

# **A statement from Eleanor Kelly: Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities report**

*Date 12 April 2021*

Dear colleagues,

Many of you would have heard about the report issued by the Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities in recent press and publicity around racial disparity in the UK. This has led to many forming a view that the report has fallen short in helping us to understand racism in our society and how it can be tackled to remove barriers to achieve equality in our society.

I wrote to the workforce in June 2020 following the horrendous death of George Floyd in Minneapolis, which was followed by the Black Lives Matter campaign. This horrific murder raised the profile of the work we all need to do in our communities and society to tackle racial inequality. Following this, Southwark Council embarked on an ambitious programme under the name of 'Southwark Stands Together' making a commitment to become actively anti-racist in recognition of the fact that we all have a part to play to make sure we continue to challenge and tackle racial inequality both inside and outside the council by listening to our communities and partners across the borough. This also included a recognition of the importance of listening to the voice of our workforce to hear their concerns and most importantly identify solutions to address areas of inequality by taking positive action to address these imbalances. This work is still underway and continues to pick up momentum and pace as we continue to focus on engaging with our workforce to identify solutions to make sustainable improvements and change.

With this in mind, I would like to reaffirm the council's commitment to continue working with our communities, partners, and our workforce to tackle racial inequality. We will continue to work to create a culture where people feel safe to express their views without fear of repercussion and to hear the lived experiences of our employees to continue developing a positive culture which openly and actively challenges inequalities within council structures, processes, practices, and systems to eliminate attitudes and behaviours that disadvantage Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic colleagues.

In view of this, I want to apologise for the injustice and inequality experienced by our Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic colleagues. I hear, understand, and acknowledge your pain and promise you that I and the Chief Officer Team are sorry for all the ways in which the council, as your employer, has let you down. We must and will do better.

Thank you for your continued support.

Eleanor