

Item No

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To: Personnel Committee **Date:** 25th January 2022

Subject: Inclusion at KCC

Classification: Unrestricted

Summary: KCC aims to be an inclusive employer. This paper outlines the approach to improving inclusion in the workplace.

1. Background

- 1.1 The [Annual Workforce Profile](#) was presented to Personnel Committee on 23rd June 2021, which led to a discussion on how diverse KCC is in relation to disability and how inclusive we are as an employer.
- 1.2 It was agreed that Personnel Committee would consider a broader item on Inclusion. This paper outlines what we mean by workplace inclusion, and what activity is being delivered to meet our workforce equality objectives. The Annual Equality & Diversity report for 2020-21 is also going to Cabinet Committees this month, setting out progress against Kent County Council's Equality and Human Rights Policy and Objectives, which is a statutory requirement under the Equality Act 2010.
- 1.3 From ongoing monitoring of our diversity and inclusion indicators, while the majority of the workforce feel a sense of inclusion, some protected characteristic groups do not experience the organisation as positively, particularly those disabled staff and those from Black, Asian and Ethnic Minority backgrounds.

Our workforce data

The Annual Workforce Profile for 2020/21 outlines the following:

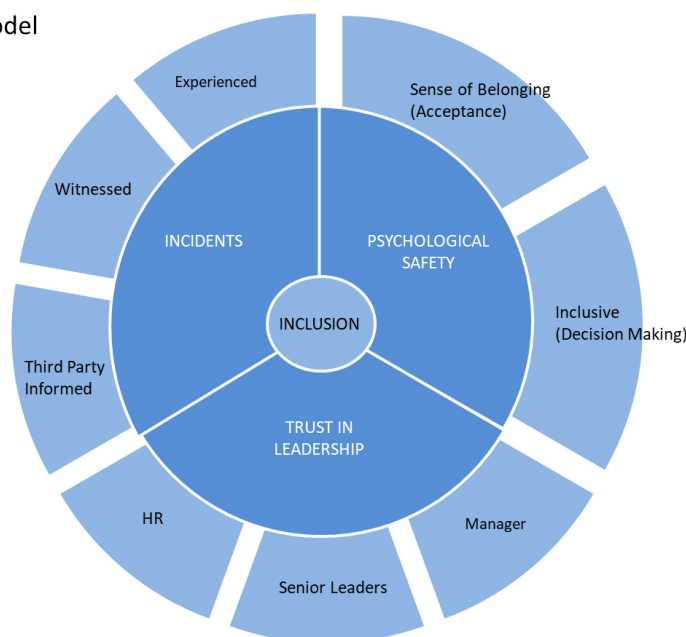
- 79.6% of the workforce are female, with women making up 58.2% of KCC's leadership group. This compares to 51% of the Kent population being female.
- 3.95% of staff have declared a disability, with 4.1% of leaders being disabled. This compares to 17.6% of the Kent population who are considered disabled, albeit this data includes those who are not economically active, so the gap appears wide.
- 7.8% of the workforce are Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic compared to 6% of KCC's leadership group. The Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic population in Kent at 6.6%.

- Overall, the level of representation in the Leadership group is similar to the representation of the wider workforce, with the exception of the proportion of female staff (based on Census data 2011). The number of Kent residents in employment who are managers, directors and senior officials is equivalent to 10.3% of people in employment (77,900), of which 2.9% (2,300) are Black, Asian and Minority ethnic, and 8.1% (28,700) are females. (ONS Annual Population Survey, 2021)

2. What do we mean by Inclusion?

- 2.1 An inclusive organisation is one which supports employees, regardless of their background or individual circumstances, to thrive at work. Simply having a diverse workforce does not lead to workplace inclusion. It relies on creating an environment where all staff experience a sense of belonging, they have a voice and feel able to influence decision making at all levels of the organisation. This reinforces trust in the organisation, particularly if leaders and managers are visibly demonstrating inclusion.
- 2.2 The business case is well known: inclusion leads to a more engaged workforce, improved creativity and innovation, improved performance and reduced absenteeism. It is also critical to address systemic barriers within the organisation to ensure individuals do not experience discrimination or feel excluded. Being an inclusive employer will impact on our ability to deliver the statutory requirements under the Public Sector Equality Duty.
- 2.3 An inclusion model has been developed to create a common understanding and language for workplace inclusion at KCC. This considers the extent to which there is psychological safety, trust in leadership and the number of incidents of discrimination in the workplace.

Inclusion Model



Creating a common understanding and language for Inclusion

- 2.4 This model is informed by a number of indicators, both hard metrics and staff perception data to assess how we are delivering against the workforce equality objective; *to be an inclusive employer*.

2.5 Developing a language when talking about issues of equality, diversity and inclusion which respects all members of the workforce is important. For example, along with other organisations, KCC is committed to stop using the expression “BAME”. Wherever practical, a more specific descriptor will be used and where this is not appropriate, the term Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic will be used in full.

3. How inclusive is KCC as an employer?

3.1 Understanding how inclusive the organisation is requires a multi-factorial approach, incorporating data points, values, concerns and experiences. This report will share some of the data we are using. That said no one data point should be considered in isolation, and as our use of the diversity and inclusion indicators matures, the understanding of the interconnectivity and trends will enable us to draw more subtle and nuanced conclusions about how inclusive we are. Indications are that KCC is an inclusive employer but there is more work to do to improve the experience of some groups.

3.2 An inclusive workplace is one that fosters enhanced employee engagement and recognises the importance of mental health and wellbeing as an indication of how staff are experiencing work. Wave 4 of the Work and Wellbeing survey gives us an indication of staff wellbeing overall and by staff groups as follows:

1. The majority of staff had good wellbeing
2. Black, Asian and minority ethnic staff had much higher wellbeing than average.
3. Staff groups with lower average wellbeing levels included disabled staff, under 25's and LGBTQ staff.
4. Staff under 35 and LGBTQ staff were more likely to have felt lonely quite or very often.
5. Disabled staff were slightly less likely to feel supported by their manager or that KCC cares, although they weren't much more likely to give a negative response.
6. Staff with school aged children and single parents, who were the household types reporting the biggest deterioration in January, are now the household type reporting the largest improvements.
7. The experience of female staff was similar to the whole organisation picture with particularly positive responses around manager and colleague support.

3.3 There has been an overall increase in levels of sickness absence compared to the mid-year position last year. Whilst the number of sickness days lost per FTE has seen an increase for males and females in the first six months of 2021-22, female employees continue to take more time off work sick than male employees. Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic employees had similar levels of sickness absence compared to white employees in the first six months of 2021-22.

3.4 Turnover of employees from a Black, Asian and minority ethnic background has increased from 12.20% in 2020 to 15.50% in the first six months of 2021-22, compared to an increase in the turnover of white employees to 10.8%. At the end of 2020-21, turnover for disabled staff saw a reduction,

which was consistent with the decrease in overall organisational turnover during this period.

- 3.5 TCP data for 2020-21 indicated that there appeared to be inequalities in higher ratings awarded to those with protected characteristics. A deep dive analysis did not suggest that there were ingrained institutional disparities in how managers have applied performance ratings.
- 3.6 In 2020/21 418 cases were recorded on the ER case management system. Of these 14 were relating to harassment/resolution. This compares to 49 of the 454 recorded cases in the previous year. In the 2019 staff survey, 86.3% of staff responded positively to reporting if they were subjected to any kind of discrimination, bullying or harassment at work, with a more positive response than the previous year. Staff were also more positive that they were more prepared to challenge inappropriate behaviours in the workplace and more positive about feeling safe at work.
- 3.7 We continue to report on our [Gender pay gap](#), and as at March 2020 the gender pay gap for KCC is significantly below the national average, which is positive for KCC at 12.7% compared to 15.5%. KCC is very clear that gender should not limit or define choices in or outside of the workplace.
- 3.8 The mid-year workforce data for 2021/22 gives us an indication of the direction of travel and areas to monitor further throughout the year. There has been an overall increase in sickness absence and turnover levels, but the majority of staff are reporting good wellbeing. Black, Asian and minority ethnic staff had similar levels of sickness absence to white staff, reported higher wellbeing than average but received lower TCP ratings for last year and turnover levels are increasing.
- 3.9 KCC is engaged with various local and national networks, such as enei (Employers' Network for Equality and Inclusion), Disability Confident, Local Government Association, the Shire County network and Kent HR network, and regularly attend conferences led by industry experts to ensure we adopt good inclusive practice, and remain a self-aware, positive organisation.

KCC participated in enei's TIDE (Talent, Inclusion and Diversity Evaluation) benchmarking in 2018, which evaluated that KCC was beginning to embed a new culture on its road to inclusion with an overall score of 70% (this compared to a median participant score of 58%). However, the score in relation to leadership and accountability was somewhat lower at 42%. Since this benchmarking was undertaken, work has taken place to address the identified gaps, and we have seen how these improvements have been made in the regular reports to Committees.

4. What we have been doing to become more inclusive

- 4.1 A significant amount of work is underway to drive cultural change through developing our leaders and managers to work and develop their staff in a way that creates an inclusive environment. This has included the introduction of the

new organisation design principles, values and cultural attributes, and working towards recruiting people with the values we require.

- 4.2 As our Leaders set the tone from the top and create the conditions for our aspired culture through their behaviour, Leadership Traits in Action workshops for senior leadership have been delivered, alongside regular Round Tables to enable rich discussion and debate across our future working practices, aspired culture and adaptive leadership in a competing and complex environment, with guest speakers providing the external challenge and insight.
- 4.3 Pilot workshops have taken place during Autumn 2021 on building inclusive management practice, which will inform a wider roll-out in the new year. This incorporates the Thobani 6C Inclusive model (see Appendix 1) to develop equality and inclusive practices and culture across the organisation. There are plans to be more explicit in using this model across the organisation to make greater and faster progress on achieving our cultural ambitions and enable inclusion to become part of the fabric of how we do things. These initiatives to build culture and capability are at an early stage and require visible leadership to make a significant shift in the management practices, culture and metrics towards greater equality, inclusion, and wellbeing for all staff.
- 4.4 Inclusion has featured heavily in staff communications and engagement activity, with the regular CMT blogs reinforcing the cultural attributes and behaviours we wish to see across KCC, and an Inclusion campaign during September to share resources, encourage learning from others' experiences and support education around topics such as allyship.
- 4.5 In response to the pandemic, the employment offer has been reviewed to ensure it addresses individual needs. This has included a review of our terms and conditions and policy framework to ensure they are fit for purpose and ensuring an inclusive approach to the way in which we recruit.
- 4.6 In addressing the gender pay gap, our approach to recruitment, career progression, maternity/return to work, leadership development, apprenticeships, learning culture, self-empowerment, the use of flexible working arrangements and a supportive management culture ensures women are supported to be their best at work. We have also been looking at other issues, that aren't solely aimed at women but address specific concerns around caring, domestic abuse and menopause.

The Domestic Abuse guidance for managers has recently been updated, and new guidance for employees has been developed. This coincided with the launch of a new KNet page on Domestic Abuse and our application to become a White Ribbon UK Accredited organisation, where formal confirmation is pending. This supports our inclusive organisational culture, values and stance against gender inequality and seeks to make a difference in our local community to end violence against women. A menopause offer has also been developed, with guidance for managers, a KNet page and awareness sessions held during the Autumn 2021.

- 4.7 Over the last year, work has accelerated to address areas of concern in relation to workplace inclusion, particularly around race equality and supporting mental wellbeing but also creating an inclusive work environment in a hybrid working model. This has included input into building accessibility considerations as offices are redesigned, and continuous improvements to digital accessibility with a specific focus on British Sign Language (BSL).
- 4.8 We continue to work with and support our staff groups in our drive for continuous improvement of the equality, diversity and inclusion agenda. This has included seeking feedback on communications and engagement plans, experiences of flexible working, particularly for our younger workforce, the use of pronouns in email signatures and the terminology used in our approach to equality monitoring for our LGBTQ+ colleagues and BMEF in relation to race equality initiatives.
- 4.9 Where staff don't feel included, measures are in place to ensure that all types of unfair treatment and discrimination are understood to be unacceptable. All known issues are followed up and dealt with via the appropriate channels. The way we approach this is to seek to resolve issues as they arise at a local level, and only if this doesn't happen do we then resort to more formal processes. In respect of Members, if concerns are raised about unfair treatment by an Officer, the constitution states the intent to resolve in private and only escalating if the issue remains outstanding through the Officer management chain. In the situation where a complaint is made about a Member, Officers are to raise this through the management chain and it may be dealt with informally with the Member or Group Leader or by referring the matter to the Monitoring Officer in the context of the Standards Committee's role in dealing with complaints that a Member has breached the Code of Conduct.
- 4.10 Whilst we are further ahead in the journey to become a more inclusive employer, there is still more work to do around inclusive leadership, employing the right people and developing the people we have to contribute to a more inclusive workplace.

5. Initiatives

We have detailed plans in place to address priority areas, and will continue to be delivered over the coming year through the following programmes:

Race Equality Matters

- 5.1 KCC signed up to the Race Equality Matters framework to become an anti-racist organisation in Feb 2021. This has involved marking Race Equality Week and Black History Month, as well as Safe Space workshops between CMT and members of the Black and Minority Ethnic Forum staff group. The safe space conversations have resulted in an organisational commitment, which will be delivered over the next 6-24 months to achieve sustainable change. (Appendix 4).

KCC's commitment to race equality is:

1. A zero-tolerance policy on racism and micro-aggressions in the workplace
2. Inclusive recruitment practice
3. Positive action in career development
4. Expectation of large and smaller scale conversations to happen across KCC that are action focused and support allyship

Various activities will be delivered, which include making a visible leadership statement on KCC's zero tolerance approach and consequences of poor practice, including a specific inclusion question that managers must use in recruitment, encouraging more self-referrals to KCC's coaching support, and a mutual mentoring and sponsorship programme.

- 5.2 Alongside this, KCC is taking part in the Social Care Workforce Race Equality Standard pilot being run by Skills for Care. A joint action plan has been developed for Adult Social Care and Health, and Children, Young People and Education directorates which aligns with and supports the corporate activity on race equality.

Disability inclusion

- 5.3 Workforce data suggests our disabled workforce do not experience the organisation as positively as other staff, and we are under-represented compared to the profile of the community we serve. Benchmarking has been undertaken to understand how KCC's workforce profile in terms of diversity compares to other public and private sector organisations (appendix 2).
- 5.4 An action plan (appendix 3) has been developed, with input from the Level Playing Field staff group, to address the identified issues and aims to achieve the following outcomes:
 - Increase the numbers of disabled staff to better reflect the communities we serve
 - Develop a culture where disabled staff (and candidates) feel confident and reach their full potential
 - Involve and engage with Disabled staff in the development of the employment offer
- 5.5 These will be delivered through several interventions some immediate and others over the medium to long term. The plan is focused on both education and context, as well as approaches to engage managers with disability inclusion.
- 5.6 There is work underway to get traction on the ground to improve the experience of the current workforce and those who are likely to join us in the future. Staff engagement on disability inclusion commenced during Autumn/Winter 2021 as part of a wider programme to provide staff and managers with the space to have the conversation around inclusion. There will be focused campaign materials to challenge thinking before further engagement activity is planned. This will be supplemented with the roll out of targeted initiatives to support manager/employee conversations and support.

5.7 The medium-term aim will focus on changing the culture and values of the people who work for and manage the organisation. This will build on activity that has already commenced such as:

- embedding the new values, cultural attributes and behaviours, and inclusive leadership development via the Organisation Development plan
- adapting our approach to recruitment and resourcing to increase representation
- having a development offer that a) equips managers to effectively challenge negative behaviour towards disabled people, and b) to ensure access to information and resources to support conversations around disability and requests for support
- continuing with education and context through staff communications

Mental Health at Work Commitment

5.8 Mental Health remains a priority, given the known impact of the pandemic and latent effect on mental wellbeing, and work is continuing to deliver the action plan. This involves both prevention and intervention activity as follows:

- prevention of ill health through communication and engagement to raise awareness of tools and resources
- an enhanced wellbeing development offer
- support to the Mental Health Support Network staff group
- interventions with teams where there are high levels of mental health absence to understand how the organisation can influence this and to ensure staff and managers are aware of the wellbeing support available.

Alternative interventions are being explored to build manager confidence and competence with supporting mental health.

It is important that we raise the profile of disabled people's voices and ensure they are adequately heard and represented, using appropriate channels. We are working with Level Playing Field and Mental Health Support Network to achieve this.

6. Conclusion

6.1 There is a continued role for KCC's leadership to champion diversity and inclusion in the workplace.

6.2 Inclusion is predicated on understanding the type of people we have in the organisation, and having good managers, leadership and a culture which enables people to thrive at work. This can be supported by initiatives and interventions to address those areas where we are not doing so well, but inclusion needs to be an integral part of what we do and how we deliver to move the organisation forward, rather than an add-on. Whilst there are early signs of an improving position in KCC, we should not be complacent and continue to invest in the planned activities.

6.3 Becoming the type of employer we want to be is a continuous and iterative process, and a whole systems approach is needed to create a culture which embraces diversity and inclusion, supported by interventions. Having diverse perspectives and safe spaces to challenge ways of working will lead to innovation, a more engaged workforce and retention of diverse talent.

7. Recommendation

7.1 Personnel Committee are invited to note, comment on and support the approach to workplace inclusion.

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Appendix 1: Thobani 6C model of Inclusive Leadership

Inclusive leadership programme

Unlocking the value of diversity - Community Leadership

2020

- **COHERENCE:** Understand and articulate why equality, diversity and inclusion matters to the organisation, not a nice to have but delivering the purpose of the organisation and our values
- **CONSCIOUSNESS:** Understanding what the barriers are to Inclusion and how things get in the way - including yourself
- **COMMITMENT:** Identify the work, personally and organisationally, support it, challenge it, create and sustain ambition - address and level the playing field - role model
- **COURAGE:** To take action - taking actions that are based on the organisation - connection to values, why inclusion, equality and diversity are important - create new spaces, bring people from the margins into the centre
- **CONNECTEDNESS:** Important leaders are connected to people who can make the most difference - develop networks of E&D seeking groups - connect directly with them to become better informed, open up channel of communication and access to decision making
- **CO-PRODUCTION:** Co-lead with others for whom D&I matters and makes a difference, by co-producing there is mutual accountability built in - working in this way results in greater traction to living our values in a really, tangible way



Appendix 2: Disability benchmarking data

The national picture

The Government's recently published National Disability Strategy includes a call to action to make disability everyone's business and to build a national conversation about disability. This is in response to the following picture:

- There remains more than a 28-percentage point gap in the employment rate of working age disabled people compared with working age non-disabled people (Labour market status of disabled people, ONS 2021)
- There are 7 million working-age people with a disability or long-term health condition in the UK but only a little over half are in work. (Family Resources Survey, 19/20).
- According to ONS Oct-Dec 2020, 20% of working age adults in UK report to have a disability, an increase from 19% last year.
- In the UK Disability Survey, less than half (48%) of employed disabled people responded positively about the flexibility afforded by their employer and sufficient reasonable adjustments being made, and only a quarter (24%) felt their promotion opportunities are the same as their colleagues.

Several national employers have made positive steps to improve their own representative profile. Notable is the Civil Service where 12.8% of civil servants identify as having a disability, compared with just 7.6% a decade ago and 10% in 2018. (ONS UK, 2020). In the entertainment sector, Channel 4 reported 11.5% of their workforce having a disability in 2019. In 19/20, BBC had 9.4% of their workforce considered disabled, with 8% of the senior leadership declaring a disability. These organisations have a strong focus on diversity and inclusion, with Channel 4 stating it is part of their DNA.

Interestingly, many of the UK private sector organisations appearing in the Thomson Reuters D&I Index of the top 100 most diverse and inclusive organisations globally do not disclose disability data on their company websites or have disability representation targets. Unilever have set a target of 5% of their workforce, and 6.1% of Microsoft staff in the US consider themselves to have a disability (Microsoft UK do not currently publish disability data).

The local picture

An analysis of our local employment data in Kent suggests a stronger position than the national one:

- 17.6% of the population consider themselves to have a disability, as per the Census 2011, although this reflects the whole population, rather than the economically active.
- In 2020, there was a 21.5 percentage point difference in the employment rate of working age disabled people compared with working age non-disabled people in Kent (61.7% vs. 83.2%)

- Of the estimated 189,600 working age people in Kent who are core or work limiting disabled, an estimated 117,000 are in employment (61.7%) (ONS Annual Population Survey)

In 2021, disabled staff made up 4.3% of KCC's non-schools' workforce (up from 3.83% in 2020). This means our workforce is under-representative compared to the profile of the community we serve.

As has been discussed previously, there may be several reasons why the number of declarations is lower than the reality:

- people may not see themselves as disabled as they develop either a chronic or age-related issue. The average age of KCC's workforce is 45 and we know the chronic nature of issues often come with age.
- they might fear negative consequences of disclosure.
- they do not see their condition or disability as an issue worth reporting.

During 20/21, there was an improvement in the percentage of staff recruited who were disabled (5.5%). For the period April to September 2021 this has risen further to 7% which is very favourable to the benchmarking data from other local authorities below.

Comparator organisation	% Workforce considered disabled (exc. schools) as at March 2021	% Applicants stated they had a disability (April 2020-March 2021)	% Shortlisted candidates considered disabled	% Successfully recruited candidates considered disabled
Kent County Council	3.95%	5.4%	7.1%	5.5%
County Council A	4.75% (As of June 2021)	5.93%	6.2%	4.79%
County Council B	7.4%	-	-	-
County Council C	2.9%	8.1%	9.5%	7.6%
County Council D	4.06%	6.2%	7.1%	6.1%
County Council E	9.79% (As at Oct 2020)	5.01% (In 19/20)	6.27% (In 29/20)	6.21% (In 19/20)
City Council F	7.11%	5.42%	6.7%	7.1%