

GREATER MANCHESTER COMBINED AUTHORITY

Date: 25th September 2020

Subject: Establishing a Race Equality Panel

Report of: Cllr Brenda Warrington, Portfolio Lead for Equalities and Ageing, and Pam Smith, Chief Executive Portfolio Lead for Equalities and Ageing

PURPOSE OF REPORT:

The purpose of this report is to provide GMCA members with an update on the recent listening exercise across Greater Manchester, and consider a proposal for the establishment of a GM Race Equality Panel.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

The GMCA is asked to:

1. Note the work to date, including responses received to the recent listening exercise.
2. Agree the proposal set out to enable the establishment of the Race Equality Panel, including the allocation of a budget of £50,000 per annum for a VCSE Race Equality Partner to support the work of the Panel, commencing in the current financial year.

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1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 The coronavirus pandemic has brought equalities issues into sharp focus, highlighting inequalities which existed in our society, and exposing new inequalities. The existing equalities panels and advisory functions have been providing a regular flow of information and experience to inform community impacts arising from the coronavirus outbreak, and those effective mechanisms to ensure views are being gathered are informing and influencing the recovery and future responses.
- 1.2 Over the last year substantive work has been undertaken to understand the issues and to inform a suitable response and structure to respond to issues affecting faith and race communities. Given the urgent need to fully understand the inequalities experienced by these communities in light of Covid, and the development of appropriate responses, it is now timely that the work undertaken to date is brought together and the Race Equality Panel is established as quickly as possible.
- 1.3 At the current time, it is imperative that GMCA should establish more extensive links with communities of identity and that effective mechanisms are in place enabling this to happen. The work undertaken to date to shape and inform the panel proposals has been enabled by an extensive engagement exercise, including a check and challenge listening exercise through the summer of 2020.
- 1.4 The proposed Race Equality Panel will input into the work to be undertaken by the Greater Manchester Independent Inequalities Commission.

2. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

- 2.1 Following the Cohesion Summit in July 2019, the Mayor of Greater Manchester requested that a series of roundtables be convened to explore the establishment of a Greater Manchester 'faith and race equality panel', and if so, what it should do, and who should be involved.
- 2.2 Two engagement sessions were convened with representatives from faith and race communities in October 2019 and February 2020. The first session included community leaders operating strategically across Greater Manchester, and attendees at the second workshop included around 100 people representing diverse faiths and BAME communities at a borough and neighbourhood level, from all 10 local authority areas.
- 2.3 The engagement showed a huge diversity across communities of faith and race, and a split amongst the faith and race leaders about whether there should be one or two panels. However, voting at the second workshop showed overwhelming support for having two separate panels as the issues faced by communities of faith and race were seen as being too complex for a single panel to be able to address.
- 2.4 At the meeting in June 2020, GMCA Members agreed the urgency of convening a GM Race Equality Panel, and that a second, Faith Panel, will be set up at a later date.

2.5 However, the CA also noted in June that circumstances had moved on considerably since February 2020, and that the Covid pandemic has brought considerable disparities to the fore affecting communities in relation to their race. It was agreed therefore that a further ‘check and challenge’ listening exercise be held to inform the establishment of the Race Equality Panel.

3. FEEDBACK FROM LISTENING EXERCISE

3.1 **Appendix 1** contains a report which summarises the responses from the recent listening exercise. The key lines of enquiry for this work were:

- The issues a panel should address
- The purpose of the panel, e.g. its mission, aims and objectives
- The role of the independent chair
- The roles and responsibilities of panel members

3.2 The final stage of the listening exercise took place in July and August 2020, and sought to hear from community leaders involved in earlier engagement activities, as well as emerging groups, including young people; public and VCSE sector organisations, particularly those with responsibility to address the issues and support solutions; equality leads, and GMCA advisory panels, so activity is aligned with, and doesn’t duplicate, work already underway across the city-region.

3.3 There were three main ways to get involved, during which nearly 300 people took part:

- By joining a meeting of an established organisation or group – over 200 people took part in 10 sessions
- By completing a survey on www.GMConsult.org – 72 responses were received
- By joining a bespoke group discussion – however, only a handful of individuals expressed interest in this; all were offered the opportunity for a one-to-one interview, but none took this up

3.4 The majority of listening exercise participants felt that the six issues highlighted during the earlier engagement (Educational inequalities and achievement, including STEM; Employment and labour market inequalities; Financial inclusion and poverty; Hate crime and preventing discrimination; Health and wellbeing inequality; and Housing and homelessness, including hidden homelessness) are the linked with systemic discrimination and structural inequalities, and they felt that tackling inequalities, racism and discrimination should be at the heart of what the panel focuses on.

3.5 Two additional issues that frequently came up in this stage of the listening exercise were discrimination in policing and criminal justice; and BAME leadership, especially in the public sector and political systems. There was also appetite for the panel to be involved in all aspects of the Greater Manchester Strategy, as well as the post-COVID recovery plans to ensure ‘build back better’ means better for all.

3.6 Participants felt that the mission, aims and objectives for the Panel should be simple and easily understood so all communities can understand what it is setting out to do. In order to

achieve that mission, most participants felt that the panel should have an explicit role in scrutinising and holding the public and VCSE sectors to account. Additionally, whilst participants agreed the panel should have a role in highlighting the issues, many strongly advocated that it should be involved in co-designing and implementing the solutions – working in partnership, rather than being ‘done to’. Participants also felt the panel needs measureable outcomes so its effectiveness and successes can be demonstrated.

- 3.7 The proposal for the CA to appoint an independent chair was not broadly supported, and many participants would prefer the panel to select a Chair (or co-Chairs) from within its members. It was also queried whether the proposals for a truly independent chair were possible, but most participants did agree the chair should work for the ‘collective good’ rather than solely for the community they’re representing.
- 3.8 There was widespread agreement that there should be an open recruitment process for Panel members, and that anyone interested should be able to apply. It was also agreed that all 10 districts should be represented, as well as a broader range of communities as possible. A number of the discussion groups remarked that it wouldn’t be possible for all of Greater Manchester’s races, ethnicities and cultures to have a seat at the table, and they felt that consequently the panel needs a strong engagement infrastructure to support members’ ability to involve those from outside their own communities. Some suggested this could be facilitated by existing BAME-led organisations, if adequately resourced. There were conflicting views about whether members should be existing ‘leaders’ or ‘new voices’, but there was wide-spread agreement that all should have insight or first-hand experience of the issues the panel will focus on.

4. FINAL PROPOSAL FOR RACE EQUALITY PANEL

- 4.1 The following section has built on the responses received through the listening exercise and provides a proposal for the establishment of the Panel.

Principles

- 4.2 The following principles will be applied to the establishment of the Race Equality Panel:
- The Race Equality Panel will promote positive role models (particularly in leadership positions), engage with the business community, and act as a voice for communities.
 - Panel members will possess strong links to the communities that they represent and with grass roots organizations, as well as with the existing representative networks
 - The Panel will reflect the diversity of GM, and achieve as broad a representation as possible across different races, the 10 districts, across sectors and other protected characteristics such as gender and disability.
 - There will be an open recruitment process for Panel members
 - The Panel will be fully aligned and connect with work of other existing GM Mayoral advisory panels.
 - The Chair (or co-Chairs) will be selected from within the membership of the Panel in conjunction with the GM Portfolio Lead for Age Friendly GM and Equalities

Terms of Reference

- 4.3 The primary purpose of the Panel should be to advise and challenge the GM public sector bodies on their work to tackle discrimination and foster good relations, acting as a critical friend; with the overall aim of addressing systemic issues which cause disadvantage to the people of GM because of their race. It might monitor the progress of public agencies, enforcing agreements that already exist, suggesting new actions and contextualize conversations.
- 4.4 Furthermore the Panel will be involved in co-designing and implementing the solutions to the issues and 'root causes' which have been identified as well. A set of measureable outcomes will be developed by the Panel so its effectiveness and successes can be demonstrated. As with the other advisory Panels, an Annual Report of progress will be submitted to the CA.
- 4.5 The Panel will include in its scope, a requirement to support the proposed GM Independent Inequalities Commission with insight and where possible, statistical data for consideration by the Independent Panel.
- 4.6 There will be an open recruitment process to the Panel, led by the CA over the coming weeks. Building from the detailed feedback which has been received from the listening exercise, a set of selection criteria will be developed in order to ensure broad representation across communities, geographies and sectors, as well as intersectionality with other protected characteristics. It is proposed that the draft role description for the Chair is discussed by the new Panel members at their first meeting, before they make a selection from within their number for endorsement by the GM Portfolio Lead for Age Friendly GM and Equalities.
- 4.7 Given the complexity of the issues in scope for the Race Equality Panel, it is suggested that the Panel might establish sub-groups to take forward specific pieces of work, and that these sub-groups may include members from the Faith Panel, once this is established, as dictated by the subject under discussion. The Race Equality Panel will meet on a monthly basis and the Chair will meet regularly with the Chairs of the other advisory panels, in order to co-ordinate and align activity.

VCSE Race Equality Partner

- 4.8 Although GMCA officers have led the engagement and listening exercises, and will undertake the recruitment exercise for Panel members, it will be important that, as with the other Panels, GMCA enters into a partnering agreement with a GM VCSE organisation to support the work of the Panel.
- 4.9 A role description will be developed for the VCSE Race Equality Partner, and following the listening exercise, this is likely to include facilitating outreach and brokering relationships across the wide diversity of race groups, provision of specialist policy support to the Panel Chair and members, supporting and facilitating effective Panel meetings and ensuring the Panel has a clear work programme which is focussed on the purpose and aims contained in

its Terms of Reference. It is proposed that a budget of £50,000 per annum be set aside by the GMCA for this work, commencing in the 2020/21 financial year, for 2 years in the first instance; and that expressions of interest are sought from local VCSE organisations.

Key issues for discussion by the Panel

4.10 Feedback from the engagement showed that there was a strong desire for the Race Equality Panel to challenge the mainstream agenda, increasing the visibility of issues relating to race and in particular challenge 'systemic' racism and bias. The emerging list of topics in scope for the Panel include:

- Hate crime and preventing discrimination
- Employment and labour market inequalities
- Health and wellbeing inequality, including housing and community safety
- Educational inequalities and achievement, including STEM
- Financial inclusion and poverty
- Addressing the unequal impacts of Covid-19
- Policing and criminal justice
- Encouraging BAME leadership and public representation

Increasing public leadership

4.11 One key message from the listening exercise was that in order to tackle 'systemic' issues in society and in relation to public services, it will be important for Greater Manchester to increase the number of people from non-White British backgrounds who hold key public positions, including Councillors, Non-Executive Directors of Foundation Trusts, magistrates and school governors, for example. As announced by the Mayor earlier this year, it is proposed that Operation Black Vote be asked to facilitate a programme similar to one which is under way in Birmingham¹.

5. NEXT STEPS

5.1 It is now proposed that GMCA officers undertake the following actions:

- **Recruitment of Panel members** – GMCA will follow the process used recently for recruitment to the Women and Girls' Panel, and put in place an open and transparent process for appointment of members to the Race Equality Panel. Around 15 people will be appointed to the Panel. Recruitment will seek to ensure that there is at least one representative from each of the 10 GM districts, with the other members being appointed to ensure that there is a broad a representation across communities.
- **Appointment of Chair** – a role description for the chair of the Panel will be developed and discussed by the Panel at its first meeting, in conjunction with the GM Portfolio Lead for Age Friendly GM and Equalities.

¹ <https://www.obv.org.uk/what-we-do/schemes-programmes-and-campaigns/birmingham-s-future-your-hands>

- **Appointment of Race Equality VCSE partner** – a role description will be developed for the Race Equality partner organisation and expressions of interest sought from across the GM VCSE sector.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 6.1 The recommendations are listed at the front of this report