Equalities Report and if so when was this last produced and where can a copy be located.
- e) How the Equalities Policy was monitored to ensure that it was being adhered to.

The Policy Manager responded to each point that had been raised in detail and explained that employee data was collated annually but could be done more frequently if needed. Staff were encouraged to share this data; however, it was highlighted that there was no legal obligation for them to do so. It was also explained that it was important for staff to understand why the data was being collected and that it was not used to identify an individual. The Policy Manager explained that there was a new system being brought in to use in the Spring of 2021, which would allow for more useful data to be collated, unfortunately historic data would not be migrated to this system.

Details of the new system were provided – it was an Enterprise Resource System, which was initially for the Finance Team, but it was explained that there was an integrated suite of software which could be added on which covered Human Resources and Payroll systems. The system was used globally and for a variety of organisations.

Members were pleased to learn that the provision of this data was something which had been discussed at Corporate Management Team and that it was hoped to carry out a “drive” on collecting the data through attending team meetings and explaining why it was important and how the data was used, whilst still giving people the option not to provide it. It was further confirmed that, in respect of the recruitment of staff a form went out with all application forms, but again, there was no obligation for it to be completed and returned.

The Policy Manager confirmed that the collection of this type of data was something which lots of authorities struggled to gather, as it was something which came up regularly at area group meetings that she attended. Members agreed that it was useful to know that it was not just this Council that struggled to gather the data and that it was something which was taken seriously, and every effort was made to collect it where possible. The importance of having robust data was also discussed and again it was hoped that the new system would help to provide this going forward. Members were mindful of the need for the data to be sufficient to be used meaningfully and that some people were often cautious about sharing this information for a variety of reasons.

Members questioned whether there was any data in respect of the percentage of people who had or had not completed the information. The Policy Manager explained that this was different for each of the characteristics, so would be hard to extract the data. Again, if limited numbers had provided it, the data would also not necessarily be meaningful. However, it was confirmed that for gender and age it was nearly 100% but for the other protected characteristics (as detailed in the terms of reference for the Task Group) it was not so many. It was acknowledged that it was difficult to know how much of the data collected was accurate. The Policy Manager confirmed that this was very much the case in respect of disabilities, as it was often clear that people had a disability but chose, for whatever reason, not to disclose it. It was acknowledged by everyone that work needed to be done to get the message across that by collecting the data the Council was able to better support its staff.

The Policy Manager provided details of the dignity at work training which had been undertaken throughout the Council. This had been a bespoke session which had been interactive and designed specifically for the Council by an external company. It had been well received and work was being carried out to ensure this reached everyone, as due to sickness etc some people had not been able to attend. It was acknowledged that the planned "mop up" sessions had not yet taken place and a further delay in rectifying this had been caused by the pandemic. People also received updates via net consent, which was a format where a presentation or policy was delivered through staff IT and they were then unable to log in to other Council systems until they had read and agreed the policy, sometimes this was also followed up with a short test. It was however acknowledged that there was a need to find a balance in respect of things such as these being sent out without staff feeling as if they had been bombarded with information and the importance of their responsibilities.

Support was provided to staff in various ways and the Policy Manager gave an example where she had herself provided support to a member of staff. Her team also managed the translation and interpretation policy for the Council and Equality impact assessments were also carried out where needed, again with her team supported officers with these. It was also noted that a large piece of work was currently being undertaken in respect of accessibility following new legislation. This referred to all documents provided by the Council in all formats.

The Task Group was also keen to ensure that any contractors used by the organisation had the appropriate policies in place and met all statutory requirements. The Policy Manager explained that whilst contractors were asked whether they adhered to the Equalities Legislation, this was not monitored, and the onus was on the Contractor to ensure that it did so. Members raised concerns around this lack of monitoring and wanted to ensure that everyone, wherever possible was treated equally if they were working at or on behalf of the Council. In respect of the Equalities Questionnaire completed by Contractors the Task Group were aware that this was in the process of being reviewed and suggested that it may be more appropriate for it to include some reference to ISO or equivalent certification. The thinking behind this was that in order to achieve certification the contractor would need to ensure that it not only met the requirements of the certification but adhered to them also. The provision of such certification would remove the onus from the Council in having to check to ensure that the Contractor adhered to the relevant policies.

The Policy Manager explained that she was currently working on an Annual Report. Unfortunately, due to a number of reasons this had not been prepared in recent years. It was hoped that going forward this would be used as a template for future reports and updated and added to each year. It was however highlighted that, it was not a requirement within the Council's Equalities Strategy to prepare an annual report and there was no legal requirement to produce one, although it was acknowledged that the production of one was beneficial. The Equalities Strategy was regularly reviewed, and the next review would take place in March 2021. Again, in some areas there was still not sufficient data to make it meaningful and this was something which it was hoped would improve in the future. Members were keen for an annual report to be produced as it was felt that it sent a clear message to both staff and residents that the Council took the matter seriously and was also an opportunity to not only highlight areas where improvement was needed but to monitor improvements in the future and showcase the areas of achievement and the work the Council was undertaking to ensure it met the requirements of the Equalities Act.

The Task Group therefore recommends the following:

<b>Recommendation 1</b>
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That an annual Equalities Report be prepared for 2021 and annually thereafter.
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<b>Recommendation 2</b>
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That a question in respect of IOS certification (or equivalent) is included in the Contractors' Questionnaire in respect of Equalities.
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## **Chapter 2**

### **Human Resources**

The Task Group considered three areas, when looking at the Human Resources processes and policies that were currently in place at the Council. It was felt that these areas were the most important in order to ensure that all staff (and prospective employees) were being treated equally and fairly and given the same opportunities by the organisation, whilst also recognising that the needs of each member of staff were very different. The Task Group's recommendations therefore reflect those areas which it investigated in detail.

The Task Group interviewed the Human Resources and Organisational Development Manager together with a Union Representative to ensure it had a balanced view of the position. Consideration was given to either inviting staff into a meeting or asking them to complete a short questionnaire, but after giving this matter due consideration it was decided that, due to the ongoing pandemic, it would not be practicable. A number of questions were prepared for discussion with the Human Resources and Organisational Development Manager and these are included below for information purposes, as these highlight the particular areas that the Task Group concentrated on. These areas also formed the basis of the discussions with the Union Representative. As there were a number of responses from the Union Representative which Members felt needed further clarification from the officers, the officers were invited back to a further meeting of the Task Group in order to have the opportunity to respond to the comments which had been made. Whilst it was clear from the discussions held with both the officers and the Union Representative that there was a good working relationship between the two, Members acknowledged that there was always room for improvement, and it was important that all concerned continued to work together to ensure a positive outcome for both the organisation and its staff.

The information provided below is a summary of that provided by all those people that were interviewed. The areas discussed were:

#### **Staff Recruitment**

The Task Group concentrated on the following areas when considering the Council's Recruitment and Selection Policy.

- a) Recruitment – the process for external vacancies and where these were advertised.
- b) All applicants with a disability who met the minimum criteria for the vacancy would be interviewed and considered on their abilities - clarification as to whether this was classed as positive discrimination.
- c) Whether the Council had short term contracts for staff and how these were managed and monitored.

The process for filling a vacancy was explained – starting with the initial discussion at Corporate Management Team, when the relevant Head of Service would put forward a case for the need for the new or vacant post to be filled, to the position being advertised usually on the West Midlands Jobs Portal, which was also used for internal vacancies as well as external. This was a platform used by all local authorities in the West Midlands. The link on the Portal would then take any prospective candidate through to the Council’s specific pages and the job specification, description, and application form would be available at that stage. If it was a specialist role, perhaps an IT one for example, then it may also be advertised in a specific publication.

Members discussed how the ethnic make-up of the Council influenced the recruitment process and whether or if there was an in balance and how this could be addressed. Officers acknowledged that currently there were some gaps in the data available and therefore it would not be appropriate to use this for such purposes. Reference was again made to the introduction of the new ERP System and a specific area of that system which would cover HR matters (highlighted in the previous chapter of this report) which it was hoped would provide more accurate data that could be used to shape future recruitment as part of the wider strategy. Officers were urged to be more forward thinking within the recruitment process to ensure that the Council was able to recruit people from a wider range of communities. It needed to promote the availability of flexible working hours, the ability to work from home and childcare support, as these were areas which were now, more than ever, important to employees, following the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Members were provided with information in respect of fixed term contracts and it was noted that currently there were 41 in place, which were managed by the relevant service area. Such posts were arranged by the relevant area for a number of reasons, with the introduction of the new system it was hoped that these would be better managed and more detailed information made available. It was confirmed that if any of these fixed term contracts were replaced with a permanent post, the person currently in the role would still need to apply for it through the usual route and would not automatically be awarded the position. There was a clear recruitment process which should be followed throughout to ensure the process was open and transparent.

The importance of data being available in respect of all aspects of recruitment was discussed by the Task Group and it was keen to ensure that this data (which would hopefully be provided through the new ERP System) was monitored on a regular basis to ensure improvements were made and achievements highlighted.

### Secondment to Other Departments

The Human Resources and Organisational Development Manager provided information as to what secondment meant and how this was handled at the Council. As it was apparent that there was not a set policy in respect of this the main area for discussion by the Task Group was the need for a clear

explanation of the process and how it was managed in order to ensure that there was a fair process in place for all staff.

It was explained to the Task Group that a secondment was a temporary transfer to another area, whilst the person's substantive role remained open to them to return to at the end of the set period of the secondment. The post would be advertised internally and if a person was interested in that secondment post then, after going through the recruitment process and with their current manager's agreement, they could be moved to that post, whilst retaining the ability to return to their main post in the future. It was seen as an opportunity for both the employee and the employer as it allowed someone from another team who may have transferrable skills to use those skills and expand their knowledge within the Council environment.

Whilst it was understood that secondment opportunities were advertised through the recruitment process, concerns were raised that some staff may not have easy access to this and were unaware or did not fully understand the meaning of secondment and the opportunities available to them. Concerns were also raised in respect of it being at the manager's discretion to allow a member of staff to be released for a secondment post. It was suggested that there should be a more formal process put in place with the opportunity for a member of staff to appeal against a manager's decision, or at least for a full and open discussion to take place in order for all those concerned to understand why a request for secondment had been turned down. It was felt that this would ensure that all staff members were treated equally and provided an open and transparent process for everyone concerned. There was also discussion around the length of time a secondment should and did actually last, as it was felt that if these went on for any length of time, it was not beneficial to the member of staff or the team that they had been seconded from, as it would leave a level of uncertainty for all concerned. If a secondment went on for any length of time, it was thought that a permanent post should be considered and not a secondment.

#### Staff Progression within the Organisation

Task Group Members were keen to ensure that all staff were given the opportunity to progress if they so wished within the Council. It was felt important to retain staff and encourage them to aim to continually improve their skills if they wished too. Concerns were raised that this was not always the case and that it often was dependant on the area that a member of staff worked in as to what support and training was available, which if this was the case, was not acceptable. The following three areas in respect of progression were those which the Task Group mainly concentrated on for the purposes of this investigation.

- a) Provide a clear definition of "progression".
- b) Progression Policy – as the Council did not have a specific policy what steps were in place to help staff progress. For example, what training opportunities were available.

- c) Whether a record of the number of staff who had progressed within the Council was kept.

The Human Resources and Organisational Development Manager explained that it was difficult to define progression, as each person had a different view on it, for example some people would be happy in the same job but want to get the most out of it and others would want to use a job to develop skills and move forward in a more career-based way. It was also noted that in the current fast-moving climate of employment, many roles that people were in had by the nature of them changed significantly from when they first started, so it could be said that they had technically “progressed”, albeit indirectly and not in the formal sense. It was also highlighted that people were much more flexible these days, so again roles would have developed in some particular areas, whilst in others those roles would be much more defined.

It was explained that these areas, together with others, would be discussed at the regular 1-2-1 meetings which managers carried out with each member of their team and again at an annual Personal Development Review (PDR) in more detail. There was a standard format for these meetings, but they could also be flexible to meet the needs of an individual and/or the requirements of the line manager. The format that was followed for each individual staff member would be discussed and agreed with them at the outset of these meetings. There would be an opportunity at those meetings to talk about transferrable skills and training opportunities, either at the request of the staff member or the line manager if an area where this was needed was identified. It was explained that the current HR system was not able to provide detailed data around cases where people had “progressed”, but it was anticipated that the new system would be able to do so. It was confirmed that the PDR would be held annually and reviewed six monthly with 1-2-1s taking place regularly, but again this was down to the staff member and line manager to agree an appropriate timescale.

Members generally agreed that progression had a different meaning for each individual, and it was also commented that in some cases people did not wish to progress but were happy within their role and it would be wrong to make them feel pressured into moving on if they did not wish to do so. Officers confirmed that it would be down to personal choice and a member of staff would not be put under any unnecessary pressure. It was therefore noted that whilst the Council’s policy of progression was embedded within the appraisal process, Members were keen to ensure that the appraisals were carried out and the appropriate opportunities made available to everyone. It was agreed therefore that a more formal approach should be taken in respect of progression, which provided staff with clear guidelines set out in a policy of how this worked, what they might expect from it and how they would be supported through the process.

Conflicting information was provided in respect of those staff members who regularly received 1-2-1s and PDRs and Members highlighted the importance of these taking place across the board to ensure all staff were given the same opportunities to progress if they so wished or to take part in any relevant training

to either support their current roles or to help them progress. It was acknowledged that there was always some room for improvement and that this was something which was reviewed on a regular basis. If a member of staff was not happy with the manner in which they were being supported by a manager there was always the opportunity for them to speak to a more senior manager or for them to speak to an HR Advisor – each service area had a designated HR Advisor who was available for anyone to speak to about concerns that they may have.

Concerns were also raised in respect of training that was provided and made available to staff, Members were keen to ensure that any training provided was appropriate for those receiving it and cost effective. They saw little benefit in providing sessions which people did not attend for whatever reason, particularly if an external training provider was being used as it was important for the Council to get value for money from any sessions it organised. They were also keen to ensure that staff were given the opportunity to attend training sessions where appropriate, as they were mindful that in some cases, for example refuse collectors, the release of them for say half a day, could impact on service delivery, so may deter them from attending such sessions.

It was suggested that progression added value to the Council and that currently there was no evidence to say how many staff had progressed and whether the policy was therefore inclusive of everyone. It was explained that whilst a member of staff could say they had progressed there was currently nothing on the current HR system used to support this, so any data would be anecdotal. Whilst this hard evidence was not present, Officers were satisfied through talking to people and from internal intelligence that this did happen in particular areas. However, it was accepted that there was not the definitive data available to support this. Again, it was hoped that with the new ERP System this would improve and allow a better monitoring process to be in place and it would be an area which was reviewed on a regular basis going forward.

The Task Group therefore recommends the following:

<b>Recommendation 3</b>
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That when the new ERP system is in use, the data collated by it in respect of HR issues be considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Board.
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<b>Recommendation 4</b>
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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>a) That clear guidelines are put in place in respect of the secondment process (which would include some sort of appeals process) and made accessible to all staff; and</li><li>b) That a formal progression policy be put in place and made accessible to all staff.</li></ul> |
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## **Chapter 3**

### **Community and Engagement Strategy**

During the interview with the Policy Manager Members asked about how community engagement influenced the Council's policies. The Policy Manager explained to the Task Group how community engagement was used to influence the Council Plan through the annual community survey. The results of these surveys were shared with the Corporate Management Team and also through Cabinet. They were used by Managers within reports and questions or smaller surveys could be used for a particular piece of work for a specific area. An example of this was when it was used within Leisure Services and helped to shape what services were provided to meet the needs of the residents. There had been a good return rate of nearly 1k for this particular survey.

The Task Group was provided with a brief overview of the results of the most recent Community Survey and, the three questions which had been included in respect of equalities. Members were pleased to see that there had also been a section provided for free text to allow residents to respond on a more general basis. It was noted that the majority of responses had been positive, with the Council being fair and inclusive.

Information was also provided in respect of a recent staff survey which was based around working from home. The Council had felt, that due to the current situation arising from the impact of the pandemic, it was important to ensure that all staff, who were working from home were being supported appropriately and given the opportunity to share any concerns or specific issues they faced. The Council was also mindful of the impact of working from home on staff's mental health and wellbeing and was keen to ensure that wherever possible this was addressed, and suitable mechanisms put in place for staff to be able to access any support that was needed. Members were provided with a number of outcomes which had been put in place following this survey.

The Task Group discussed the importance of hearing from residents about their experiences and how they felt the Council were meeting the needs of those from the protected characteristics groups and it was therefore suggested that more detailed questions around equalities could be included in the next community survey. Members of the Task Group would be happy to work with the Policy Manager in formulating these questions to ensure that they focused on the right areas and covered any specific areas which were highlighted to Members whilst working in their local communities.

It was also discussed as to how best the Community Survey could be promoted to ensure as many residents as possible completed it as it was acknowledged that robust data was needed in order for it to be used in a meaningful way. Members were keen to add their support to any campaign that was put in place to promote the survey and were happy to work with officers to get the best results for all concerned. It was vitally important that community groups

engaged with the Council to help make any necessary improvements in the future.

The Task Group therefore recommends the following:

<b>Recommendation 5</b>
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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>a) That a specific section on Equalities be included within the annual Community Survey; and</li><li>b) That the Overview and Scrutiny Board (or Members of the Equalities Task Group) are involved in the preparation of the questions to be included.</li></ul> |
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## **Areas to Note**

There was one particular area which the Task Group considered briefly at its final meeting and whilst they did not feel it appropriate to make any recommendation on this matter, they would like this to be looked at in more detail and action taken if felt appropriate. This was in respect of compliments and complaints received by the Council and there were two specific areas which the Task Group discussed and wished to be highlighted:

- Compliments and Complaints page and the Customer Care Pledge on the Council's website – it was suggested that these be in a more prominent position (in order to make them easier for residents to locate) and promoted through the Council's social media on a more regular basis.
- Members also discussed that it would be useful for them to receive regular updates on the number and type of compliments and complaints that were received. It was acknowledged that this was available through the Corporate Dashboard, but it was felt that this should be something which was received at a committee, such as the Overview and Scrutiny Board. It was noted that in previous years, this was a report which had been received by the Board on a quarterly basis, as part of its role of managing the Council's performance.

It should also be noted that as part of the investigation it carried out, the Task Group did also discuss and consider whether it was appropriate to "invite" in members of the public to one of its meeting or to set up a survey of its own to get the views of residents. However, after discussion it was agreed that in light of the current position and the impact of Covid-19 that logistically this would not be practicable and that in the current difficult times there may not be sufficient responses in order to provide meaningful data. Hence, the suggestion that future Community Surveys included more questions around equalities as detailed in the previous chapter of this report. There were a number of Members of the Task Group who had contacts with a number of community groups in their Wards and it was agreed that they would support the Policy Manager in making contact with those groups to encourage further community engagement. It was suggested that other Members may also have a number of contacts which could prove helpful to the Policy Manager and this should be explored further as the Covid-19 restrictions were reduced.

It was felt important that all Members played a part in improving and supporting community engagement in any way that they could.

### **OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY BOARD**

#### **Equalities Task Group**

##### **Terms of Reference as at August 2020**

The Identifying and Addressing Racial Disparities within Bromsgrove District Council's Operations Task Group has been set up by the Overview and Scrutiny Board to carry out detailed scrutiny/pre-scrutiny of the above topic.

1. The Task Group be made up of 9 Members with a quorum of 5. The Task Group will meet throughout the next six months at intervals to be decided by the Group.
2. Meetings will be restricted to 1.5 hours in order for the Group to remain focused (with the option to extend should it be deemed necessary).
3. The Task Group agreed that if Members missed more than 2 meetings then they would no longer be on the Task Group.
4. The Task Group will be a standing item on the agenda of the Overview and Scrutiny Board and either a verbal or written report will be provided at each of the Board's meetings.
5. The Task Group is able to make recommendations to the Overview & Scrutiny Board who will then put forward its recommendations for consideration by Cabinet or directly to Cabinet/Council.
6. The Task group is expected to complete the investigation in six months and provide its findings and recommendations to the Overview and Scrutiny Board in a written report at that time.
7. Should the Task Group not complete its work within that timescale, then an interim report will be presented to the Overview and Scrutiny Board with a request for further time to complete the investigations.

##### **Aims and Objectives of the Task Group**

The Task Group will undertake a scrutiny investigation into Identifying and Addressing Disparities of those who come under the protected characteristics communities (as detailed within the Equalities Act 2010) within Bromsgrove District Council's Operations and will cover the following areas, although this list is not exclusive:

- Identify if any disparities exist within the Council's operations.
- How easy is it for Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic (BAME), together with those groups included within the protected characteristics communities of the Equalities Act 2010, residents to access council support?
- Identify ways that these disparities, if any, can be addressed

For information, the protected characteristics communities within the Equalities Act 2010 are as follows:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender reassignment
- Marriage and civil partnership
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Race
- Religion or belief
- Sex
- Sexual orientation

**BACKGROUND PAPERS**

**Council Documents**

Equalities Strategy

Engagement Strategy

Recruitment and Selection Policy

Contractors Equalities Questionnaire

**External Documents**

Equalities Act 2010

**WITNESSES**

The Task Group considered evidence from the following sources before making its recommendations:

**Internal Witnesses:**

Deb Poole – Head of Transformation, Organisational Development and Digital Strategy

Rebecca Green – Policy Manger

Becky Talbot – Human Resources and Organisational Development Manager

Laney Walsh – Unison Representative

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