



<b>Subject:</b>	Race Equality Champion for Belfast City Council
<b>Date:</b>	19 <sup>th</sup> June 2020
<b>Reporting Officer:</b>	Nigel Grimshaw, Strategic Director of City & Neighbourhood Services
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	Nicola Lane, Good Relations Manager

<b>Restricted Reports</b>	
<b>Is this report restricted?</b>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<b>If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?</b>	
<b>After Committee Decision</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>After Council Decision</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Some time in the future</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Never</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>

<b>Call-in</b>	
<b>Is the decision eligible for Call-in?</b>	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>

<b>1.0</b>	<b>Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues</b>
1.1	In light of current events and in response to a request by an Elected Member, the Committee is asked to consider the possibility of appointment of a Race Equality Champion.
<b>2.0</b>	<b>Recommendations</b>
2.1	The Committee is asked to <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Agree that a report be brought to a future Committee meeting which summarises the existing structures internal policies and action plans related to addressing equality of opportunity and promoting the inclusion of Black Asian and Minority Ethnic communities (BAME). The report would also include options which Members could consider to enhance its current arrangements with the purpose of promoting the equality and inclusion of BAME communities, their access to Council services</li></ul>

	and participation in civic life. It would also take into consideration the review of the Council's wider approach to championing diversity.
<b>3.0</b>	<b>Main report</b>
3.1	The current discourse around the events in America, and the reaction both locally and globally serves to both highlight the issue of racism and provides opportunities for public bodies to reflect on how they engage and include minority communities and provide a leadership role in championing race equality and inclusion.
3.2	From a Council perspective, The Belfast Agenda states that "In 2035, Belfast will be a City that is welcoming, safe, fair and inclusive."
3.3	The Council's Good Relations Strategy "Good Relations is Everyone's Business, launched in September 2019, sets out our vision and values for a shared, peaceful and reconciled Belfast. It states that good community and race relations are essential for a healthy and safe City and that it will set the standard for Belfast to aspire to be a place of welcome and diversity. It recognises that the most successful cities in the world are those that are the most diverse. The strategy outlines how we can play our part in building a better city for residents and visitors alike, where different identities can be a strength and our diverse cultural traditions can all be part of collective cultural wealth; a City where everyone has an equal place and where no-one is left behind.
3.4	Discussions with the BAME community as part of the consultation and subsequent good relations audit indicated that groups and people from the BAME community find it challenging to engage with official structures, particularly with those in decision making roles. They find it difficult to play a full and equal part in civic life and this position would be supported by statistics.
3.5	They report that positive relationships have been developed at community level with groups and individuals through particular Council programmes or through the relationship developed with particular officers. However, BAME communities have also reported that they find it difficult to engage in decision making structures and have their voice represented at decision making level.
3.6	Members will be aware that the Council has established a Shared City Partnership (SCP), which is a formal working group of Council. The role of the SCP is to assist the elected political leadership of the Council, staff, diverse civil society interests and partnering agencies

	<p>to engage pro-actively on all Good Relations issues on behalf of citizens and be a collective voice, promoting a common vision for Good Relations in the City.</p>
3.7	<p>The SCP oversees the work of the Council's District Good Relations Programme and the PEACE IV Local Action Plan. Through these Forums, the Council facilitates a number of projects such as the Migrant Forum and the Diversity Programme. Most recently, the Council has signed up to a 3 year Inclusive Cities Programme. The latter is a knowledge exchange initiative supporting UK cities and their local partners to achieve a change in their approach towards the inclusion of newcomers in the city. Support will be provided by the Global Exchange on Migration and Diversity which is the knowledge exchange arm of the Centre on Migration, Policy and Society at the University of Oxford.</p>
3.8	<p>In addition, Council has already adopted a number of interdependent policies, frameworks and action plans and has developed specific internal and external programmes which address our Section 75 obligations, particularly in relation to gender, race and disability. Some of these plans are being developed through the Council's People Strategy to ensure that our workforce is more representative of the community we serve and to encourage more people from ethnic minority communities to apply and take up positions within the organisation.</p>
3.9	<p>Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 (the Act) requires Belfast City Council to comply with two statutory duties:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>to have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity between persons of different religious belief, political opinion, racial group, age, marital status or sexual orientation, men and women generally, persons with a disability and persons without and persons with dependants and persons without.</i></li> <li>• <i>to have regard to the desirability of promoting good relations between persons of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group.</i></li> </ul>
3.10	<p>Members will note that racial groups are covered by both duties emphasising the synergy between equality and good relations.</p>

3.11	<p>Members will be aware that an Equality and Diversity Network has been established and is chaired by the City Solicitor, Director of legal and Civic Services to provide strategic leadership and direction for delivering the Equality and Diversity Framework/ Equality Action Plan across all departments. This group reports to the Corporate Management Team and onto Strategic Policy &amp; Resources Committee for approval and resource allocation, where necessary.</p>
3.12	<p>Nevertheless, it is generally acknowledged that there is an underrepresentation of BAME communities within the structures of civic life at various levels. This hinders the ability of agencies to advocate for these communities or to ensure that policies meaningfully address issues and challenges which BAME communities face.</p>
3.13	<p>One way of addressing this issue may be to appoint a Race Equality Champion within the Council it is worth noting that this is the practice adopted by each Department within central government. Research suggests such champions should be nominated from senior officer or Elected Member level to deliver the maximum impact.</p>
3.14	<p>The Council has previously appointed Gender and LGBT Champions at officer and member level. This current position is being reviewed to examine how Council might have a wider champion approach to encompass all section 75 groups with a report in the first instance being brought to the Equality &amp; Diversity Network prior to consideration by members.</p>
3.15	<p>In light of the above information, Members may wish to recommend that Officers bring a report to a future Committee meeting which summarises the existing structures and the internal policies and action plans related to addressing equality of opportunity for BAME communities. The report would also include options members could consider to enhance its current arrangements with the purpose of promoting the equality, inclusions and visibility of BAME communities, their access to Elected members and participation in civic life. This report would also take into consideration the review of the Council's wider approach to championing diversity and inclusion highlighted above.</p>
3.16	<p><u>Financial &amp; Resource Implications</u> None associated with this report.</p>
3.17	<p><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u> Actions, which would promote the inclusion of BAME communities in civic life, would have a positive impact on equality and good relations within the City.</p>

<b>4.0</b>	<b>Appendices – Documents Attached</b>
	None