

Report

Report to:	Equal Opportunities Forum
Date of Meeting:	21 August 2019
Report by:	Executive Director (Finance Corporate Resources)

Subject:	Annual Report on Mainstreaming Equalities and Diversity – Finance and Corporate Resources
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1. Purpose of Report

1.1. The purpose of the report is to:-

- ♦ advise the Equal Opportunities Forum of the strategic and operational work being undertaken and planned by Finance and Corporate Resources to meet the commitments within 'South Lanarkshire Working for You' Mainstreaming Equalities Report 2017 to 2021

2. Recommendation(s)

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

- (1) that the work being undertaken by Finance and Corporate Resources in terms of mainstreaming equalities be noted.

3. Background

- 3.1. The Executive Director (Finance and Corporate Resources) is responsible for supporting and developing strategies to meet the Council's commitment and statutory duties on equality and diversity, both within the Resource and Council wide. This is in the Council's role both as an employer and as a provider of services. This is a complex area of work that has increased greatly in recent years.
- 3.2. The Public Sector Specific Duties, as previously reported to the Forum outline the key responsibilities for public bodies and include statutory requirements to report against equality outcomes and to continue to evidence that decisions relating to policy and practice are properly assessed against the general duties of eliminating, advancing and fostering.
- 3.3. The first four year cycle for the Specific Duties ended in April 2017, The Scottish Government and the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) have reviewed the impact the Duties are having on improving the delivery of services and employment practices. The outcome of this review is expected to be published in Autumn 2019 and may be the catalyst for changes to the requirements of the Duty.

4. Resource and Service Planning

- 4.1. The Resource plan identifies the Resource's corporate responsibility with regard to equalities and diversity as a headline priority. Objectives noted are:-
- ♦ taking effective action on equality by identifying where individuals' needs are not being met

- ◆ making the right decisions, first time around through effective consultation and engagement and carrying out impact assessments
- ◆ developing better policies and practices based on evidence available locally and nationally
- ◆ being more transparent, accessible and accountable
- ◆ delivering improved outcomes for all by understanding the needs of the individuals

4.2. Officers from the Resource provide both lead and support roles for a number of equality related working groups, networks and forums including:-

- ◆ the Corporate Equality and Diversity Working Group and any of its short life groups, e.g. on equality impact assessments
- ◆ the network of Resource Diversity Liaison Officers who monitor recruitment and provide advice to managers on equality issues in employment and the employee forums
- ◆ the co-ordination of the Employee Networks – Caring, Disability, Ethnicity and LGBT Matters
- ◆ Seniors Together in South Lanarkshire and the Older People's Assembly
- ◆ partnership working arrangements with other public agencies and the voluntary sector e.g. the Diversity Monitoring Group (DMG), the South Lanarkshire Disability Partnership (incorporating the South Lanarkshire Access Panel) and the Lanarkshire Ethnic Minority Action Group (LEMAG)
- ◆ the Community Engagement Co-ordination Group which is a partner wide group
- ◆ performance improvement through continued achievement of external standards such as Investors in People (IIP) and Customer Service Excellence (CSE)

5. Mainstreaming Equalities

5.1. The Council meets its statutory duties by ensuring that equality and diversity issues are effectively “mainstreamed” and built into its strategic planning and performance monitoring.

5.2. In our strategy we indicated that this can be achieved by:-

- ◆ carrying out a process of “impact assessment” for any new policy/practice or change to policy/practice which is relevant to the duty to promote equality and eliminate discrimination or harassment. Our online toolkit has facilitated 790 assessments
- ◆ requiring each Resource to identify how it will mainstream equalities and its commitments in this area in its Resource/Service plan. This can be evidenced through Resources having equalities as a standing item on the agenda of Resource/Senior Management Team meetings and JCCs. It is further evidenced through their annual reporting to this Forum and in the updates they provided as part of the 2019 mainstreaming equalities progress report

5.3. Whilst leading on the mainstreaming framework for the Council, the Resource has also addressed its own mainstreaming issues within its service areas. A brief overview of some of this work is provided below:-

5.3.1. Administration and Legal Services

In addition to its support to Elected Members and the Council's decision making process, Administration and Legal Services has responsibility for administering the electoral process and the provision of grants to community groups and voluntary organisations. Some specific developments in the past year have been:

- ♦ awareness raising regarding access to democracy through delivery of how to vote sessions for European Parliamentary elections to employees who attend the Network and also to members of the public who come along to partnership meetings, e.g. the Access Panel, Seniors Together and the South Lanarkshire Disability Partnership

5.3.2. The service provides ongoing and regular legal advice and briefing sessions for officers across the Council in relation to employment and service delivery matters. Since January 2016 the Licensing and Registration service has made disability awareness training mandatory for all new taxi licence applications and this training is ongoing. Recently the frequency of the training has increased with delivery taking place on a monthly basis instead of the previous quarterly basis. The training now covers anyone applying for, or renewing, a taxi licence (private hire or taxi).

5.3.3 The training is well received and the drivers leave the session with knowledge that they feel will help them make a difference to the way they treat customers with disabilities.

5.3.4 **Communications and Strategy**

Promotes our commitment to equality and diversity externally and internally. It provides access to information on Council services, oversees the co-ordination of Resource and Service Planning and takes the lead role in promoting the work of the Council through the media, the design of publicity material and the development of the Council website. This is a vital area of equality and diversity work. The Council's commitment to equality has to be communicated effectively both to employees and members of the community. Some examples of its contribution to the equality and diversity strategy in last year have been:-

- ♦ Resource planning guidance has specific reference to equalities and reinforces commitment for Resources to consider equalities issues within their planning process
- ♦ a continued approach to improving the accessibility of the Council's website and complying with new legislation and industry accessibility standards. Accessibility is tested using online tools as well as citizens and the website has an application which reads out text for those with visual impairments or for those whose first language is not English. The service develops new forms and content with the customer in mind and tests early with members of our community, including those with disabilities

5.3.5 **Consultation, Involvement and Engagement**

These are key aspects to the impact assessment process which Resources undertake on all existing and new strategy, policy and procedure development. Finance and Corporate Resources has led the way in improving the ways in which Resources consult and engage with the South Lanarkshire community. The KETSO toolkit, a hands-on kit for creative engagement, has continued to provide an innovative way of engaging community members who may be reluctant to speak at events, but who have valuable comment to make. The tool has proven to be very useful with a wide range of groups including the Community Links, Social Work Resources service users and tenants groups in engaging people on topics that affect them and their daily lives. It has also been used to good effect with staff groups in developing policy and practice.

6. **Partnerships**

6.1. The Resource supports a number of partnerships including:

6.2. **Seniors Together in South Lanarkshire**

Which works as a multi-agency partnership that involves people aged 50+ from the local community in meaningful engagement to enable them to influence the policy and service provision of partner agencies. In addition to a steering committee and a number of thematic task groups, the project delivers an Older People's Assembly on behalf of South Lanarkshire Council. This takes place four times each year in the key localities of South Lanarkshire and is chaired by the spokesperson for older people. Activities of note have included:-

- ◆ **Men's Shed Development and Mobile Men's Shed Project** – Seniors Together is the lead agency for the support and development of men's sheds in South Lanarkshire. With recent funding from the Big Lottery, a Mobile Men's Shed Project is being delivered to assist in reducing loneliness and isolation in older men. Further support is provided to assist local communities to develop their own static sheds and ongoing support is provided to those sheds currently up and running in South Lanarkshire. To date a further seven sheds have been supported to set up since the Men's shed development worker took up post a year ago
- ◆ **Active Days programme** - has now developed into eight different days throughout the South Lanarkshire area, the most recent addition being in Blackwood. A positive Ageing Event is being arranged for 23 August 2019 where all active days participants will come together to share and exchange information on activities to improve health and wellbeing and to undertake group sessions in physical activity and cultural activities. The aim of this day is to encourage all the current active days to consider expanding their activities and the number of days available so that a good health and wellbeing provision is available for retired people throughout the communities of South Lanarkshire. Everyone engaged in this programme will have the opportunity to attend an older people's assembly in their locality as part of the support and engagement with older people as a community of interest group.
- ◆ the development of the Hearing Aid batteries collection scheme which has been launched in all South Lanarkshire libraries
- ◆ Seniors Together has been working with older people in South Lanarkshire to look to develop community foot care projects which will prevent falls and isolation in later life. NHS no longer provide nail cutting or general foot care to older people which has resulted in them paying approximately £25 a session for a Podiatrist. Through joint working with NHS Lanarkshire a proposal has been developed to introduce a test case in one of the rural areas in South Lanarkshire. NHS staff will train volunteers to undertake nail cutting and foot care. This proposal is based on a very successful project which is delivered in another health board area.

6.3. **South Lanarkshire Disability Partnership (incorporating the South Lanarkshire Access Panel)**

A user led partnership that brings together the Council, NHS Lanarkshire, Police Scotland, Scottish Fire and Rescue Service and other local agencies with representatives from the voluntary sector. The objective of the group is to improve communication between the organisations and the community and to give people with disabilities an opportunity to influence policy and service provision. A number of specialist sub-groups exist to discuss specific issues relating to planning/building control and access issues, housing, health and licensing of taxis.

During 2017/18 the partnership have:-

- ◆ participated in the development of council policies
- ◆ continued to discuss and put forward suggestions in relation to major planning applications
- ◆ contributed to the development of the Lanarkshire shared British Sign Language (BSL) plan

6.4. Diversity Monitoring Group (DMG)

The partnership work of the group continues to ensure that matters surrounding harassment and discrimination within the community are being dealt with fairly and that work is ongoing to reduce the incidences of hate crime.

7. Performance Measurement

7.1. Improvements to capture equalities related data on service provision are ongoing and, as mentioned above, the use of online technologies for consultation and the impact assessment process are driving these changes forward. Some of the progress in the past year has been:-

- ◆ successful maintenance of the “Customer Service Excellence” standard in 2018
- ◆ supporting the members on this Forum with regular reports and updates on changes to legislation and its implications for the Council as well as co-ordinating the programme of Resource annual reports
- ◆ supporting the work of the Council through:-
- ◆ the employee development process and training programmes including the vocational development programme
- ◆ development of a new learn online course - transgender awareness
- ◆ partnership working with Trade Unions to deliver a mental health and wellbeing awareness session

8. Employment

8.1. Personnel Services

The Council depends on the competence and commitment of its employees to deliver its services and has always aimed to be an “employer of choice”. This has been underpinned by the partnership working agreement with the trade unions and JTUC members make a valuable and important contribution to the corporate equality and diversity working group. The Council’s employment strategies and approach to joint working are consistently recognised externally.

8.2. Equal pay is a constant focus of attention and at all times the Resource is working in the best interests of the Council to ensure that we have a fair and equitable pay structure and evaluation scheme.

8.3. With regard to our Statutory Performance Indicator’s in relation to the percentage of women coming in the top 5% of salaries, women now make up 48.8% of our employees in this range.

9. Employee Development and Vocational Training Programmes:

A commitment to promoting equality of opportunity is a core competence for all employees. Equality and diversity issues are included in all training and development activities from induction and corporate policy courses, to management development

programmes. This is in addition to equality specific training on disability, impact assessment, Deaf Awareness and British Sign Language.

- 9.1. When recruiting for Vocational training programme including, the Modern Apprenticeship programme, we include positive about disability messages in all adverts. Any participants who fall into the "Looked After Care Leavers" are tracked to ensure positive destinations following the programme. Skills Development Scotland (SDS) now offer enhanced funding for care leavers and people with disabilities and/or health issues and/or learning disabilities.
- 9.2. South Lanarkshire Council's Supported Employment Team delivers four employability programmes supporting young people with significant additional support needs and or communication disorders such as autism. Two of the programmes work with young people in their transition from school to employment, education or training with an aftercare support for 1 year to sustain these destinations. Post school we offer employability training and support in to paid employment through a one year employer-led internship model at Hairmyres Hospital called Project SEARCH with various partners – NHS Lanarkshire, New College Lanarkshire and ISS Facilities Management. The team also delivers a two year course run in partnership with New College Lanarkshire at The Coalyard Tearoom and Laundry based in Larkhall and in community cafes. This provides participants with the opportunity to gain experience, skills and many qualifications with the aim of gaining paid employment.

10. Communication/Support

- 10.1. An ongoing area of work is to raise awareness of the Council's equality commitment both internally to employees as well as to the community. The Network, has continued to see a core number of people attending across the four themes of Caring, Disability, Ethnicity and LGBT Matters. The aim continues to be that each of the four themes can be attended by any employee and that the Network is there to not only provide support to individuals but also to influence the work of the Council.
- 10.2. The Council is committed to promoting its values externally. This is shown through its continued support for a range of voluntary organisations such as Lanarkshire Ethnic Minority Action Group (LEMAG), projects such as Seniors Together and partnership working arrangements such as the DMG, the Disability Partnership and the South Lanarkshire Access Panel. Work with these organisations to raise public awareness of equality issues will continue and their support in developing our equality outcomes now and in the future is key to the success the council will have in improving the quality of life of everyone in South Lanarkshire.

11. Finance and Information Technology Services

- 11.1. IT provides a critical support function to all Resources of the Council as the single provider of Information and Communications Technology (ICT).
- 11.2. Finance Services conducted its annual budget consultation exercise to engage with a wide variety of community members and representative groups. This included the South Lanarkshire Youth Council, employee forums, Disability Partnership and Access Panel, as well as Seniors Together and the Citizens Panel. Attendance at the sessions show continued support for the approach and methods the Council is using to make savings as well as support for the Council's revised priorities.

12. Action Plan

- 12.1. During 2019 the Council will continue to develop its partnership working to ensure that good practice in the area of equalities is shared and, to ensure that we share a similar vision in relation to the Equality Act and the Scottish specific duties.

12.2 Other actions will include working towards achieving the actions contained in the British Sign Language (BSL) Plan. The action plan will be co-ordinated with North Lanarkshire Council and NHS Lanarkshire and include input from the D/deaf and Deaf/blind community of Lanarkshire. Links will also be made to the SeeHear strategy action plan.

12.3 The second Gaelic Language plan will also be progressed this year as required by Gaelic Language (Scotland) Act 2005.

13. Employee Implications

13.1. As outlined in the report, the Equal Opportunities Policy and accompanying legislation has implications for the Council as an employer and work here is reflected in the Council's employment and training strategies as described above.

14. Financial Implications

14.1. As equalities considerations are being "mainstreamed", they will be contained within existing resources. This position will be reviewed on an ongoing basis as the Resource Action Plan is developed.

15. Other Implications

15.1. The risk to the Council is that if the Resource does not have due regard to the Public Sector Equality Duty it may lead to non-compliance with equalities legislation. The consequence of this could be an unlimited financial penalty.

15.2 There are no sustainable development issues with this report.

16. Equality Impact Assessment and Consultation Arrangements

16.1. 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.

Paul Manning

Executive Director (Finance and Corporate Resources)

22 July 2019

Link(s) to Council Values/Ambitions/Objectives

- ◆ Fair, open and sustainable
- ◆ Focused on people and their needs
- ◆ Working with and respecting others
- ◆ Excellent employer
- ◆ Accountable, effective, efficient and transparent
- ◆ Ambitious, self aware and improving

Previous References

- ◆ 9 May 2018

List of Background Papers

- ◆ None

Contact for Further Information

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

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