

EMT – 27 July 2021

HR COMMITTEE – 16th September 2021

SUPPORTING WORKFORCE INCLUSION

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1.1 The Council continues to advocate our inclusive workforce, equal opportunities culture and commitment to all practices noted in Section 4.
- 1.2 All employees continue to mandatorily complete Equality training two yearly:
 - i. Office based employees complete the 'Equalities Essential' e-learning module
 - ii. Operational workforce attend 1 hour 'Embracing Equality and Diversity' session, delivered by a member of the HR Team

2. INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 This report highlights the Councils commitment as an equal opportunities employer and our ongoing positive measures that supports this culture for our workforce.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The Council is an equal opportunities employer and recognises the value of our workforce.
- 3.2 A diverse workforce is important to the Council to foster ideas, promote new ways of working and celebrate all regardless of age, culture, ethnic heritage or sexual orientation. This contributes to ensuring our services both represent and meet the needs of our community.

4. WORKFORCE EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

- 4.1 The following practices highlight our inclusive culture:
- 4.2 Policies:
 - i. Our dedicated Equal Opportunities policies were updated in January 2021 and reflect our commitment to the removal of discrimination against any employee or applicant in their access to employment, training, working conditions, promotion and dismissal.
 - ii. Our suite of Employment policies reflects the above, with reference to gender specific personal pronouns removed as they are reviewed and updated.
 - iii. The process for identifying those who would benefit from the support of reasonable adjustments was improved in January 2021, including how these agreed adjustments are recorded and reviewed including ongoing dialogue between manager and employee. The HR Team are alerted whenever an employee's disability status is updated on the HR Hub and there is an improved working document for managers to record and update required adjustments.

- iv. The HR Advisory team support line managers to ensure our Employment policies are fairly and non-discriminately applied across our workforce so decisions made support both our employees and organisational needs.

4.3 Website:

- i. In April 2021 the Councils internal Equality, Diversity and Inclusion pages were updated. These are designed to be interactive and provide up to date resources for employees, including local disability and LGBTQIA+ resources. An example includes a link directing staff to the [Hampshire LGBTQIA+ Alliance](#). This is an alliance of Hampshire based LGBTQIA+ networks that have pledged to work together with the aim of celebrating and supporting LGBTQIA+ communities across Hampshire.
- ii. The CIPD Inclusion Calendar is promoted in this area of the intranet. It highlights over 240 important dates including holy days, religious festivals, health and wellbeing awareness days, special events and bank holidays. Periodically throughout the year the HR team highlight pertinent events that may be affecting our staff. For example June marked Pride Month. The special edition of our Employee Assistance Programme newsletter was circulated to all staff and the Pride flag at Appletree Court was our internal screensaver for the month of June.
- iii. These updated intranet pages were promoted at the time of release through our Communications team and remain prevalent on the home page of Forestnet.
- iv. Dedicated Equality pages on the external website highlight our commitment to equality with simple, clear information. This includes Gender Pay Gap and Workforce Profile data.

4.4 Employee Forum:

- i. The employee forum is an informal staff network the talks direct to HR and our Chief Executive about what is happening in their teams, celebrates success and is an opportunity to raise and talk through current issues affecting staff. It is an inclusive forum that aims to be representative of our workforce. All meeting notes are available on our intranet for the whole workforce and new attendee's encouraged.

4.5 Disability Confident:

- i. We are a committed Disability Confident Employer. This means that:
- ii. Our recruitment process is inclusive and accessible. The HR Team deliver regular training to line managers covering the importance of upholding our fair processes throughout the recruitment process, and the benefits of diversity within a team. HR support and guidance is available throughout the recruitment process for managers to ensure fair, inclusive decisions are made. The induction process is designed to support all new employees fairly and should reasonable adjustments be needed, there are processes in place to ensure this is supported in the right way.
- iii. We communicate and promote our vacancies in methods accessible for all members of the community. We use a variety of methods including the Councils recruitment portal, various social media platforms, local newspapers/publications and professional publications. This encourages diverse recruitment.
- iv. Offer interviews to any disabled candidate who meet the essential criteria for the role, anticipate and make reasonable adjustments for employee and candidates (as

needed) and support existing employees who acquire a disability or long-term health condition.

4.6 In July 2020 the Council published its Workforce Profile. At the time this highlighted the Councils workforce was representative of the local New Forest community. Since then our Workforce has changed (Leisure outsourcing) and the Census was held in March 2021. It is anticipated in summer 2022 ONS will publish initial census findings. At that point the Workforce profile will be reviewed and updated so it can be compared to the most accurate data.

4.7 Training:

- i. The HR Team deliver periodic line management 'Brief Bite' training. This suite of training covers a breadth of management responsibilities, including absence, capability, disciplinary, wellbeing and performance management. All these sessions cover the importance of equal opportunities and how to make fair, non-discriminatory people management decisions.
- ii. All employees are currently required to complete the 'Equalities Essentials' eLearning module every 2 years. Throughout the module there are a variety of questions and clips with a quiz at the end. It covers:
 - a. Understanding Key Terms – including our responsibilities under the Equality Act
 - b. Handling Harassment – what harassment means and how to handle if it were to happen from both an employee and management perspective
 - c. Inclusive Service – how to provide an inclusive service to our customers, including communication tools
 - d. Equality in Action – the benefits to our organisation of promoting equal opportunities
- iii. The HR Team deliver Embracing Equality and Diversity in the Workplace Training (Appendix A). This is a one-hour session currently available to all employees. It is an accessible overview that whilst highlighting the necessary legal responsibilities on us through the Equality Act 2010, explores how we encourage respect, inclusion and fair treatment for all our colleagues and residents. It covers the same topics as the e-learning module in a condensed way.
- iv. This was originally designed for and delivered to our operational workforce in November 2019 – January 2020.
- v. Since November 2019, 31 Embracing Equality and Diversity in the Workplace training sessions have been run with 432 employees attended across the workforce.
- vi. The nature of e-learning means it is often difficult and impractical for operational staff to complete. The Embracing Equality and Diversity session is designed to be inclusive and relevant to the workforce, whilst covering all the key components.
- vii. On this basis it is proposed the E-Learning module is completed by office-based staff only, and the operational workforce attend the Embracing Equality and Diversity session delivered by HR.
- viii. The HR Team will manage the completion and renewals of Equality training. This will include tracking and reminding office-based staff who have not completed the E-

learning module and working with operational managers to deliver a two-yearly rolling programme for the HR led session.

- ix. It is envisaged every quarter training sessions will be run for operational staff to include those due for renewal and any new employees.
- x. Both training tools will be regularly reviewed to ensure they are relevant and fit for purpose.
- xi. This approach will ensure all employees receive regular and effective equality training.

5. CONCLUSIONS

- 5.1 This details the Councils commitment to Equal Opportunities, a culture which will continue to be advocated across the workforce.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 None

7. CRIME & DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 None

8. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 None

9. EQUALITY & DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 This paper promotes the Councils continued Equal Opportunities culture.

10. DATA PROTECTION IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 None

11. UNION COMMENTS

- 11.1 In order to further workforce inclusion I think that it would be really beneficial for employees to be able to select their gender from a drop down on their personal details page on the HR Hub instead of it being hard locked and requiring speaking to someone in HR to change in the background. I believe the current system has an unnecessary barrier of having to come out to someone in order to have their gender recognised on the system.
- 11.2 In response to this the HR Hub has been updated in order that employees can self-select the gender neutral title of MX.

For further information contact:

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