

EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES FORUM

Minutes of meeting held via Microsoft Teams on 11 November 2020

Chair:

Councillor Bert Thomson

Councillors Present:

Councillor Janine Calikes, Councillor Maureen Devlin, Councillor Mary Donnelly, Councillor Eric Holford, Councillor Katy Loudon, Councillor Jim McGuigan

Councillors' Apologies:

Councillor Ann Le Blond, Councillor Martin Lennon, Councillor Joe Lowe

Attending:

Finance and Corporate Resources

A Bell, Personnel Officer; G Bhatti, Employee Development and Diversity Manager; E A McGonigle, Administration Officer; K McVeigh, Head of Personnel Services, C Mitchell, Information Officer; L Paterson, Administration Adviser; L Wyllie, Administration Assistant

Also Attending:

J Clark, Unite the Union

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 2 September 2020 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 – Finance and Corporate Resources

A report dated 14 October 2020 by the Executive Director (Finance and Corporate Resources) was submitted on work being undertaken by Finance and Corporate Resources to meet the commitments of the "South Lanarkshire Working for You" Mainstreaming Equalities Report 2017 to 2021.

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

- ♦ Resource and Service planning
- ♦ COVID-19 impacts
- ♦ mainstreaming equalities
- ♦ communications and strategy
- ♦ consultation, involvement and engagement
- ♦ Seniors' Together in South Lanarkshire
- ♦ South Lanarkshire Disability Partnership
- ♦ Diversity Monitoring Group
- ♦ performance measurement

- ◆ employment
- ◆ employee development and vocational training programmes
- ◆ communications/support

Councillor Holford advised of his concern in relation to delays in the completion of OT assessments for adaptations etc. He also asked, in terms of recruitment, if there was any follow-up work undertaken with unsuccessful disabled applicants. In response, the Employee Development and Diversity Manager confirmed that she would obtain information regarding the delay in OT assessments. In relation to unsuccessful disabled applicants, although there was no follow up at present, there was no reason that this could not be taken forward.

The Chair referred to the ongoing work in terms of the British Sign Language (BSL) Plan. He considered that it would be beneficial for Forum members to hear the views of deaf/blind members of the community on their experience with communicating with the Council and accessibility of the Council's website.

The Chair, on behalf of the Forum members, welcomed the report and expressed appreciation of the work and activities being undertaken by Finance and Corporate Resources to take forward the Council's commitment to mainstreaming equality and diversity in strategic planning and performance. He asked that this be communicated to all staff working in this area.

The Forum decided:

- (1) that the report be noted; and
- (2) that arrangements be made to invite a representative(s) from the deaf/blind community to a future meeting to discuss their experience of communicating with the Council and accessibility of the Council's website.

[Reference: Minutes of 21 August 2019 (Paragraph 3)]

Councillor McGuigan left the meeting during this item of business

4 Making the Council's Website Inclusive

C Mitchell, Information Officer, Finance and Corporate Resources gave a presentation on Making the Council's Website Inclusive.

The presentation provided detailed information on the following key areas:-

- ◆ the Council's customers
- ◆ Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG 2.1)
- ◆ criteria in terms of accessibility and useability
- ◆ use of language and plain English
- ◆ the website's audiences
- ◆ finding the right tone and voice
- ◆ future plans
- ◆ the requirement for an Accessibility Statement

Discussion took place in relation to:-

- ◆ improvements which could be made to the search facility on the Council's website
- ◆ online forms and separate platforms used by CMIS and the Licensing and Registration Service
- ◆ the existing format of Council Committee reports and the possibility of those being in an "easy read" format

Having responded to members' questions, the officer was thanked for her informative presentation.

The Forum decided: that the presentation be noted.

5 Urgent Business

There were no items of urgent business.