

Committee: Overview and Scrutiny Commission

Date: 22 January 2020

Subject: Demographic profile of councillors and senior officers

Lead officer: Caroline Holland, Director of Corporate Services

Lead member: Councillor Laxmi Attawar, Cabinet Member for Women and Equalities

Contact officer: Julia Regan, Head of Democracy Services Julia.regan@merton.gov.uk

Recommendations:

- A. That the Overview and Scrutiny Commission review the information on the demographic profile of councillors and senior council officers (see Appendix A); take a decision on whether it wishes to undertake further scrutiny of this issue and if so, how.
-

1 PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1. Appendix A provides tables setting out the demographic profile of the population of Merton, of councillors and of council staff and senior officers . This information has been provided at the request of the Commission so that it may review the situation and decide whether it wishes to undertake further scrutiny of the under-representation of certain demographic groups amongst councillors and senior managers.

2 BACKGROUND

- 2.1. As part of the topic suggestion campaign earlier this year, the Muslim Women of Merton suggested that the Commission should review the council's approach to involving Muslim women in local democracy. The Muslim Women of Merton (MWM) would like the council to commit to reviewing the representation of Muslim women in local politics and senior leadership across council life following the lines of enquiry that MWM have suggested below:
- 1) How many female, Muslim council employees at team leader/manager grade are there at present and how has this fluctuated over the past 10 years? Is this figure representative of the local population?
 - 2) Will the council commit to collecting ethnicity and faith data of their councillors on an ongoing basis in future?
 - 3) How does the council currently measure engagement with the Muslim community and is it regarded to be adequate?
 - 4) How might the council improve engagement and consultation with the Muslim community on the above issues and how could Muslim organisations assist this process?
- 2.2. In discussing this suggestion at the topic workshop in June, members noted the advice from the council's Equalities and Community Cohesion Officer

that the lack of diversity in local politics and senior leadership at the council also affects the wider BAME community and other protected characteristics.

- 2.3. The Commission, at its meeting on 4 July 2019, therefore agreed to receive a report setting out the demographic profile of councillors, council employees and senior management. The intention was to compare this data with data on the local population and to consider what steps it wished to take in relation to any under-representation, for example recommendations to Cabinet, further report, task group review.
- 2.4. Subsequently, at a meeting of Council on 10 July 2019, the Cabinet Member for Women and Equalities, in response to a question, undertook to collect data on councillors so that she could assess the extent to which councillors are representative of the local population. A questionnaire was then laid round at a meeting of Council on 18 September and then emailed to all councillors to provide further opportunities to complete the form.

3 DATA ANALYSIS

- 3.1. The tables in Appendix A set out the proportion of local residents, staff, managers and councillors grouped by gender, age, ethnicity, disability, religion and sexual orientation. The data sources are listed below each of the tables.
- 3.2. The Commission is asked to note that the data sources differ in methodology and content, therefore providing at best an indication of the differences between the demographic of the resident population, council staff and managers, and councillors. In particular, the council's workforce is drawn from a wide geographical area including and beyond Merton itself. The provision of data by staff, other than age, is optional.
- 3.3. The Commission is also asked to note that the councillor data is based on questionnaire responses from just 39 of the 60 councillors. It may wish to recommend that this data is collected in a more systematic way in future, perhaps as part of the induction process following council elections.
- 3.4. Gender
- 3.5. Table 1 shows that women are over-represented in the council workforce as a whole but under-represented amongst senior managers (defined as the top 5% earners). 63% of councillors are men, both in Merton and nationally.
- 3.6. Age
- 3.7. Table 2 shows that staff and councillors are older than the local population - 50% of staff are aged 50+, as are 59% of councillors, compared to 36% of the local population. Note that the local population figures will include people in full time education, unemployed and retired so comparisons should be drawn with caution.
- 3.8. Ethnicity
- 3.9. Tables 3 and 4 show that the proportion of Black and Minority Ethnic staff is slightly lower than the local population (33% compared to 37%) but substantially lower amongst managers (11%). The sample size of 39 councillors is small so the results should be treated with caution – Merton

has 28% BME councillors compared to 37% of the local population and 4% councillors nationally.

3.10. Disability

3.11. Table 5 shows that the proportion of staff, managers and councillors declaring that they have a long term health problem or disability is lower than that found in the local population. Again the councillor data should be treated with caution due to the small number of respondents. Note also the inclusion of unemployed and retired people in local population figures.

3.12. Religion

3.13. Table 6 sets out the proportion of councillors, council staff and managers from each faith category compared to the local population. The data should be treated with caution due to the relatively high levels of missing data (data provision was optional) which may skew the results.

3.14. Sexual orientation

3.15. Table 7 sets out the declared sexual orientation of Merton councillors compared to councillors nationally. The Merton councillor data should be treated with caution due to the small number of respondents. Data for staff and managers is also shown and should be treated with caution due to potential bias caused by low response rates (data provision was optional).

4 DISCUSSION

4.1. The Commission is asked to discuss the information and decide whether it wishes to undertake further scrutiny and, if so, how. In particular, the Commission may wish to follow up on the under-representation of young people and women amongst councillors and of black and minority ethnic communities amongst senior managers.

4.2. The Commission is asked to note that the selection of candidates to stand as prospective councillors is largely made by the political parties and that the council does not have a role in this. The council may undertake advertising and/or information events to bring the role of councillor to the attention of underrepresented sections within the community.

4.3. The Commission is also asked to note that following a December 2018 meeting of the Joint Consultative Committee With Ethnic Minority organisations where the under-representation of BAME communities amongst senior managers was discussed, there have been the following improvements:

- There has been an improvement on posts graded MGC and above for the year 2018/19. The data covers 11 vacancies for which there were 46 applications. 44% of applicants were BAME, 40% of those shortlisted were BAME and 33% of those appointed were BAME. It should be noted that there were just 8 appointments and with such a small cohort variances of +/- one person can cause large percentage differences.
- It is a council requirement that all panel members and chairs who take part in the recruitment and selection process must have undergone the relevant recruitment and selection training; regularly refreshing their skills

every 2 years. It is the responsibility of the 'chair' of the panel to check that all panel members have attended such training. In the case of member-level appointments (Director and Chief Executive posts) training is provided to all panel members.

- We are currently in the process of designing and procuring a new on line recruitment and selection course which we will ensure addresses how to avoid unconscious bias in the recruitment process. Managers will be required to refresh this training every 2 years.
- At a recent Head of level post within Childrens, Schools and Families the Director found that the black candidate that went through the long listing and short listing stage was not appointable. When providing feedback to the candidate the Director offered the candidate mentoring from her to enable the candidate to be able to progress to a higher level post at some future stage.
- HR are currently exploring with the Corporate Management Team the viability of producing career pathways for existing staff so that they can clearly see what they would need to do and be able to demonstrate in order to progress, along with any training and support that would be available to them. This is a big piece of work which would require appropriate resource.
- HR continue to ensure that when appointing agencies for senior recruitment that we ask them to demonstrate their track record in producing BAME candidates and the number of successful BAME appointments. This is a practice that will continue.

4.4. The following further actions are also being taken:

- The BAME profile amongst senior managers is still below that of the whole workforce. Therefore, actions are being taken to ensure we have good practices in place and that these are adhered to.
- Sample checks will be introduced to ensure all shortlisting and interview panel members have up-to-date recruitment and selection training. This check will be undertaken in all cases for appointments at MGC and above. This training will include awareness of unconscious bias in the recruitment process.
- The Workforce Strategy includes actions to run a diversity and cultural awareness programme including training, with the aim to achieve a more cohesive workforce able to serve our communities better. A training programme is being developed by Human Resources, in addition to actions being developed at departmental level.
- Where external recruiters are used for senior appointments – they are instructed to conduct additional searches and through their channels encourage applications from BAME candidates.
- The Council will seek to introduce diversity in panel representation for senior appointments and this can be done by panel participation or introducing stakeholders' panels.

- The Council is currently reviewing its leadership development offer and will explore adopting cultural competency as an element within the programme.
- HR will continue to remind and encourage staff twice yearly to update their personal equality data on the online system iTrent so that our monitoring can be 100% accurate.

5 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

The Commission can choose its preferred approach to any future scrutiny, subject to officer resources being available to support the work.

6 CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN OR PROPOSED

6.1. Not applicable.

7 TIMETABLE

7.1. Not applicable.

8 FINANCIAL, RESOURCE AND PROPERTY IMPLICATIONS

8.1. There are no property or resource implications at this time.

9 LEGAL AND STATUTORY IMPLICATIONS

9.1. None for the purposes of this report.

10 HUMAN RIGHTS, EQUALITIES AND COMMUNITY COHESION IMPLICATIONS

10.1. The data and commentary in this report highlight questions about whether there is an under-representation of certain demographic groups amongst councillors and senior council managers. In particular there appears to be an under-representation of young people and women amongst councillors and of black and minority ethnic communities amongst senior managers.

10.2. The work that has been carried out already by the council and planned further steps outlined in paragraphs 4.3 and 4.4 will assist in addressing the under-representation of black and ethnic communities in the council workforce at senior level.

10.3. The Commission is asked to discuss the report and decide whether it wishes to undertake further scrutiny or to receive further information about the issues raised.

11 CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

11.1. None for the purposes of this report.

12 RISK MANAGEMENT AND HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

None for the purpose of this report.

13 APPENDICES – THE FOLLOWING DOCUMENTS ARE TO BE PUBLISHED WITH THIS REPORT AND FORM PART OF THE REPORT

Appendix A – demographic data

14 BACKGROUND PAPERS

14.1. None

Appendix A – Demographic data

Table 1 - Gender

	Merton Population	Council Staff	Council Managers	Merton councillors	National councillors
Male	49.3%	32.5%	52.9%	63%	63.3%
Female	50.7%	67.5%	47.1%	37%	35.7%
No data					1%

Data Sources

Population – GLA population data for Merton, 2019

Staff – HR data for all Merton Council employees, September 2019

Managers – HR data for the top 5% earners in Merton Council workforce, September 2019

Merton councillors - data taken from all 60 councillors on council website

National councillors – Local Government Association national census of councillors, 2018

Table 2 - Age

	Merton Population	Council Staff	Council Managers	Merton councillors	National councillors
16-24	12.3%**	3.5%	NA	0%	0.6%
25-49	51.5%	46.2%	NA	38%	20.5%
50+	36.2%	50.3%	NA	59%	78.9%
No data				3%	

Data Sources

As Table 1, except for:

Merton councillors - data provided by 39 councillors via questionnaire

** data relates to residents aged 15-24

Note – 11.7% of Merton councillor respondents were aged 70+

Table 3 - Ethnicity

	Merton Population	Merton councillors	National councillors
White	63.2%	69.2%	95.8%
Mixed/multiple	5.3%	5.1%	0.9%
Asian/Asian British	20.2%	12.8%	2.1%
Black/Black British	9.4%	7.7%	0.9%
Other ethnic group	1.9%	2.6%	0.3%
No data		2.6%	

Data Sources

Population – GLA population data for Merton, 2019

Merton councillors - data provided by 39 councillors via questionnaire

National councillors – Local Government Association national census of councillors, 2018

Table 4 – Summary of ethnicity data

	Merton Population	Council Staff	Council Managers	Merton councillors
White	63.2%	55.4%	70.9%	69.2%
BME	36.8%	33.1%	11.4%	28.2%
No data		11.5%	17.7%	2.6%

Data Sources

Population – GLA population data for Merton, 2019

Staff – HR data for all Merton Council employees, September 2019

Managers – HR data for the top 5% earners in Merton Council workforce, September 2019

Merton councillors - data provided by 39 councillors via questionnaire

Table 5 - Disability

	Merton Population	Council Staff	Council Managers	Merton councillors	National councillors
Disabled	12.6%	5.3%	4.6%	2.6%	16.1%
Not disabled				92.3%	
No data		15.0%	25.3%	5.1%	

Data Sources

Population – 2011 census data – long term health problem or disability, all ages

Staff – HR data for all Merton Council employees, September 2019

Managers – HR data for the top 5% earners in Merton Council workforce, September 2019

Merton councillors - data provided by 39 councillors via questionnaire

National councillors – Local Government Association national census of councillors, 2018

Table 6 - Religion

	Merton Population	Council Staff	Council managers	Merton councillors
Buddhist	0.9%	3.3%	0%	0%
Christian	56.1%	58.6%	55.6%	41.0%
Hindu	6.1%	2.6%	2.2%	2.6%
Jewish	0.4%	0.2%	0%	0%
Muslim	8.1%	6.3%	2.2%	7.7%
Sikh	0.2%	0.8%	2.2%	0%
Other religion	0.4%	3.3%	2.2%	5.1%
No religion	20.6%	33.3%	35.6%	33.3%
No data		44.2%	47.0%	10.3%

Data Sources

Population – 2011 census data

Staff – HR data for all Merton Council employees - % for each category based on respondents only, 44.2% staff and 47% managers did not provide data

Merton councillors - data provided by 39 councillors via questionnaire

Table 7 - Sexual orientation

	Merton councillors	National councillors	Council staff	Council managers
Heterosexual/straight	79.5%	88.3%	96.4%	88.0%
Gay or lesbian	7.7%	4.2%	2.1%	12.0%
Bisexual	0	1.7%	0.6%	0%
Other	0	0.2%	0.2%	0%
Prefer not to say	12.8%	5.6%	36.3%	41.1%

Data Sources

Merton councillors - data provided by 39 councillors via questionnaire

National councillors – Local Government Association national census of councillors, 2018

Staff – HR data for all Merton Council employees - % for each category based on respondents only, 36.3% staff and 41.1% managers did not provide data