

To discuss the topic of **Diversity and Inclusion (D&I)**, the Business Manifesto Advisory Group (BMAG) met in July 2021 and welcomed keynote speaker, Baroness Ruby McGregor-Smith, CBE, President of the British Chambers of Commerce.

Building on the foundations of her report, “Race in the workplace: The McGregor-Smith Review” Baroness McGregor-Smith outlined the challenges, still faced in the workplace and community, of women (not) being in senior positions, the gender pay gap (which remains) and ethnicity. She commented that there is a real “need to start talking about it”.

On the key topic, she advocated the need for business to take D&I more seriously. Her report identified a roadmap of 26 recommendations, which stand true today. The Thames Valley business community was encouraged to review and apply this roadmap. In conclusion, Baroness McGregor-Smith welcomed the launch of the Chamber’s D&I Charter and invited businesses to act, do what works for their own organisation and be proud of the individual actions people take to make a sustained difference.

Following the keynote, the Chamber was joined by panellists, including Chico Chakravorty of **Doing Diversity Differently**, Sheri Hughes of **Page Group**, Dr Ram Raghavan of **COMPAIRA**, and Roland White of **Microsoft International**. Each shared their business experience and expertise, offering further insight into effective, sustained application of D&I, the essential need for behavioural change and building a strong, true sense of belonging and wellbeing in the workplace.

In an open forum, a number of key points were discussed, including:

- **Developing a Strategy:** what does D&I mean to your business? Ensure a long-term vision and commitment is put in place.
- Businesses must start collecting and **publishing Data** at a granular level. Be transparent and report gender, ethnicity and disability pay gaps and associated actions to be taken.
- **Address bias in recruitment practices** in the workplace – break down the unconscious bias in training programmes and recruitment processes.
- **Unlock Thames Valley Talent:** Slough is one of UK’s top ten cities with the highest proportion of working age people (50.3%) from BAME backgrounds. We must play to our region’s strength and engage those from the BAME community, especially the young, and give them an opportunity to show their potential.
- Look at the business **Supply chain** and consider the power you have to affect and inform by asking ‘what are your suppliers doing for D&I?’ and bringing them into conversation.

Both speakers and panellists advocated the need to continue raising awareness, using the tools available and measuring progress annually. There was a collective call for business leaders to commit and have tangible objectives by giving yourself three things to do, carrying them out and making D&I ‘business as usual’.

**Business Manifesto Advisory Group (BMAG)**  
**Diversity and Inclusion, 14<sup>th</sup> July 2021**



During the event, we launched our [Diversity and Inclusion Charter](#), which aims to enable member organisations to not only demonstrate their commitment to promoting more diverse and inclusive workplaces, where all employees can truly belong, but realise an increase in their performance whilst delivering economic growth for the company and the region.