

# EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES FORUM

Minutes of meeting held via Confero and in the Council Chamber, Council Offices, Almada Street, Hamilton on 29 March 2023

## **Chair:**

Councillor Mo Razzaq

## **Councillors Present:**

Councillor Ross Clark, Councillor Poppy Corbett, Councillor Grant Ferguson, Councillor Mark McGeever (Depute), Councillor Kirsten Robb, Councillor Bert Thomson

## **Councillors' Apologies:**

Councillor Janine Calikes, Councillor Monique McAdams, Councillor Dr Ali Salamati

## **Councillor Also Present:**

Councillor Richard Lockhart

## **Attending:**

### **Community and Enterprise Resources**

A Brown, Head of Enterprise and Sustainable Development; G Forrest, Support Team Leader; S Laird, Engineering Manager – Transportation Engineering

### **Finance and Corporate Resources**

A Bell, Team Leader, Consultation, Organisational Development and Equality; K McLeod, Administration Assistant; E-A McGonigle, Administration Officer; K McVeigh, Head of Personnel Services

## **Also Attending:**

M Kennedy, NASUWT; 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 30 November 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 – Community and Enterprise Resources**

A report dated 14 March 2023 by the Executive Director (Community and Enterprise Resources) was submitted on work being undertaken by Community and Enterprise Resources to meet the commitments of the Council's Equal Opportunities Policy and related statutory duties.

The Council had published its "Mainstreaming equalities progress report 2019 to 2021" and "Mainstreaming equalities report 2021 to 2025" in April 2021. The new Equality Outcomes set for 2021 to 2025 would focus on actions to produce results intended to achieve specific and identifiable improvements in people's life chances. The Resource would lead on Equality Outcome 2:-

- ◆ 'Older people, those from vulnerable groups and individuals who live alone are protected from scams and nuisance calls and their wellbeing is improved through increased awareness and preventative action'

This Outcome would be progressed by Environmental Services' Consumer and Trading Standards Services and details were attached at Appendix 1 (items 8 and 9) to the report.

The Resource continued to build on progress and remained committed to embedding equalities across all aspects of service provision. The equality activity of the Resource was aligned to, and reported against, the following 6 Council plan "Connect" outcomes:-

- ◆ caring, connected, sustainable communities
- ◆ inspiring learners, transforming learning, strengthening partnerships
- ◆ people live the healthiest lives possible
- ◆ our children and young people thrive
- ◆ good quality, suitable and sustainable places to live
- ◆ thriving business, fair jobs and vibrant town centres

Progress of activity and details of the differences each had made was detailed at Appendix 1 to the report.

The report detailed strategic and operational activities that had been undertaken or planned by the Resource in relation to the following:-

- ◆ the Comfort Scheme Pilot in Lanark
- ◆ the Open Space Strategy (OSS)
- ◆ employment and training
  - ◆ recruitment
  - ◆ training and development
  - ◆ supporting employees
- ◆ access to information
- ◆ consultation, involvement and engagement

Community and Enterprise Resources had an in-house Equal Opportunities Working Group and the Chair of that Group participated in the Council's Equality and Diversity Working Group. Over the course of 2022, the Resource carried out 2 Equality Impact Assessments (EQIAs), as detailed in paragraph 4.2 of the report.

Details were provided on next steps and priorities for the Resource over the next year which included:-

- ◆ continuing to promote and facilitate equality in all areas of service delivery
- ◆ ensuring effective input to the Corporate Equality Outcomes
- ◆ continuing to implement the process of equality impact assessment across all new and revised policy areas
- ◆ continuing the commitment to staff training and development in relation to equality and diversity issues
- ◆ continuing the project management and delivery of projects assisting in providing improved facilities for disabled people and ensuring compliance with Equality Act Legislation

Officers responded to members' questions on various aspects of the report and, where information was not immediately available, undertook to provide this to the relevant members.

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

*[Reference: Minutes of 15 September 2021 (Paragraph 5)]*

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## 4 Transport Network Accessibility

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S Laird, Engineering Manager, Community and Enterprise Resources gave a presentation on transport network accessibility.

Officers in Roads, Transportation and Fleet Services considered numerous design documents when creating and maintaining an accessible transport network. Those documents included:-

- ◆ Design Manual for Roads and Bridges
- ◆ Cycling by Design
- ◆ Inclusive Mobility: A Guide to Best Practice on Access to Pedestrian and Transport Infrastructure

Many of the documents had been produced by regulatory bodies, such as the Department for Transport, and publication had followed significant investigations and assessments so that the accessibility needs of all people were met in accordance with the Equality Act 2010.

The presentation provided detailed information on the following areas:-

- ◆ footways, footpaths and pedestrian crossing facilities
- ◆ tactile paving surfaces
- ◆ cycle facilities accessible to all
- ◆ bus stops
- ◆ traffic signal controlled junctions/pedestrian crossings

The measures described had been implemented in projects over several years and improvements had been made to the accessibility of the transport network to disabled people. Public engagement exercises provided opportunities to identify network issues and also allowed for opportunities to comment on concept and detailed designs. Accessibility features and measures remained an integral part of the design process for all new projects.

Having responded to members' questions, S Laird was thanked for his informative presentation.

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

*In terms of Standing Order No 14, the meeting was adjourned at 2.58pm and reconvened at 3.03pm*

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## 5 British Sign Language Update

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A verbal update by A Bell, Team Leader, Consultation, Organisational Development and Equality (Finance and Corporate Resources) was given on British Sign Language (BSL) in response to a matter raised at the previous meeting of the Forum.

A meeting had taken place with Education Resources which had highlighted that:-

- ◆ Calderside Academy currently offered a BSL qualification to Deaf and additional support needs (ASN) pupils and that:-
  - ◆ this qualification would be made available as part of the curriculum choice for all pupils in 2024
  - ◆ a 6 week taster course was also being provided to S1 and S2 pupils
- ◆ Hamilton School for the Deaf offered classes for parents and friends of Deaf pupils
- ◆ there was a commitment to extend the opportunity for primary school pupils to learn BSL and there would be learning from the Calderside Academy delivery of the Vocational Qualification (VQ) with a view to extending that

- ◆ Education Resources would bring a report to the Forum meeting on 14 June 2023 outlining what was happening in schools in relation to BSL

In terms of the workforce, the Council offered BSL, as a personal development choice, to employees interested in an accredited course. This included Modern Apprenticeships and there had been a recent taster session involving 12 modern apprentices.

The Team Leader, Consultation, Organisational Development and Equality responded to members' questions in relation to the following:-

- ◆ whether it would be possible to extend the offer of BSL training to elected members
- ◆ the current arrangements in Registration Services for the Deaf community
- ◆ the type of accreditation offered by the Council and progression opportunities for those members of staff who had completed accredited courses
- ◆ the use of technology, such as speech to text

A Bell was thanked for her informative update.

**The Forum decided:**

- (1) that the verbal update be noted; and
- (2) that all elected members be contacted to establish if there would be an interest in either a taster or accredited course in BSL.

*In terms of Standing Order No 14, the meeting was adjourned at 3.11pm and reconvened at 3.16pm*

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## **6 Urgent Business**

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There were no items of urgent business.