

COUNCIL FUNCTIONS COMMITTEE

7 September 2017

Present: Councillor D Walford (Chair)
Councillor M Watkin (Vice-Chair)
Councillors A Dychton, S Johnson and N Steele

Officers: Interim Head of Human Resources
Assistant HR Business Partner
Member Development and Civic Officer

1 Apologies for absence/ committee membership

There was a change of membership for this meeting: Councillor S Johnson replaced Councillor J Johnson.

No apologies were received from Councillors Mills and Shah.

2 Disclosure of interests (if any)

There were no disclosures of interest.

3 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 28 February 2017 were submitted and signed.

4 Annual statement of workforce monitoring

The Committee received a report of the Head of Human Resources which detailed the profile of Watford Borough Council's workforce from 1 April 2016 to 31 March 2017.

Watford Borough Council was committed to equality and diversity across the full spectrum of its services and in its role as an employer. The commitment was articulated in its equality objective and associated action plan which identified key actions the council would take to ensure equalities for its workforce and that it reflected the community it served. Watford's commitment went beyond its statutory obligations and reinforced its corporate priority to ensure equality and diversity was at the heart of everything it did.

The Interim Head of Human Resources introduced the report to the Committee. Although the report was an annual statutory requirement, there was no obligation on the part of staff to complete a survey and the relatively low number of respondents remained an issue in terms of obtaining accurate data. However, the 50% response was generally reliable in facilitating an analysis and provided actionable headline data.

The age profile of Watford was not unusual, compared with other authorities, but it was important to attract younger staff. The council had introduced apprenticeships to improve the situation, but not all council roles lent themselves to younger people, especially where experience was required.

The Watford outturn for BAME top 10% Earners was 13.64%. This was higher than the local government average, which was to be commended.

The Committee expressed the view that with a Watford BAME population of 38.12%, it was desirable for the council to aim to reflect this figure in its recruitment, acknowledging, however, that positive discrimination was not permissible. They also considered that low uptake amongst certain ethnic and religious groups might be the result of cultural attitudes to choosing a career in local government, or a desire not to disclose origin or religion because of perceptions of discrimination. There was scope for further investigation in this area. Also, it would be ascertained whether the overall figure referred to working population, which was acknowledged as being more reliable.

It was noted that recruitment training to all appropriate managers had taken place in January 2017. The Committee would be provided with percentage attendance figures in due course.

The disability information had some limitations, as 64.65% of employees had not made a disability declaration. The Disability Focus Group, which met twice yearly, would be consulted about the probable reasons for low reporting. Staff surveys, also, would provide further useful information in this and all areas covered in the Monitoring Report.

The Committee felt that local government was not always fully understood by the public and were of the view that raising awareness amongst certain groups was a priority. The Interim Head of Human Resources reported that, already, the council was raising its profile through work placements and school visits. This work would continue, but the council, as a relatively small local employer, would be proportionate in its efforts.

Chair

The Meeting started at 7.00 pm
and finished at 7.20 pm