

East Herts Council Report

Human Resources Committee

Date of meeting: Wednesday 11 September 2024

Report by: HR and OD Service Manager

Report title: Equalities Report 2023-2024

Ward(s) affected: None

Summary

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR HR Committee:

- a) The Annual Equalities Report 2023/24 be noted.
- b) The recommendations set out in the 2024/25 action plan are considered and approved.

1.0 Proposal

- 1.1 Members are invited to consider the Annual Equalities Report 2023/24 and approve the 2024/25 action plan.

2.0 Background

- 2.1 Human Resources produce an annual equalities report which provides a detailed analysis of the council's workforce and external applicants applying for jobs, by the protected characteristics of the Equality Act 2010.
- 1.2 The Equality Act protects people from discrimination on the basis of protected characteristics, which include age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, gender, sexual orientation, and marriage and civil

partnership.

- 1.3 Public sector bodies with more than 150 employees are required to publish data on equality in their workforces annually.

1.0 Reasons

- 3.1 This report underscores the council's legal obligation under the Equality Act 2010 and the Specific Duties Regulations 2011, which require public sector bodies with over 150 employees to publish annual data on workforce equality. Compliance with these regulations is crucial for several reasons:
- 3.2 **Transparency:** Regular publication of equality data ensures that the council's commitment to diversity and inclusion is visible to all stakeholders, fostering trust and confidence in its operations.
- 3.3 **Accountability:** By publishing detailed equality data, the council can be held accountable for its performance in promoting equal opportunities and addressing inequalities within its workforce.
- 3.4 **Promotion of Equal Opportunities:** The report aims to identify and address any disparities in the workforce, ensuring that all employees have equal access to opportunities and are treated fairly, regardless of their protected characteristics.

4.0 Options

- 4.1 By implementing improved data collection and analysis methods, the council can ensure accurate and comprehensive data that inform better decision-making. Alongside this, developing and implementing targeted initiatives will address identified inequalities, enhance recruitment processes, and provide necessary training to promote an inclusive culture. This integrated approach will not only meet legal compliance but also actively support and enhance workforce diversity and inclusion.

5.0 Risks

- 5.1 Legal Risks: Non-compliance with the Equality Act 2010 and the Specific Duties Regulations 2011 could lead to legal sanctions, financial penalties, and damage to the council's reputation. It is crucial to meet these statutory requirements to avoid such consequences.
- 5.2 Operational Risks: If the council fails to collect and analyse equality data effectively, it may miss critical insights needed to address disparities and promote inclusion. Inadequate data can result in ineffective equality initiatives, perpetuating existing inequalities and undermining the council's commitment to fairness.
- 5.3 Reputational Risks: Inadequate handling of equality issues can damage the council's reputation, both internally among staff and externally among the public and stakeholders. Demonstrating a strong commitment to equality through robust data collection and proactive measures is essential for maintaining a positive reputation.

6.0 Implications/Consultations

6.1. Community Safety

- 6.1.1 No implications for community safety have been identified. The report's focus is on workforce equality, which does not directly impact community safety measures.

6.2. Data Protection

- 6.2.1 Yes – the report contains sensitive personal data. To protect individuals' privacy, data has not been included in sections where small sample sizes could lead to the identification of individuals. This approach ensures compliance with data protection laws while maintaining the integrity of the report

6.3. Equalities

6.3.1 Yes – the whole report is dedicated to equalities. It provides a comprehensive analysis of the council’s workforce in terms of the protected characteristics defined by the Equality Act 2010. The report aims to identify any disparities and recommend actions to promote equality and diversity within the council.

6.4. Environmental Sustainability

6.4.1 No implications for environmental sustainability have been identified. The report’s focus is on workforce equality, and it does not address environmental sustainability issues.

6.5. Financial

6.5.1 No additional major financial implications have been identified. The report focuses on the analysis of workforce equality data and does not propose actions that would have a direct financial impact on the council’s budget outside of staff development and training budgets and benefits from operational upgrades to systems and processes.

6.6. Health and Safety

6.6.1 No implications for health and safety have been identified. The report does not address health and safety issues directly, as its primary focus is on workforce equality

6.7. Human Resources

6.7.1 Yes – the report includes detailed information on equalities relating to staff. This encompasses recruitment, training, disciplinary actions, and staff turnover, providing insights into the council’s efforts to promote diversity and inclusion within its workforce. The findings can inform HR policies and practices to enhance equality and support for all employees further.

6.8. Human Rights

6.8.1 No direct implications for human rights have been identified. However, promoting equality within the workforce supports the broader human rights principle of non-discrimination.

6.9. Legal

6.9.1 Yes – public sector bodies with more than 150 employees are required by law to publish annual data on workforce equality. This legal requirement is intended to ensure transparency and accountability in promoting equality and diversity within public sector organisations.

6.10. Specific Wards

6.10.1 No specific wards are affected by the report. The analysis and recommendations are focused on the council's workforce as a whole, rather than on specific geographic areas.

7.0 Background papers, appendices and other relevant material

7.1 Please see Appendix A for the full report.

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