

Report

Report to:	Housing and Technical Resources Committee
Date of Meeting:	13 November 2019
Report by:	Executive Director (Housing and Technical Resources)

Subject:	Annual Report on Mainstreaming Equality and Diversity within Housing and Technical Resources
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1. Purpose of Report

1.1. The purpose of the report is to:-

- ◆ provide Committee with an overview of progress made in relation to mainstreaming equalities within Housing and Technical Resources during 2018/2019, and highlight key action areas for 2019/2020

2. Recommendation(s)

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

- (1) that the progress made during 2018/2019 and key action areas for 2019/2020 in relation to mainstreaming equalities, be noted.

3. Background

- 3.1. In March 2018, the Resource reported to Housing and Technical Resources Committee its commitment to progress actions to mainstream equality and diversity activity throughout 2018/2019.
- 3.2. The Housing and Technical Resources Equality and Diversity Co-ordinating Group continue to progress the Equality and Diversity work plan and supports a consistent approach to mainstreaming equality and diversity across the Resource.
- 3.3. This report outlines the progress made in meeting these commitments during 2018/2019, and sets out the key priorities being progressed during 2019/2020.

4. Key areas of progress 2018/2019

4.1. Equality Impact Assessments

During 2018/2019, the Resource completed a total of eight Equality Impact Assessments in respect of:-

- ◆ Housing Allocation Policy
- ◆ South Lanarkshire Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan
- ◆ Local Letting Initiatives (x6)

4.2. Fairer Scotland Duty

The Fairer Scotland Duty came into effect from 1 April 2018. This places a legal responsibility on public bodies to pay due regard to how they can reduce inequalities of outcome caused by socio-economic disadvantage, when making strategic decisions.

The Fairer Scotland Duty is subject to a 3 year implementation phase, during which the Scottish Government will work with the Equalities and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) to share best practice. It is expected that the EHRC will also contribute to the final guidance.

Interim guidance has been produced for public bodies and during 2018/2019, the Resource completed a Fairer Scotland Duty assessment as part of the development of the South Lanarkshire Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan 2019 to 2024. The assessment identified no negative impact in terms of inequalities of outcome.

4.3. Home+ new housing supply programme

During 2018/2019, there were a total of 132 completions within the Home+ new build housing programme. This consisted of 56 general needs properties and 76 amenity properties, providing a range of accessible, adaptable new homes suitable for a variety of needs. This provision was further enhanced by 61 homes which were brought back into Council ownership through the open market purchase scheme.

4.4. Adaptations programme

The Resource completed 979 adaptations to council properties throughout 2018/2019. In addition to this, the Scheme of Assistance provided grant funding for adaptations to private homes. This supports people with health conditions or disabilities to be able to continue to live independently within their own homes, without the need for rehousing or moving into a care environment.

4.5. Wheelchair accessible housing targets

In March 2019, the Scottish Government issued guidance to local authorities on setting targets for the delivery of wheelchair accessible housing. These targets are to be set across all housing tenures, supporting Scottish Government's 'A Fairer Scotland for Disabled People Delivery Plan'.

In September 2019, the Scottish Government published revised Local Housing Strategy guidance. This reinforces the requirement for local authorities to set wheelchair accessible housing targets. This will be an important consideration in the development of future Local Housing Strategies, with progress against the targets monitored via the Strategic Housing Investment Plan.

4.6. South Lanarkshire Strategic Commissioning Plan 2019 to 2022

The Resource worked with partners from across the South Lanarkshire Health and Social Care Partnership to contribute to the development of South Lanarkshire's second Strategic Commissioning Plan, covering the period 2019 to 2022.

An integral part of the plan is the 'housing contribution statement' which outlines the ways in which the Resource and its housing and homelessness partners will contribute towards its delivery over the next 3 years. Building upon the close working relationships between the Resource and its health and social care partners, the housing contribution has been embedded throughout the plan, linking specific priorities on health and homelessness.

4.7. South Lanarkshire Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan 2019 to 2024

Following the recommendations of the national Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Action Group (HARSAG) in 2018, the Resource worked with its housing and homelessness partners from across South Lanarkshire to develop a new Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan. A draft of this was submitted to the Scottish Government in December 2018 for review and the finalised plan was approved at Housing and Technical Resources Committee in January 2019.

The plan contains 5 high level priority objectives which are centred around a partnership approach to prevent homelessness and to provide adequate support where homelessness cannot be prevented.

An annual review of the plan will be completed and reported to Housing and Technical Resources Committee, the South Lanarkshire Community Planning Partnership Board and the South Lanarkshire Integrated Joint Board in 2020.

4.8. Syrian Refugee Resettlement programme

During 2018/2019, the Resource continued to support the Syrian Refugee Resettlement Programme. Since commencement of the Programme, in December 2015, a total of 46 families (170 individuals) have been resettled in South Lanarkshire and continue to be supported by Housing and Technical Resources Syrian Refugee Resettlement Team.

4.9. Gypsy/Travellers

During 2018/2019, the Resource continued to work closely with the residents of the 2 Council operated Gypsy/Traveller sites, ensuring they were regularly consulted with on a range of issues which affect them, including rent setting and site investment. Based on engagement with residents, detailed investment master plans were developed for both sites, encompassing a range of improvements which are scheduled to be delivered over the next 3 years.

4.10. Translation and Interpretation Services

The Resource continues to provide a range of translation (written) and interpretation (verbal) services to customers with specific communication requirements, and includes sign language provision. Financial costs for providing these services within 2018/2019 was £5,382. The increase on previous years can be attributed to the increased diversity of the population within South Lanarkshire.

The Syrian Refugee Programme is fully funded by the Home Office and not part of the costs outlined above.

4.11. Consultation, engagement and customer feedback

As part of the Resource's annual consultation programme, officers continued to work closely with a range of equalities groups or stakeholders. These include:-

- ◆ Disability Partnership Housing Sub Group
- ◆ Access Panel
- ◆ Gypsy/Travellers
- ◆ Seniors Together
- ◆ Sheltered tenants
- ◆ Those with lived experience of homelessness
- ◆ Lanarkshire Ethnic Minority Action Group (LEMAG)
- ◆ South Lanarkshire Youth Council
- ◆ Women's Aid

During 2018/2019, these groups and stakeholders were instrumental in shaping development of key, strategic pieces of work, such as the review of the Housing Allocation Policy and the delivery of the third Sheltered Tenants' Festival in October 2018. This was a tenant-led event, co-ordinated by a Central Planning Group consisting of a mix of tenants and officers, attended by 180 sheltered tenants.

4.12. Employee Training and Development

Resource employees participated in a wide range of equality and diversity related training activities during 2018/19. These consisted of a mix of one-off events, classroom-based training and on-line learning activities.

- ◆ International Day Against Homophobia and Transphobia (IDAHOT)
- ◆ Building an Age-Friendly Workplace event
- ◆ Gender-Based Violence
- ◆ Training in Child and Adult Protection
- ◆ Virtual Dementia Experience attended by sheltered housing staff supporting the National Dementia Strategy
- ◆ British Sign Language Levels 1 and 2 and Refresher training

5. Priorities for 2019/2020

5.1. The Resource Equality and Diversity Monitoring Report, aligned to the national Equality Outcomes for 2017 to 2021, will continue to drive progress in relation to mainstreaming equality across Housing and Technical Resources during 2019/2020.

5.2. Key priorities include:-

- ◆ continue to implement equality impact assessments and Fairer Scotland Duty assessments across all new and revised policies and strategies
- ◆ in response to revised Local Housing Strategy guidance, plan for cross tenure wheelchair accessible housing targets to become an integral part of future Local Housing Strategies
- ◆ continue to work with the Health and Social Care Partnership to support the objectives of the Housing Contribution Statement and the wider national health and wellbeing outcomes
- ◆ develop a revised sheltered housing needs assessment with the aim of ensuring that those applicants most in need of the sheltered housing support service are prioritised and implement
- ◆ continue to engage with Gypsy/Travellers on matters which affect the Gypsy/Traveller community and raise awareness of the Gypsy/Traveller culture through continued staff development sessions
- ◆ work with the South Lanarkshire Homelessness Strategy Group and engage with those who have lived experience of homelessness to support the implementation of year 1 of the Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan

5.3. It is intended that the key priorities detailed above will improve services to customers, in particular those of minority or disadvantaged groups.

6. Next steps

6.1. In line with the agreed reporting schedule, an annual update will continue to be reported to Housing and Technical Resources Committee, Parent Joint Consultative Council and Equal Opportunities Forum during 2019/2020.

7. Employee Implications

7.1. There are no employee implications associated with this report.

8. Financial Implications

8.1. There are no financial implications associated with this report.

9. Other Implications (Including Environmental and Risk Issues)

- 9.1. There is a risk to South Lanarkshire Council should the Resource not comply with the relevant equalities duty and legislation.
- 9.2. The content of this report will contribute to the evidence to support the requirements of the Annual Assurance Statement.

10. Equality 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 or formal consultation is required.

Daniel Lowe

Executive Director (Housing and Technical Resources)

23 October 2019

Link(s) to Council Values/Ambitions/Objectives

- ◆ Focused on people and their needs
- ◆ Working with and respecting others
- ◆ Accountable, effective, efficient and transparent
- ◆ Fair, open and sustainable
- ◆ Excellent employer
- ◆ Get it right for children and young people
- ◆ Improve health, care and wellbeing
- ◆ Make communities safer, stronger and sustainable
- ◆ Improve later life
- ◆ Improving the availability, quality and access of housing
- ◆ Protect vulnerable children, young people and adults
- ◆ Deliver better health and social care outcomes for all
- ◆ Support our communities by tackling disadvantage and deprivation and supporting aspiration

Previous References

- ◆ Housing and Technical Resources Committee, 7 March 2018

List of Background Papers

- ◆ The Fairer Scotland Duty – Interim Guidance for Public Bodies (Scottish Government – March 2018)
- ◆ Wheelchair Accessible Housing Target Guidance Note (Scottish Government – March 2019)
- ◆ Local Housing Strategy Guidance (Scottish Government – September 2019)
- ◆ A Fairer Scotland for Disabled People Delivery Plan to 2021 (Scottish Government – December 2016)
- ◆ South Lanarkshire Health and Social Care Partnership Strategic Commissioning Plan 2019-22
- ◆ Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Action Group: Final Recommendations Report (Scottish Government – June 2018)
- ◆ South Lanarkshire Council Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan 2019-2024

Contact for further Information

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

Annette Finnan, Head of Housing Services

Tel: 01698 455611

E-mail: Annette.finnan@southlanarkshire.gov.uk