

# Housing Finance and Regeneration Policy and Scrutiny Committee

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<b>Title:</b>	Diversity and Inclusion at Westminster
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<b>Cabinet Member Portfolio</b>	Councillor Melvyn Caplan, Cabinet Member for Finance, Property and Regeneration
<b>Wards Involved:</b>	All
<b>Policy Context:</b>	City for All
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## 1. Introduction

2.1 This report covers the Council's initiatives to promote diversity and inclusion at Westminster.

## 2. Diversity and Inclusion at Westminster

2.1 Our ambition is to provide world-class services to the residents and communities. The best way to understand and meet the needs of those residents, visitors and businesses is to ensure the council reflects the diversity of the people who live here.

2.2 The route map for that change is The Westminster Way (TWW). It is the way to change our corporate culture and put in place processes that allow any staff member—whatever their background, ethnicity or gender—to succeed at the council.

2.3 In recent years the lack of diversity in our middle and senior management tiers had become increasingly evident and steps had to be taken to address this.

## 4. The Westminster Way

4.1 We launched our people strategy, The Westminster Way (TWW) in 2018. It is the map that sets out how we will develop and empower our staff to deliver the best possible outcomes for our communities. TWW has three pillars: “Everyone has talent”, “Everyone is valued” and “Everyone is a leader”. Through TWW we make it clear that inclusion and diversity is in our DNA, and our employment practices reflect that.

4.2 We have encouraged a two-way dialogue with our staff through the development of staff networks. This has led to our staff creating a number of networks, in addition to our long-standing women’s network, including the BAME, ABLE (disability) network, LGBTQ+, Multifaith and Family networks. This happened as we changed the way in which we communicated by being transparent and open to challenge. Staff now have confidence that the organisation is listening and changing. Through the staff networks, a new culture of engagement, challenge and innovation is helping us to bring about change.

4.3 We have taken bold and innovative steps on the diversity and inclusion agenda. We were one of very few organisations in the country to publish our BAME pay gap report in 2018 and we are taking bold steps to become a more inclusive organisation. They include

- Positive Action - For all middle and senior management roles we have committed to have at least one candidate from a BAME background on every shortlist.
- Inclusive mentoring - Championed by our Executive Leadership Team, this enables leaders in the council to improve their cultural intelligence by being mentored by colleagues from different backgrounds.
- Diverse recruitment panels - All interview panels for middle and senior manager roles are gender and BAME diverse.
- Focus on equity in terms of gender and ethnicity in how our staff are rewarded - A new approach to ‘step ups’ to the next salary point within our broad band reward framework resulted in increased number of nominations, improved transparency around step-ups allocation and process and much more equitable gender and diversity distribution across our workforce.
- Only working with recruitment partners who have a track record in this area.

4.4 We are prepared to take risks and learn from our mistakes. These bold programmes are only part of the answer; it is through changing the culture of the organisation and embedding TWW that we will make long lasting, sustainable change.

4.5 Other key highlights that show our commitment to inclusion and diversity include:

- Participation in PRIDE march: Led by the Lord Mayor, the Leader and members we took part in PRIDE London in 2018 and 2019. In 2019 we

had over 80 councillors and members of staff and their families. In 2020 our LGBTQ+ also hosted a virtual PRIDE event for the council.

- Through TWW, we are developing sector leading programmes and working with staff to drive cultural change across our organisation. A key example of this was changing our maternity pay to 'best in class' with six months' full pay and six months' half pay. At the same time, we made this available to all parents by introducing a new shared parental leave policy.
- Our innovative personal development framework is a step change away from the traditional performance management approach and prioritises coaching and development conversations for all staff.
- Our "everyone has talent" programme provides development opportunities for all staff. Each cohort of employees on the talent programme are representative of the wider workforce with a 3<sup>rd</sup> of places taken up by BAME staff and 60% by women.
- Holding engagement events focussed on I&D has enabled staff and managers to see the importance of this agenda. Events include:
  - All staff conferences in December 2018 and 2019 focussed on I&D – more than 90% of staff indicated that they would attend similar events in the future.
  - Regular meetings with our top 150 leaders with I&D being a constant theme.
- We are signatories to the Race at Work Charter and have various other memberships highlighting our commitment to having an inclusive working environment.
- We have been invited to speak about our diversity and inclusion journey and our bold approach to the issues at a number of external events. Serena Simon (BAME Network Chair) is also heavily in the Pan London response to the impact Coronavirus has had on our BAME community.
- Supported Employment- The Council has an in-house team, the Westminster Employment Service, based in Growth Planning & Housing which provides 1-2-1 coaching support in community settings for adults and young people with disabilities, health conditions and significant barriers to employment. The Service, alongside People Services and other partners, also provides guidance and support to hiring managers within the Council, as well as developers, suppliers and other businesses with the objective of securing good quality employment for residents.
- Supported Internships – The Council has hosted 2 cohorts of supported internships over the past 18 months. As a local authority, we are committed to continually improving the support and opportunity that we provide all young people as they prepare for adulthood. This is particularly important for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities.

- The staff ABLE Network was launched approximately 15mths ago. Key highlights include:
  - Working closely with Corporate Property on City Hall and the refurbishment of Lisson Grove. As well as making sure the building is physically accessible, advising on making it much more inclusive for people with a wide range of disabilities and communication needs.
  - Over the last year the Networks work has been just as much about supporting staff to better understand disabilities and neurodiversity as it has about the physical environment. We have seen the development of e-learning modules such as the autism awareness course, developed and delivered by one of the network steering group, and the neurodiversity course which launched in August. Internal Communications are leading on a digital accessibility e-learning module which should help make all our internal and external communications more accessible. Some of the learning from these modules has also been incorporated into our inclusive recruitment training, which is now mandatory for all hiring managers.
  - Over 80 of our staff use assisted technology such as screen readers, the City Council funded a second assisted technology specialist post in our bi-borough IT team.
  
- We have been shortlisted for a number of awards this year which including:
  - Innovation in Building Diversity and Inclusion category of The MJ Awards 2020
  - Workforce Transformation category of The MJ Awards 2020. This submission was centred around The Westminster Way
  - Best Diversity & Inclusion Approach category of the Business Culture Awards 2020

## **5. Impact of our actions**

5.1 The change in the last two and a half years has been significant. Our staff engagement scores have increased by 12% (as highlighted in our most recent staff survey). This is the second year running that we have seen record levels of staff engagement. Staff are telling us how much more positive the organisation feels. The number of staff saying Westminster is “a great place to work” has increased from 53% to 76% since 2017.

**If you have any queries about this Report or wish to inspect any of the  
Background Papers, please contact Report Author  
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