

EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES FORUM

Minutes of meeting held in Committee Room 5, Council Offices, Almada Street, Hamilton on 29 November 2017

Chair:

Councillor Bert Thomson

Councillors Present:

Peter Craig (*substitute for Councillor Calikes*), Maureen Devlin, Eric Holford, Katy Loudon, Joe Lowe, Jared Wark (*substitute for Councillor Le Blond*)

Councillors' Apologies:

Janine Calikes, Mary Donnelly, George Greenshields, Ann Le Blond, Jim McGuigan

Attending:

Finance and Corporate Resources

A Bell, Personnel Officer; G Bhatti, Employee Development and Diversity Manager; J Muirhead, Administration Adviser; K McVeigh, Head of Personnel Services

Community and Enterprise Resources Committee

A McKinnon, Head of Facilities, Waste and Ground Services; M Muir, Countryside and Greenspace Manager

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 20 September 2017 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 - Community and Enterprise Resources

A report dated 20 October 2017 by the Executive Director (Community and Enterprise Resources) was submitted on the work being undertaken by Community and Enterprise Resources to meet the commitments of the "South Lanarkshire Working for You" Mainstreaming Equalities Report 2013 to 2017.

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

- ◆ improve services for older people
- ◆ protect vulnerable children, young people and adults
- ◆ improve the road network and the quality of the physical environment
- ◆ provide the right conditions for inclusive economic growth
- ◆ tackle poverty and support aspiration
- ◆ raise educational attainment and support lifelong learning
- ◆ work with partners to help communities thrive

The Forum decided: that the report be noted.

[Reference: Minutes of 7 June 2016 (Paragraph 3)]

Councillor Holford entered the meeting during this item of business

4 Green Spaces, Wellbeing and Community Engagement

The Countryside and Greenspace Manager gave a presentation on the work of the Lanarkshire Greenspace, Health and Wellbeing Partnership (LGHWP).

The main aim of the LGHWP was to develop a preventative spend model, using public land assets, to support the physical and mental health of people in the Lanarkshire area. It was anticipated that the associated health benefits of this activity would be a reduction in low level health complaints, such as stress and obesity related ailments, and it would allow more NHS resources to be targeted at those with the highest need, whilst maintaining one of the Council's major assets with minimal investment.

The challenges associated with bringing those green spaces up to standard included:-

- ◆ fly tipping
- ◆ abandoned vehicles
- ◆ anti-social behaviour
- ◆ degraded or no access infrastructure
- ◆ people frightened to use natural spaces
- ◆ green spaces being perceived as a liability rather than an opportunity

To deal with those challenges, the LGHWP had established a number of local Community Management Groups (CMGs) to support key green spaces and involved the local population in the management and maintenance of Council land assets. There had also been significant investment in managing the land better, restoring native woodlands and restoring and improving paths and access routes. There was growing evidence that contact with 'nature' improved mental health and wellbeing, whilst the benefits of physical activity were enhanced when it took place outdoors. The benefits of undertaking this work included:-

- ◆ on an individual basis:-
 - ◆ improved self esteem
 - ◆ resilience
 - ◆ communication
 - ◆ coping skills
 - ◆ reduced stress
 - ◆ purpose
- ◆ on a community basis:-
 - ◆ inclusion
 - ◆ participation
 - ◆ empowerment
 - ◆ learning
 - ◆ achievement
- ◆ on an environmental basis:-
 - ◆ reduced structural barriers
 - ◆ improved physical access
 - ◆ perceptions of safety

The Countryside and Greenspace Manager was thanked for his presentation and was commended on the innovative approach of the Partnership.

The Forum decided: that the presentation be noted.

5 British Sign Language Plan

A report dated 31 October 2017 by the Executive Director (Finance and Corporate Resources) was submitted providing an overview of the Scottish Government's British Sign Language (BSL) National Plan 2017 to 2023 and outlining the implications for the Council.

Under the Act, the Council had a duty to prepare a Council plan within one year of the publication of the National Plan. The Council plan would identify measures required to increase or improve the use of British Sign Language across Council services and to ensure that Council policy was aligned with the National Plan.

The report outlined the steps the Council was required to take prior to producing a plan.

The Forum decided: that the report be noted.

[Reference: Minutes of 7 June 2016 (Paragraph 6)]

Councillor Lowe left the meeting during this item of business

6 Learn On Line - Deaf Awareness

The Personnel Officer demonstrated the council's Deaf Awareness training course available through the Learn on Line training facility.

Having responded to members' questions, the Personnel Officer was thanked for her informative demonstration.

The Forum decided: that the demonstration be noted.

7 Urgent Business

There were no items of urgent business.