

# EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES FORUM

Minutes of meeting held via Microsoft Teams on 31 March 2021

## **Chair:**

Councillor Bert Thomson

## **Councillors Present:**

Councillor Janine Calikes, Councillor Mary Donnelly, Councillor Eric Holford, Councillor Katy Loudon, Councillor Jim McGuigan, Councillor Mo Razzaq (*substitute for Councillor Martin Lennon*), Councillor Margaret B Walker (*substitute for Councillor Maureen Devlin*)

## **Councillors' Apologies:**

Councillor Maureen Devlin, Councillor Ann Le Blond, Councillor Martin Lennon, Councillor Joe Lowe

## **Attending:**

### **Finance and Corporate Resources**

A Bell, Personnel Officer; G Bhatti, Employee Development and Diversity Manager; C Lyon, Administration Officer, E A McGonigle, Administration Officer; K McVeigh, Head of Personnel Services,

### **Housing and Technical Resources**

J Fernie, Homelessness and Housing Support Manager; A Muir, Strategy and Policy Officer

---

## **1 Declaration of Interests**

No interests were declared.

---

## **2 Minutes of Previous Meeting**

The minutes of the meeting of the Equal Opportunities Forum held on 11 November 2020 were submitted for approval as a correct record.

**The Forum decided:** that the minutes be approved as a correct record.

---

## **3 Annual Report on Mainstreaming Equalities and Diversity – Housing and Technical Resources**

A report dated 3 March 2021 by the Executive Director (Housing and Technical Resources) was submitted on work being undertaken by Housing and Technical Resources to meet the commitments of the “South Lanarkshire Working for You” Mainstreaming Equalities Report 2017 to 2021.

During 2019/2020, the Resource completed a total of 11 Equality Impact Assessments covering the following areas:-

- ◆ 7 Local Letting Initiatives
- ◆ establishment of a target for Wheelchair Accessible Housing Targets
- ◆ Anti-Social Behaviour Strategy 2019 to 2023
- ◆ Gypsy/Traveller Pitch Allocation Policy
- ◆ Rent Management Policy

Details were provided on the strategic and operational work being undertaken or planned by the Resource under the following headings:-

- ◆ Home+ new build housing programme
- ◆ adaptations programme
- ◆ wheelchair accessible housing targets
- ◆ South Lanarkshire Strategic Commissioning Plan 2019 to 2022
- ◆ South Lanarkshire Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan 2019 to 2024
- ◆ Syrian Refugee Resettlement Programme
- ◆ gypsy/travellers
- ◆ translation and interpretation services
- ◆ consultation, engagement and customer feedback
- ◆ employee training and development

The Resource had revised service delivery arrangements to support all customer groups and helping to mitigate the impact of COVID-19 on potentially vulnerable individuals and groups had been a focus of attention during 2020/2021. The Resource Equality and Diversity Co-ordinating Group (EDCG) continued to oversee the work in relation to mainstreaming across the Resource during 2020/2021 and the impact of COVID-19 was a key focus for their workplan.

The Chair, on behalf of the Forum members, welcomed the report and expressed appreciation of the work and activities being undertaken by Housing and Technical Resources to take forward the Council's commitment to mainstreaming equality and diversity in strategic planning and performance.

**The Forum decided:** that the report be noted.

*[Reference: Minutes of 30 October 2019 (Paragraph 3)]*

---

#### **4 Throughcare and After Care Housing Services Role**

---

J Fernie, Homelessness and Housing Support Manager, Housing and Technical Resources gave a presentation on the role of throughcare and after care housing services.

The presentation provided detailed information on the following key areas:-

- ◆ the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) (Incorporation) (Scotland) Bill which ensured children's rights were respected and protected in the law in Scotland and that public authorities were legally required to respect and protect children's rights in the work they did
- ◆ partnership working and the Children's Services Partnership Governance structure
- ◆ the role of Housing and details of Housing Services
- ◆ the focus for Housing including a dedicated locality housing officer and regular liaison meetings with Social Work
- ◆ housing options considerations
- ◆ the accommodation pathway adopted for all children in care
- ◆ housing options and examples
- ◆ performance highlights for 2018/2019 and 2019/2020
- ◆ future priorities

J Fernie, having responded to members' questions, was thanked for her informative presentation.

**The Forum decided:** that the presentation be noted.

---

## **5 Item of Urgent Business– Equity Working Group Update**

---

It was agreed that Councillor Razzaq, as Chair of the Equity Working Group, would provide an update on the work of the Group to date. The Group had proactively considered and discussed:-

- ◆ the Council's recruitment process
- ◆ recruitment of Black and Asian Minority Ethnic (BAME) candidates
- ◆ results from the BAME recruitment survey
- ◆ positive action versus positive discrimination

Discussion at the Group's meeting to be held on 26 April 2021 would include:-

- ◆ equalities training for employees and elected members
- ◆ feedback from focus groups involving participants from the BAME recruitment survey
- ◆ update from the recent public sector summit on race and employment

A discussion took place on the importance of fully understanding the reasons why the Council's recruitment statistics continued to show disparities between the success rates of applicants of white ethnicity and BAME applicants. A similar disparity was also shown in the statistics for disabled candidates and those matters would be fully discussed at future meetings of this Forum.

**The Forum decided:** to note the position.