

# EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES FORUM

Minutes of meeting held via Confero and in the Council Chamber, Council Offices, Almada Street, Hamilton on 30 November 2022

## **Chair:**

Councillor Mo Razzaq

## **Councillors Present:**

Councillors Janine Calikes, Councillor Ross Clark, Councillor Grant Ferguson, Councillor Mark McGeever (Depute), Councillor Kirsten Robb, Councillor Ali Salamati

## **Councillors' Apologies:**

Councillor Poppy Corbett, Councillor Monique McAdams, Councillor Bert Thomson

## **Attending:**

### **Finance and Corporate Resources**

A Bell, Team Leader, Consultation, Organisational Development and Equality; G Bhatti, Employee Development and Diversity Manager; M Carrigan, Administration Assistant; N Docherty, Administration Assistant; K McVeigh, Head of Personnel Services; S Somerville, Administration Manager

### **Social Work Resources**

D Dobbie, Service Manager (Children and Justice); M Kane, Service Development Manager; C Stewart, Planning and Performance Manager

## **Also Attending:**

K Irvine, Action for Children; N Sheach, Dartington; K Wallace, Unite the Union

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## **1 Declaration of Interests**

No interests were declared.

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## **2 Minutes of Previous Meeting**

The minutes of the meeting of the Equal Opportunities Forum held on 21 September 2022 were submitted for approval as a correct record.

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

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## **3 Annual Report on Mainstreaming Equalities and Diversity – Social Work Resources**

A report dated 1 November 2022 by the Director, Health and Social Care was submitted on work being undertaken by Social Work Resources to meet the commitments of the Council's Equal Opportunities Policy and related statutory duties.

The Council Plan 2022 to 2027, Connect, set out the Council's objective to deliver a range of outcomes for the benefit of everyone in South Lanarkshire. There were 6 outcomes, with Social Work Resources focusing mainly on the following 3:-

- ◆ Health and Wellbeing
- ◆ Children and Young People
- ◆ Communities and Environment

The COVID-19 pandemic brought unprecedented challenges. It impacted on the most vulnerable and placed significant pressure on the Council's wider partners and workforce. At the height of the pandemic, critical investment had been placed in front line staffing, while business continuity plans were established to ensure that public protection remained a priority.

Despite the return of services through the council's Recovery Plan, there remained a residual impact. A significant build-up of demand, coupled with a national shortage of skilled workforce across all sectors, had resulted in recruitment and retention challenges within social care.

Social Work Resources participated in the Council's Equality and Diversity Working Group and, along with other Resources, had developed equality outcomes that met the general duty as set out in the Equality Act 2010 as follows:-

- ◆ to eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation of people who became involved in the justice system
- ◆ to advance equality of opportunity
- ◆ to foster good relations in all the work we do

Progress in meeting the Council's 5 identified equality outcomes was detailed at Section 5 of the report.

Over the course of 2021/2022, the Resource carried out Equality Impact Assessments, which included 6 that related to the Council's policies and plans, as detailed in paragraph 6.2 of the report.

Officers responded to members' questions on various aspects of the report.

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

*[Reference: Minutes of 16 June 2021 (Paragraph 3)]*

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## **4 Inclusion as Prevention**

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A presentation was given on Inclusion and Prevention by the following:-

- ◆ D Dobbie, Service Manager (Children and Justice), Social Work Resources
- ◆ N Sheach, Dartington
- ◆ K Irvine, Action for Children

Inclusion and Prevention was a system change initiative aimed at preventing the criminalisation of young people.

The presentation highlighted the following:-

- ◆ The 'Inclusion as Prevention' Approach
  - ◆ a 5 year system change initiative funded by National Lottery Community Fund
- ◆ Tests of Change
  - ◆ adopt, adapt or abandon
- ◆ Animation Showcase – Grief and Loss
- ◆ Aspirations and Legacy
  - ◆ wider impact
  - ◆ sustainability
  - ◆ evaluation

D Dobbie, N Sheach and K Irvine, having responded to members' questions, were thanked for their informative presentation.

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

*In terms of Standing Order No 14, the meeting was adjourned at 3.00pm and reconvened at 3.07pm*

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## **5 Forward Programme for the Equal Opportunities Forum**

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A verbal update by G Bhatti, Employee Development and Diversity Manager (Finance and Corporate Resources) was given on the proposed broad structure of future forum meetings which included suggestions put forward by Forum members. In terms of visits to places of worship, those would be organised in small groups outwith the meetings' schedule.

Each individual meeting would focus on a specific Resource.

Following discussion, it was agreed that the matter raised in terms of British Sign Language (BSL) be considered at the next meeting of the Forum.

The Chair highlighted potential future events, such as Pride week and one involving religious groups.

G Bhatti responded to members' questions.

**The Forum decided:**

- (1) that the verbal update be noted; and
- (2) that the matter raised in terms of BSL be considered at the next meeting of the Forum.

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## **6 Urgent Business**

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There were no items of urgent business.