

Report

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Report to:	Housing and Technical Resources Committee
Date of Meeting:	25 November 2009
Report by:	Executive Director (Housing and Technical Resources)

Subject:	Housing and Technical Resources Equality and Diversity Action Plan 2009/2010
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1. Purpose of Report

1.1. The purpose of the report is to:-

- ♦ provide a progress report to Committee on the Housing and Technical Resources Equality and Diversity Action Plan 2009/2010.

2. Recommendation(s)

2.1. The Committee is asked to approve the following recommendation(s):-

- (1) that progress made against the actions contained in the Housing and Technical Resources Equality and Diversity Action Plan 2009/10 be noted.

3. Background

- 3.1. The Council's Equality Schemes on Race, Gender and Disability and its strategy and policy on equality and diversity outline how we will meet our legislative duties and our commitment to achieving equality and diversity in all our activities.
- 3.2. Housing and Technical Resources Equality and Diversity Action Plan sets out objectives and priority actions in relation to mainstreaming equalities within Housing and Technical Resources.
- 3.3. A wholesale review of this action plan was undertaken in early 2009. The Action Plan follows a clear structure, and now provides a greater focus on impact and achieving outcomes.
- 3.4. This report outlines the progress made to date in implementing the action plan.

4. Housing and Technical Resources Equality and Diversity Action Plan 2009/10

- 4.1. Progress of the action plan is monitored on a monthly basis by the Housing and Technical Resources Equality and Diversity Co-ordinating Group. This group is chaired by the Head of Support Services, Patrick Murphy and includes representation from the 3 services (Area, Property and Support).
- 4.2. The action plan includes 61 priority actions, with sub tasks, which range from small scale actions to longer term projects. The plan includes 4 key themes and objectives which are outlined below:-

Key theme 1:

Organisational Culture and Governance

Objective:

The Resource can demonstrate its commitment to equality and diversity as a strategic priority.

Key theme 2:

Planning, Monitoring and Review

Objective:

The Resource has plans in place to capture and monitor equality and diversity information, which is used to inform service planning and provision.

Key theme 3:

Consultation and Participation

Objective:

The Resource has effective consultation and participation arrangements in place which are used to shape policy and practice.

Key theme 4:

Access to Services, service delivery and customer care

Objective:

The Resource has systems, policies and procedures in place to ensure its services are accessible to all.

5. Priority actions and progress to date

5.1. Key actions and progress to date in relation to the above themes are presented below.

5.2. Organisational Culture and Governance

Our commitment to Equality and Diversity is reflected in our strategic documents including our Resource and Service Plans, supported by the action plan.

◆ Staff Development

- 796 employees have attended Equality and Diversity courses since 1 April 2009 over 46 sessions.
- In 2009/10 we continue to emphasise the individual responsibilities of staff through the Personal Development Review process and deliver a major training programme in relation to equality and diversity including:-
 - Race, Disability and Diversity Awareness
 - Equality Impact Assessment
 - British Sign Language
- Further specialist training has also been delivered to staff throughout the year. The Forum Interactive World Café training initiative was designed to explore the way that individual beliefs, perceptions and attitudes can affect how we feel and behave when we deliver our services.
- We have held 2 Service Development Sessions for Area Services staff on Equality and Diversity in August and September of this year. The first focused on 'Knowing your customers and meeting their needs', with a follow up session on 'Equality and Diversity: your role and contribution'.

5.3. Planning, Monitoring and Review

The action plan recognises that the Resource needs better monitoring information to help us plan and provide services which meet the needs of individuals. Improving our data collection and monitoring is therefore a high priority task and we are progressing a number of short and longer term actions to achieve this.

- ◆ Collecting, monitoring, storing and using population and service user profiles
 - We have reviewed the equality categories used in the Common Housing Register Application Form, in line with the draft 2011 census data.
 - We have prepared a profile of our tenants, waiting list and homeless applicants by age, gender, ethnicity and disability. This is also available by local area. The profile has assisted with the identification of gaps in our information.
- ◆ Equality Impact Assessments (EQIAs)
 - All new or revised policies/functions will be impact assessed. We have revised our schedule of EQIAs and will undertake a programme of assessments in 2009/10 as set out in the action plan. We have a target of 20 assessments for the year, with 8 completed to date;
 - Housing and Technical Resources guidance on completing an EQIA has been developed to supplement the corporate guidance and will be rolled out to staff by December 2009.

5.4. Consultation and Participation

Housing and Technical Resources have excellent and well-established arrangements for consulting and involving our tenants and service users. However, there are a number of areas which we have sought to improve and areas for further development.

- ◆ We held 2 focus groups with residents of our travelling person's sites in Swinhill, Larkhall and Springbank, East Kilbride in August and September 2009 to seek views on the draft Pitch Allocation Policy and Occupancy Agreement, site investment priorities and ongoing consultation and involvement.
- ◆ An independent consultant has been appointed to develop the customer feedback framework and continuous customer surveys to improve engagement with individual service users. The framework is in place and is being implemented in stages, beginning with Repairs.

5.5. Access to services, service delivery and customer care

The Council has a high rate of compliance with the physical access requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act, the most recently published Audit Scotland report (2007/08) highlights a 79% compliance rate, the sixth highest in Scotland. We also offer a range of methods, including translation and interpretation, and locations through which our services can be accessed.

- ◆ Develop a range of materials to better promote service availability.

We have improved the range of information available through a number of new publications:-

- The booklet 'A short guide to our housing services' provides an overview of our key services and how to access them. The booklet has been published in 6 languages and distributed to key locations.
- A leaflet called 'Domestic Abuse – How to get Help' has been developed and distributed. The leaflet provides advice and information on the support available.
- A leaflet on 'Reporting Harassment and Hate Crime' has been prepared and distributed.

6. Next Steps

6.1. We will continue to progress and monitor the actions contained in the action plan. Future actions which will be progressed across the key themes in 2009/10 include:-

- ◆ The plan outlines an exercise to address identified gaps in our information and to consider our equality and diversity data collection, storage and use more broadly. This is a longer term action which will progress in stages through a working group which:-
 - is currently developing an action plan and schedule of work;
 - is currently reviewing how we collect and store information;
 - is currently reviewing the type of information we are obliged and wish to collect;
 - is currently reviewing the alerts we use on our main Housing systems to develop a range of further flags, for example a communication need such as a visual impairment;
 - will identify priority service areas for customer profiling/data collection;
 - will review how equality monitoring information is used plan and provide priority services and assess equality of access for all service users;
 - will review equality and diversity best practice and identify a range of potential performance indicators.
- ◆ Actions identified through each EQIA will be appended to the Resource Action Plan and progress monitored via the Equality and Diversity Co-ordinating Group.
- ◆ A particular area we aim to improve is our engagement with residents from a minority ethnic background and we are looking at ways to do this in conjunction with the South Lanarkshire Tenant Development Support Project. The timescale for this task has been revised in line with the Project's work plan and will be completed by 31 March 2010.
- ◆ We will work with the South Lanarkshire Disability Partnership Access Panel to undertake qualitative audits of some of our main housing offices by March 2010. This will help us to evaluate if our current approach to accessibility audits meets customer needs and not just the technical specifications of the Disability Discrimination Act.

An annual report will be produced following year end.

7. Employee Implications

7.1. None.

8. Financial Implications

8.1. There are no financial implications in relation to the proposals contained within this report. However, as individual actions progress there is a possibility that there may be some financial considerations for example IT costs in relation to our collection and storage of customer information. Any significant financial implications will be considered and reported on in more detail if necessary.

9. Other Implications

9.1. None.

10. Equalities Impact Assessment and Consultation Arrangements

10.1. This report does not introduce a new policy, function or strategy or recommend a change to an existing policy, function or strategy and, therefore, no impact assessment is required.

10.2. The development of the action plan was undertaken in consultation with Resource lead officers.

Jim Hayton

Executive Director (Housing and Technical Resources)

30 October 2009

Link(s) to Council Objectives and Values

- ◆ Improve the quality, access and availability of housing

Previous References

- ◆ None

List of Background Papers

- ◆ Housing and Technical Resources Equality and Diversity Action Plan

Contact for Further Information

If you would like to inspect the background papers or want further information, please contact:-

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