

Equality Impact Assessment: Report and EIA Action Plan

Purpose

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| What is being reviewed? | Introduce Independent Observers to monitor recruitment into BCP Council vacancies, especially those at Management level and above |
| Service Lead and Service Unit: | Samuel Johnson, Policy and Performance |
| People involved in EIA process: | Samuel Johnson |
| Date/s EIA started and reviewed: | 14 October 2020 - 28 June 2021 |

Background

- 1.1.** It was previously noted by Dorset Race Equality Council (DREC) that whilst the profile of communities across the conurbation had changed significantly between the census of 2001 and that of 2011 conversely the profiles of the local authorities of Bournemouth, Christchurch, Poole and others in Dorset had remained relatively stagnant during the same period. This position was damaging to the reputation of the councils as they were not seen as 'employers of choice' within Black Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) communities and among other underrepresented groups.
 - 1.1.1.** This fact was more noticeable in Bournemouth as it had the highest proportion of BAME people in comparison to any other town across the county. The council was also one of the largest employers within the area.
- 1.2.** Nine delegates from a range of professional backgrounds undertook recruitment and selection training which was the same as that given to employees responsible for recruiting new staff.
- 1.3.** The Independent Observer initiative was supported by the council and its Executive and Service Directors. The course was opened by the Chief Executive.
 - 1.3.1.** It is important to note that the role of independent observers was to observe the council's recruitment process and not the performance of Elected Members or of employees whose role required them to recruit new staff.
- 1.4.** A decision was taken to work in partnership with DREC who were engaged to administer the recruitment of several volunteers from the community, that were willing to undertake the Council's recruitment and selection training.
 - 1.4.1.** On completion of the recruitment and selection training the volunteers were able to select to observe the whole selection process for any vacancy within the council.
 - 1.4.2.** Observers would be permitted to score candidates at the same time, with the same criterion used by the appointing recruitment panel at each stage of the process from the initial paper sift through to Interview and offer of employment.
 - 1.4.3.** If observers scores differed significantly from that of the panel members, they would engage in conversation to explore how each party had arrived at a different conclusion.

- 1.4.4.** However, observer's scores even though they were noted they did not contribute towards the scores on which an appointment was made. Observers were not entitled to influence the appointment of any candidate or form part of the decision-making process as ultimately it was the recruitment panel of Council officers or Elected Members only who could be held accountable for an error of judgment should one occur.
- 1.5.** As trained independent observers each was able to understand the criteria used to invite an applicant to interview or why an application may be rejected at the initial stages of recruitment or be unsuccessful at interview.
- 1.6.** The training was delivered by Human Resources (Mouchel) and (the Councils' equality & diversity co-ordinator) and was delivered in July of 2015. The independent observers were utilised and continued until approximately up to 2017/18, it unclear why the practice was discontinued.
- 1.7.** Recruiting managers will need to agree the necessary arrangements with HR to facilitate the independent observation of recruitment to posts, this will ensure that there is smooth interaction between the BCP Council and observers.
- 1.8.** The Independent Observes Initiative was identified as good practice by the LGA during the Peer Challenge for Bournemouth Borough Councils accreditation at the level of Excellent on the Equality Framework for Local Government who commented that:

2. Constitution: Officer Employment Procedure Rules

- 2.1.** The Constitution (Part 4F para 2.1) requires recruitment, designation and appointment of officers to be undertaken in accordance with the law and the Council's policies and procedures. The introduction of Independent Observers would be an adopted procedure (subject to para 2 as set out below).
- 2.2.** The Constitution provides that Cabinet is responsible for the development of Corporate Human Resource policies, determining and monitoring the policies and the operational implementation of them to include practices and procedures (Part 4F para 3.1).
- 2.3.** Paragraph 4 of Part 4F of the Constitution describes in more detail the requirements for appointments to Tier 1 and 2 appointments and those of the Monitoring Officer (MO) and Section 151 (S151) Officer. This includes the positions of Director for Human Resources (HR) and Organisational Development (OD) overseeing the arrangements for appointment in consultation with the Leader of the Council and convening a member panel containing at least one member of the opposition and one Cabinet member.
- 2.4.** It also provides that the panel will support the Director of HR and OD to draw up a statement of duties, advertising arrangements and to short list. The panel will also reach a view as to the most suitable candidate following interview and make a recommendation to Full Council to make the decision on appointment.

Findings

- 3.** The population of BCP Council's area is around 395,800 and is estimated to reach 420,900 by 2028. It is also likely to have become more diverse since the last Census and is one of the largest employers in the area¹

¹ State of BCP Report November 2019

- 3.1. BCP Council's communities are 88.4% White British and 11.6% BAME.
- 3.2. The current workforce is not representative of the communities BCP Council serve and can be found [here](#). A brief analysis of the profile of staff recruited into more senior roles over the past 12 months has identified that:
- 5% of applications for Management roles were from non-white candidates
 - 10.6% of applicants identified as living with a disability
 - 0% from either of these groups were offered employment.
 - Males are disproportionately less successful in being offered employment than females
 - People under the age of 34 and over the 55 are disproportionately unsuccessful for Management roles.
 - Gay, Lesbian and bi-sexual candidates are disproportionately successful at getting to offer stage, the reverse is the case for heterosexual candidates.
 - The percentage of the workforce who have declared their ethnic origin as BME is 5%.
 - Although proportionate numbers of applications for Council jobs are received from members of Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) groups, candidates from these communities are less likely to secure an offer of employment when compared to their white counterparts.

Conclusion

Summary of Equality Implications

Independent Observers initiative shall increase transparency of senior selection processes and improve understanding, whilst increasing the trust and confidence within local communities of BCP Councils recruitment process and practice.

There are positive impacts for all groups as this will safeguard fairness and equity for all groups.

Equality Impact Assessment: Report and EIA Action Plan

Equality Impact Assessment Action Plan

| Issue identified | Action required to reduce impact | Timescale | Responsible officer(s) |
|--|--|--|--|
| Lack of diversity in BCP Council workforce | Introduce Independent Observers to monitor recruitment into BCP Council vacancies, especially those at Management level and above | With immediate effect | HR Business Partners SELG support the introduction of this initiative |
| | Utilise Community Equality Champions Network and SLAs with DREC, DOTs and partnerships with community-based groups to include the recruitment of additional cohorts of Independent Observers | TBA by the Strategic Equality Leadership Group | Head of Communities and Head of Insight Policy and Performance |
| | Agree training requirements for new Independent Observers | With immediate effect | Learning and Development Manager |