

ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

COMMITTEE	Staff Governance
DATE	12 April 2021
EXEMPT	No
CONFIDENTIAL	No
REPORT TITLE	Equally Safe at Work Employer Accreditation Programme
REPORT NUMBER	RES/21/092
DIRECTOR	Steven Whyte – Director of Resources
CHIEF OFFICER	Isla Newcombe – Chief Officer – People and Organisational Development
REPORT AUTHOR	Keith Tennant – Policy and Advice Officer
TERMS OF REFERENCE	2.6

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To inform committee of the outcome of the Council's participation in the Equally Safe at Work pilot employer accreditation programme.

2. RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 That the Committee notes the content of this report.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 This report informs members of the outcome of the Council's involvement in the Equally Safe at Work employer accreditation programme.
- 3.2 The Council was informed on 29 January 2021 that it was successful in attaining the accreditation at the Bronze level. The work undertaken in relation to the programme will contribute to the advancement of gender equality in the Council's workforce. The accreditation period begins on 9 March 2021 and lasts two years until 9 March 2023.
- 3.3 The Council's planned participation in the programme was first reported to the Staff Governance Committee on 3 September 2018, with a service update having been given to members on 18 February 2019 and a further update provided at the Staff Governance Committee of 10 December 2019.
- 3.4 The Council had become involved in the programme to improve policies and practices in relation to gender equality and gender-based violence, and to contribute towards its work in meeting the Public Sector Equality Duty.
- 3.5 The pilot programme initially ran from January to December 2019, with a project group having been in place to plan and undertake the work.

- 3.6 The Council made its submission for the accreditation in December 2019 and was assessed in January 2020 for the award. It was deemed, at that time, that it met most but not all the criteria under the six standards.
- 3.7 It was intimated by 'Close the Gap', the organisation overseeing the accreditation, that the programme was to be extended until June 2020, and then later to September 2020, because of the Covid-19 situation and to allow the pilot group of councils more time to complete it and meet the required standards.
- 3.8 Further work was to be undertaken and evidence gathered in 2020 to meet the outstanding parts of the programme. This was completed in the Autumn of 2020 and another submission was made, with the outcome being that the criteria were met for the Bronze award.
- 3.9 The programme was developed and run by 'Close the Gap', Scotland's national policy and advocacy body working on women's labour market equality, to address gender inequality and gender-based violence and was piloted in seven 'early adopter' councils, including this council.
- 3.10 Its aim is to support employers in reviewing workplace culture and ensuring that policies and practices are enhanced to address gender inequality at work and prevent gender-based violence.
- 3.11 Participation in the pilot has provided the Council with the opportunity to demonstrate leadership both in the workplace and within the wider community by showing that steps are being taken to address gender inequality and gender-based violence.
- 3.12 The organisation now has a framework to guide future work on these matters, with solid foundations in place on which to build on. There is also an improved understanding of the causes and consequences of workplace gender inequality and how this relates to gender-based violence.
- 3.13 The programme was divided into six standards: Leadership, Data, Flexible Working, Occupational Segregation, Workplace Culture and Gender-Based Violence. Each standard had a set of criteria to meet, with there having been thirty criteria in total.
- 3.14 It involved undertaking a range of activities including awareness raising, surveying of staff, training, and reviewing of policies and procedures and practices. This included the compilation of a Gender-Based Violence policy and guidance and the introduction of a new special leave provision linked to staff experience of gender-based violence, all agreed at the Staff Governance Committee of 10 December 2019.
- 3.15 The predicted benefits of participation include having a wider range of skills, experiences, and perspectives; increased employee morale and retention rates; and enhanced performance of the public-sector equality duty.

- 3.16 The Council is committed to ensuring gender equality in the workplace and preventing gender-based violence and having been a part of this programme will assist in meeting these aims.
- 3.17 Involvement in the programme also links to the Council's guiding principles. As 'one team' the organisation is aiming is to create an inclusive work environment in which everyone can thrive. The work undertaken in relation to the programme will assist with this.
- 3.18 A ceremony was held on 9 March 2021 by 'Close the Gap' to celebrate the success of the pilot programme and to announce the councils who had attained the Bronze award, which included this council, being one of four.
- 3.19 'Close the Gap' intimated in their notification letter that the gaining of the award demonstrates that the Council 'is a sector leader on gender equality at work in local government'.
- 3.20 The accreditation lasts for 2 years at which point a review is undertaken to ensure that the organisation is still meeting the criteria for Bronze.
- 3.21 Consideration will also be given as to whether to pursue the Silver award, the next level of the accreditation. A council which maintains its Bronze accreditation and wishes to advance to Silver will have 18 months from March 2023 to submit evidence in support of their work.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 There are no direct legal implications arising from this report.

6. MANAGEMENT OF RISK

Category	Risk	Low (L) Medium (M) High (H)	Mitigation
Strategic Risk	N/A	N/A	N/A
Compliance	N/A	N/A	N/A
Operational	N/A	N/A	N/A
Financial	N/A	N/A	N/A
Reputational	N/A	N/A	N/A
Environment / Climate	N/A	N/A	N/A

7. OUTCOMES

<u>COUNCIL DELIVERY PLAN</u>	
Impact of Report	
Aberdeen City Local Outcome Improvement Plan	
Prosperous Economy Stretch Outcomes	The Prosperous Economy theme in the LOIP makes mention of the importance of retaining talent and expertise in City organisations. This would include the Council. The measures put in place under the accreditation should help to enhance the culture of the organisation making it more inclusive. This in turn should help with the retention of trained and valued employees meaning that they can continue in post and contribute to delivering effective services to citizens and businesses, indirectly contributing to the City's economy.
Prosperous People Stretch Outcomes	The Prosperous People theme in the LOIP indicates that all people in the City are entitled to feel safe, protected from harm and supported where necessary, which would include employees of the Council. The accreditation is concerned with the prevention of gender-based violence and helping to ensure that employees are given support and kept safe in the workplace. The Council's participation in the programme directly links with this outcome and should assist with employee mental health and wellbeing, allowing them to function in employment and at home.

8. IMPACT ASSESSMENTS

Assessment	Outcome
Impact Assessment	Not required.
Data Protection Impact Assessment	Not required.

9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

Not applicable

10. APPENDICES

Not applicable

11. REPORT AUTHOR CONTACT DETAILS

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