

Brighton & Hove City Council

Equalities, Community Safety & Human rights Committee

Agenda Item 32

Subject: Progress Update on BHCC Anti-Racism Strategy 2023-2028 – Year One

Date of meeting: 25th March 2024

Report of: Executive Director Neighbourhoods, Communities & Housing, Rachel Sharpe

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Ward(s) affected: All

For general release

1. Purpose of the report and policy context

- 1.1 This report provides a update on the council's progress in year one of its Anti-Racism Strategy 2023-2028. Progress on actions by directorate is outlined in Appendix 1.

2. Recommendation

- 2.1 That Committee notes the report.

3. Context and background information

- 3.1 In March 2023, the council agreed its first ever [Anti-Racism Strategy](#) which set out our developing understanding of anti-racism, highlighted the priority areas of work for the council as a whole and for directorates, and kicked-off a five-year action plan for the whole organisation. Anti-racist work was already underway as a result of the council's Fair and Inclusive Action Plan, which started in 2019 in response to the findings of an independent review of the experiences of Black and Racially Minoritised staff. This was strengthened with the council's pledge in 2020 to become an anti-racist council and then codified in 2023 with the approval of the strategy.

Culture Change

- 3.2 Embedding anti-racism into an organisation requires a sensitive, nuanced, and persistent approach. The council is using the Fair and Inclusive Action Plan which includes Anti-Racism Strategy specific actions to track and measure the progress of the anti-racism work committed to.
- 3.3 When tracking our progress towards becoming an anti-racist organisation it is important to consider the overall growth of the organisation's confidence

in talking about anti-racism and intersectionality. This is evidenced by the willingness of staff to have uncomfortable conversations, to proactively seek advice and guidance from the council's Equalities Diversity and Inclusion ('EDI') team, and to reflect, through an anti-racist intersectional lens, on the outcomes they are delivering for residents, and staff. While these important metrics may not be reflected in an action plan with a list of activities, they point to growth and a shift in culture within the organisation.

- 3.4 One of the main themes of development in our anti-racism understanding is allyship, particularly White allyship. Allyship is vital in the progress of anti-racism in our organisation, especially considering the ethnicity demographics of the council's workforce. While the council has clear plans and actions to diversify the workforce, this will take time and Black and Racially Minoritised voices are in the minority in teams, working groups and spaces across the council. Through the encouragement of White allyship we aim to take the burden off Black and Racially Minoritised people to advocate for themselves by upskilling White allies to support and advocate alongside.
- 3.5 We have seen many White staff take initiative in developing their understanding of anti-racism. Some examples of this are that there has been an increase of micro learning at team meetings throughout the council, a project board established in Public Health to devote more capacity to understanding the impact of inequality in accessing services, a task and finish group set up in Housing to explore the cause(s) of a disproportionate representation of Black & Racially Minoritised people in temporary accommodation, and other intentional spaces established by teams, such as lunch & learn sessions, to focus on developing their understanding of anti-racism and intersectionality.
- 3.6 We are conscious of the need to support allies to be informed allies and to mitigate for unintended harm caused by well-intentioned, naïve allyship. For example, a White male senior manager was supported by a staff member from the EDI team with a pilot scheme of monthly inclusion mentoring sessions and bespoke developmental support over a six-month period. This enabled them to grow their leadership style through discussing challenges and learning in a one-to-one space. With increased confidence, awareness, and skills he was been better able to partner with Black and Racially Minoritised staff and to influence senior White colleagues by exhibiting allyship – all leading to improvements in service practice for staff and service users.
- 3.7 It is vital we build managers' confidence to deal with potential fallout from uncomfortable conversations and build White staff members' confidence to accept they will make mistakes, so that the understandable fear of making a mistake does not deter them from growing and strengthening their anti-racism understanding and practice. This has been provided through support from and learning opportunities created by the council's EDI team, and training available to all staff via our Learning & Development offer. Moreover, it is equally important we provide Black and Racially Minoritised staff with bespoke support when triggered or harmed by allies' mis-steps.

We are doing this through EDI business partnering support at first point, following organisation standard routes of escalation if necessary and signposting to appropriate sources of support within and outside the council.

- 3.8 There will be a continued focus in 2024/25 on culture change with the continuation and scaling up of micro and case study learning. Using lived experience and real-life episodes, we expect to see an increase in staff confidence in discussing racism, and a growth in understanding of the impacts of racism within the organisation and in our service provision.

Monitoring progress

- 3.9 Progress has been tracked through a rigorous governance and monitoring approach. The Anti-Racism Strategy identified three strategic themes that underpin our improvement – 1) Engagement: Communicating and Collaborating; 2) Data: Collecting and using; 3) Policy and Practice: Reviewing and Changing. The strategic themes align with the Fair and Inclusive Action Plan to ensure every agreed anti-racism action has accountability at various levels of the organisation up to the Executive Leadership Team.
- 3.10 Additionally, each directorate has an assigned EDI business partner, HR business partner and a business improvement manager to support and improve the overall performance of the directorates. Together the three officers aid the delivery, governance, and monitoring of all the directorate's fair and inclusive actions including their anti-racism actions. The first year of the anti-racism strategy established this system. In 2024/25 will continue to refine and strengthen our monitoring including capturing impact.

Progress highlights

- 3.11 Progress on the prioritised actions committed to by each of the council's five directorates is outlined in Appendix 1. Below are key progress highlights of note:
- 3.12 The council is committed to supporting schools in becoming more anti-racist and a specific strategy has been developed to outline the nuanced implementation of anti-racism in schools. A team of teachers is seconded to assist in the delivery of the Brighton & Hove Anti-Racist Education Strategy, with two of the team acting as Interim Strategy Leads. The lead teacher team has delivered a vast portfolio of work to support the development of anti-racism across schools. This includes delivering Anti-Racism training to over 50% of state-maintained schools and developing new guidance centred around a restorative justice approach for both primary and secondary schools.
- 3.13 The anti-racism work in education also supports racial literacy for pupils. Racial literacy for pupils is about enabling all children and young people to

talk about the effects of and experiences of racialisation in a constructive and informative way. This allows young people to be informed in an age-appropriate way and gives them the skills to challenge ideas about race while celebrating difference. The importance of the anti-racism work in education is highlighted by severe lack of representation in staffing of schools. In Brighton and Hove, 27% of pupils identify as Black & Racially Minoritised, whereas only 6% of the workforce do. Many schools have no Black or Racially Minoritised teachers. This is significant because representation and shared lived experience have a significant impact on pupil's sense of belonging at their educational institution.

- 3.14 The council is committed to achieving and maintaining a diverse workforce that represents the city it serves. The council established a Diverse Talent programme; its aim: to provide Black and Racially Minoritised employees with personal and professional workforce development, increasing confidence and skills to progress in careers, to understand and overcome barriers in accessing opportunities and gaining promotion. Running from April to September 2023 the programme was structured as a series of monthly workshops. Each participant was matched to a sponsor, a senior leader at the council and offered two coaching sessions with a professional work coach. It was built on the success of a pilot programme in 2022.
- 3.15 Key successes to take from this year's programme include significant increase in confidence for those who took part, out of fifteen participants, two were promoted within the council during the programme and a third person was offered an apprenticeship. It is important to note that this programme ran at the same time the council implemented the recruitment freeze, meaning there were less opportunities available. One participant of the programme said, "The programme was a success for myself, and I would encourage everyone to join the Diverse Talent Programme". The council will be running a Future Leaders Programme in 2024. This programme is aimed at Black and Racially Minoritised and/or disabled staff members, addressing our growing awareness of how intersecting protected characteristics can impact a person's lived experience.
- 3.16 The council is committed to improving the equality data monitoring across the council. A better understanding of who does and doesn't use our services, along with a deeper understanding of their experience of our services means we can work to improve and get it right first time for our diverse residents. This year, we developed bronze, silver and gold standard equality data monitoring forms that can be used council wide. In 2024/25 our aim is to increase the usage of these equality data monitoring forms, and support teams and services to have more confidence in asking for equality data and using equality data to create nuanced changes to services that increase inclusivity.
- 3.17 The council is committed to internal policy and practice review with accountability on implementation of learning. Health and Adult Social Care senior leadership has begun developing their directorate-specific anti-racist practice model. This will help them to implement the goals of the council's anti-racism strategy, embed intersectional and anti-racist thinking into

practice and management across all services in a systemic way. It builds on an responds to their work for the Workforce Race Equality Standard (WRES), and staff engagement. The first of a series of development workshops with the EDI (Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion) team and key senior leaders, Business Improvement Manager, and HASC Engagement leads has been completed. Work will continue strengthening the directorate's staff voice network, upskilling management to respond to staff engagement and feedback around recruitment, retention, progression, and creating more equitable outcomes through improved decision-making.

- 3.18 The council is committed to increasing engagement with Black and Racially Minoritised service users and people city wide. The Exhale Creative Grant scheme was successfully delivered June - November 2023. It funded three projects that responded to the legacy of the transatlantic slave trade in the city and showcased Black and Racially Minoritised local artists. The work has provided insight into the perspectives and needs of Black and Racially Minoritised creatives and artists working in the city. There was also media coverage in Brighton & Hove News, the Argus, local independent blogs, BBC Radio Sussex and Platform B radio. The evaluation of the scheme found a high level of engagement and extremely positive feedback.

4. Analysis and consideration of alternative options

- 4.1 No alternative options considered. Part of the Anti-Racism Strategy is a commitment to reporting publicly on the council's progress.

5. Community engagement and consultation

- 5.1 No community engagement was required on this report. As noted in paragraph 3.9 community engagement is a strategic theme of the Anti-Racism Strategy and therefore is an ongoing improvement activity. The council continues to meet with the Anti-Racism Community Advisory Group (consisting of representatives from key Black and Racially Minoritised community and voluntary sector groups in the city) to provide strategic insight based on lived experience direct to different services across the council. Most recently the group discussed anti-racism in education, with violence against women and girls schedule for April. The area of focus is determined by the group.
- 5.2 The council also continues to support Black and Racially Minoritised voices through funding a Community Voices project; an independently facilitated group of Black and Racially Minoritised residents that come together to discuss their experience of using council and other public services, and host council service representatives at meetings to present the work they do.

6. Conclusion

- 6.1 Overall, the work in the first year of the strategy signals a positive trajectory for the organisation, with progress being made against agreed actions and evidence of organisational culture shifting. The council recognises there is still

a long way to go in becoming an anti-racist council, and this is reflected in the four further years we have committed to work on the anti-racism strategy action plan. The council thanks all residents, community organisations, advocates and other stakeholders who have and continue to work with us to bring our anti-racism aims to fruition. We look forward to continuing to work with all stakeholders both internally and externally to see continued progress on the anti-racism strategy in 2024-25.

7. Financial implications

- 7.1 No direct financial implications have been identified in this report, which is for noting only.

Name of finance officer consulted: Mike Bentley Date consulted: 07/03/24

8. Legal implications

- 8.1 No direct legal implications have been identified this report, which is for noting only.

Name of lawyer consulted: Victoria Simpson Date consulted: 06/03/24

9. Equalities implication

- 9.1 The work of the Anti-Racism Strategy is inherently focused on equality and fulfilling our equality duty under the Equality Act 2010.

10. Sustainability implications

- 10.1 There are no sustainability implications in this report.

11. Other Implications

Social Value and procurement implications

- 11.1 There are no social value or procurement implications in this report

Crime & disorder implications:

- 11.2 There are no crime and disorder implications in this report.

Public health implications:

- 11.3 There are no public health implications in this report.

Supporting Documentation

1.1.1 Appendices

Progress on Anti-Racism Strategy Prioritised Actions