

EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES FORUM

Minutes of meeting held in Committee Room 5, Council Offices, Almada Street, Hamilton on 8 December 2009

Chair:

Councillor Denis McKenna

Councillors Present:

Eileen Baxendale, James Malloy, John Murray, Jim Wardhaugh, Sheena Wardhaugh

Councillors' Apologies:

Jim Handibode, Joe Lowe, Lesley McDonald

Attending:**Community Resources**

S Nixon, Business Manager; L Rhind, Personnel Manager

Corporate Resources

R McIlwain, Executive Director; M Armstrong, Administration Officer; G Bhatti, Employee Development and Diversity Manager; C Calder, Project Manager, Seniors Together in South Lanarkshire; S Cameron, Diversity Adviser (Equalities); S McLeod, Administration Officer; K McVeigh, Head of Personnel Services

Social Work Resources

B Hutchinson, Personnel Services Manager

1 Declaration of Interests

No interests were declared.

2 Single Equality Scheme

A report dated 3 November 2009 by the Executive Director (Corporate Resources) was submitted on the proposed new Single Equality Scheme 2009 to 2012 entitled "South Lanarkshire Working for You".

The Single Equality Scheme brought together the Council's existing schemes covering race, gender and disability, set out the Council's commitment to the current public sector duties and also extended the scope to cover proposed new equality duties. The Scheme was attached as an appendix to the report and included an action plan which would allow the specific actions identified to be monitored and reviewed on an annual basis to ensure that satisfactory progress was being achieved.

Arrangements would be put in place to ensure that the Single Equality Scheme was effectively communicated to employees by way of a core brief.

The Forum decided:

that the Single Equality Scheme "South Lanarkshire Working for You" and the associated action plan be endorsed and submitted to the Executive Committee for approval.

3 Impact Assessment Update

A report dated 26 November 2009 by the Executive Director (Corporate Resources) was submitted on progress made in undertaking equality and human rights impact assessments.

By November 2009, the Council had met its commitment to assess retrospectively 289 strategies, functions and policies and those assessments had been published on the Council's website. A further 119 assessments were in the system awaiting approval with the majority of those relating to the 2010/2011 financial savings proposals.

Of the assessments carried out, 70% had concluded that there was no adverse impact on any part of the community or workforce covered by equalities legislation. 30% of the assessments had concluded that there was, or might be, an adverse impact and action plans had been put in place to either gather more relevant information or to make appropriate changes to the strategy, policy or function.

The Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) had invited tenders for the examination of local authority funding decisions in Scotland relating to the 3 public sector equality duties. This would involve a retrospective analysis of the extent to which local authorities had considered their race, disability and gender equality duties when making particular funding decisions in the financial years 2006/2007 to 2008/2009.

In light of guidance which had been provided by the EHRC, work had been undertaken to review impact assessments to ensure that all assessments had provided a clear basis for decision making and had been realistic in assessing impact upon equality groups.

The Forum decided: that the report be noted.

4 Equal Opportunities Monitoring

A report dated 5 November 2009 by the Executive Director (Corporate Resources) was submitted on changes to the Equal Opportunities Monitoring Form and service monitoring procedures.

The Equality Bill, expected to come into force in April 2011, would extend the general duties placed on public bodies and would require the Council to properly monitor and assess strategies, policies and functions in this regard.

A number of concerns had been identified during the 2007 Government Equalities Review on the way data on inequality was collected and used. The General Register Office for Scotland had begun to address the issue of inaccurate information and had published Scotland's new Official Ethnicity Classification. In addition, the possibility of including a question about an individual's sexual orientation in the 2011 Census was being considered.

The Council's Equal Opportunities Monitoring Form had, therefore, been amended to ensure that equalities monitoring requirements would be met. The revised form, attached as an appendix to the report, included questions relating to sexual orientation, gender identity and religion/belief as well as more detailed questions relating to disability.

The revised form would ensure that relevant information was gathered consistently across Resources. This would provide clear monitoring statistics for both the Council workforce and the community and, consequently, allow areas for improvement in both employment practice and service delivery to be identified.

The Forum decided: that the report be noted.

5 Review and Relaunch of Better Government for Older People

A report dated 5 November 2009 by the Executive Director (Corporate Resources) was submitted on the review of the Better Government for Older People project and its relaunch as Seniors Together in South Lanarkshire.

In May 2008, the Minister for Pensions Reform announced that John Elbourne, an independent consultant, had been asked to examine the arrangements for the engagement of older people and the ability of those arrangements to inform policy and actions of Government at all levels. This included a review of Better Government for Older People. The Elbourne Report had been published in November 2008 and included a number of key recommendations.

The Government's response to the Elbourne Report had been published in February 2009 and confirmed the new framework for Government engagement with older people which included the development of regional advisory groups.

South Lanarkshire's Better Government for Older People had considered the Government's response and an external evaluation of the project had been carried out. As a result, a new strategic plan had been developed and the project had been renamed "Seniors Together in South Lanarkshire" with effect from 4 December 2009.

It was intended that the project would link with the new regional advisory groups when they were formed.

The Forum decided: that the report be noted.

6 Annual Report on Mainstreaming Equalities and Diversity - Community Resources

A report dated 24 November 2009 by the Executive Director (Community Resources) was submitted on the work being undertaken by Community Resources to meet the commitments of the Council's Equal Opportunities Policy and related statutory duties.

The Personnel Manager highlighted the following areas covered within the report:-

- ◆ equality impact assessments
- ◆ employment
- ◆ training and development
- ◆ delivering services
- ◆ areas for improvement

The Business Manager gave a presentation on the Eddlewood Training Academy which provided catering training to unemployed people.

The Forum decided: that the report be noted.

7 Urgent Business

There were no items of urgent business.