

Report

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Report to:	Corporate Resources Committee
Date of Meeting:	15 February 2012
Report by:	Executive Director (Finance Corporate Resources)

Subject:	Annual Report on Mainstreaming Equalities and Diversity
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1. Purpose of Report

1.1. The purpose of the report is to:-

- ◆ advise Committee of the strategic and operational work being undertaken and planned to meet the commitments in the Council's Single Equality Scheme and Equality and Diversity Strategy

2. Recommendation(s)

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

- (1) that the content of the report 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. The Equality Act 2010 which came into force in October 2010 simplifies the responsibilities of public bodies by reducing levels of bureaucracy. However, the Act increases the number of protected characteristics and, therefore, there is a great deal of work required to ensure that we both know and understand the make up of our community and workforce.

3.2. In 2009, the Council produced its first Single Equality Scheme to replace the existing race, disability and gender schemes. The purpose was to ensure that when equalities matters are being considered that all areas covered by previous legislation, and those now covered by the Equality Act, are properly accounted for. The Scheme will be updated in 2012 to incorporate the new public sector specific duties that are to be introduced in April 2012. The specific duties will outline the key responsibilities for public bodies and will include statutory requirements to report against equality objectives and to evidence that decisions relating to policy and practice have been appropriately assessed.

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:-

- ◆ Number of impact assessments carried out against those timetabled
- ◆ Development of a Single Equality Scheme

- ◆ Increase in number of women / men taking up employment in non traditional roles

4.2. Officers from the Resource provide both the 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 assessment
- ◆ the network of Resource Diversity Liaison Officers who monitor recruitment and provide advice to managers on equality issues in employment and the employee Committees
- ◆ 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) formerly MARIM, the Disability Partnership and the Lanarkshire Ethnic Minority Action Group (Lemag)
- ◆ the Corporate Consultation Working Group
- ◆ the Scottish Councils Equalities Network
- ◆ the compilation of the annual report to Audit Scotland on the statutory performance indicator on accessible public buildings
- ◆ the performance improvement through continued achievement of external standards such as Investors in People (IIP) and Chartermark

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 would 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 over 500 assessments and is being updated to ensure that the work done on these is carried through to Resource and service level plans
- ◆ requiring each Resource to identify how it will tackle the mainstreaming of equalities and its commitments in this area in its service plan. This has been done and Resources now have equalities as a standing item on the agendas of Resource senior management team meetings and JCCs. They also submit an annual equalities report to the Equal Opportunities Forum

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

- ◆ Nip and Tuc website which provides access to a wide range of small area socio-economic information has been developed to meet the relevant accessibility standards

- ◆ Reference to equalities within Resource planning guidance has been reviewed and reinforces commitment for Resources to consider equalities issues within their Resource planning processes
- ◆ Equalities impact assessments have been carried out/are being carried out on a number of key policy areas, e.g. Single Outcome Agreement
- ◆ Facility for text / speak on Councillors and Committees web pages which provides access to committee reports and agendas to those with a visual impairment

5.3.2. **Corporate Communications and Public Affairs:** promotes our commitment to equality and diversity externally and internally. It provides access to information on Council services 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 the last year have been:-

- ◆ the Be Fair or be Fined campaign continues to highlight the misuse and abuse of disabled parking bays and blue badges and is being highlighted as good practice in forthcoming Scottish Government Guidance on Blue Badge reform
- ◆ improving the accessibility of the Council's website. The new Council website meets the AA compliance standard for web accessibility. As part of the continuous improvement of the new site there have been workshops carried out across the community. This has included sessions involving Citizens Panel and Access Panel members, as well as English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) groups, youth groups and young travellers
- ◆ South Lanarkshire Voluntary TV has actively recruited from the black and minority ethnic (BME) community, youth groups and older people's groups for its community trainee film makers. This is to enable members of the community to develop broadcasting and film skills that allow them to publicise the work of their groups and raise awareness of issues amongst their communities
- ◆ SLVTV has produced a number of programmes highlighting the work of voluntary groups, ones of note are those covering Lanarkshire Ethnic Minority Action Group, Disabled Curling, Wheelchair Bowls and Dress for Success
- ◆ the Public Protection Newsletter has highlights of what's happening across Lanarkshire and at national level in terms of adult protection, child protection, domestic abuse and the management of high risk offenders

5.3.3. **Continuous Improvement:** consultation, involvement and engagement are a key aspect to the impact assessment process which the Resources undertake on all existing and new strategy, policy and procedure development. Corporate Resources has led the way in improving the ways in which Resources consult and engage with the South Lanarkshire community.

5.3.4. **Legal Services:** there is an extensive body of legislation relating to equality and diversity and, in addition to providing advice and briefing sessions for officers on the Corporate Equality and Diversity Working Group, Legal Services has worked with colleagues in Finance Services to revise the Council's procurement toolkit to take account of all equalities groups. This has been well received by Resources and noted nationally by other authorities and Audit Scotland as an area of good practice. Registration and Licensing have yet again retained their Chartermark standard for their range of sensitively delivered front line services.

5.3.5. **Personnel Services:** the Resource has responsibility for developing corporate employment policy. Information on work in this area is covered in paragraph 8.

5.4. There have also been access audits conducted as part of the strategy and this has identified that some improvements can be made in relation to signage and polling station layout. It is planned to conduct awareness raising sessions with Housing and Technical Resources staff who set up stations to improve access to venues and key facilities within them. This will also be raised as part of the equality training of polling station staff.

6. Partnerships

6.1. The Resource supports a number of partnerships including:-

6.2. **Seniors Together in South Lanarkshire:** Formerly Better Government for Older People, the project has been re-branded and will continue to work as a multi-agency partnership which 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 has an Older People's Assembly which meets on a quarterly basis and receives excellent attendance. Activities of note have included:-

- ◆ involvement in consultation exercises including the Council's 2010/11 Budget Consultation and proposed savings
- ◆ running of the second annual Big Event promoting active aging to the community

6.3. **South Lanarkshire Disability Partnership:** This is a user led partnership bringing together the Council and other agencies such as NHS Lanarkshire and Strathclyde Police with representatives from the voluntary sector. The objective of the group is to improve dialogue amongst these organisations and the community, and to give disabled people 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. Other activities during 2010/11 included:-

- ◆ conducting access visits to Stonehouse and Fernhill Community Facilities
- ◆ assisting with mystery shopper exercises for Housing and Technical Resources
- ◆ involvement in developing and reviewing election materials to improve access to the voting process. This has involved access visits to a number of polling stations

6.4. **Diversity Monitoring Group (DMG):** The DMG continues to implement its revised remit with a view to covering protected characteristics as set out by legislation. This will aim to build upon the successful partnership work of the group and 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 such crime.

7. Performance Measurement

7.1. Improvements to capture equalities related data on service provision are ongoing and, as previously mentioned, 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:-

- ◆ review of the Council's equality monitoring process as part of the Improving Local Equality Data pilot with the Improvement Service

- ◆ co-ordination of the annual statutory performance indicator on accessible public buildings
- ◆ successful maintenance of the Chartermark standard
- ◆ supporting the members of the Equal Opportunities 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

8. Employment

8.1. The Council depends on the competence and commitment of its employees to deliver its services and has always strived 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. Some examples of employment related initiatives include:-

- ◆ review of the Severe Weather policy involving members of the Disabled Employee Committees
- ◆ maintained Double Tick symbol due to ongoing recruitment practices and support provided and made available to employees

8.2. Equal pay continues to be a focus of attention and there is currently a large number of equal pay claims filed with the Employment Tribunal. At all times, the Resource is working in the best interests of the Council with regard to the claims made.

8.3. With regard to our SPIs in relation to the percentage of women coming in the top 5% of salaries, women now make up 41.9% of our employees in this range.

9. Employee Development and Vocational Training Programmes

9.1. 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 race, disability, impact assessment, Deaf Awareness and British Sign Language.

9.2. The Council is a major provider of vocational training programmes for young people. This helps us maintain our work in regard to the inclusion agenda and includes programmes such as:-

- ◆ pupils in 3rd and 4th year in all Council secondary schools having the opportunity to undertake a vocational qualification at college for half a day per week. By doing so they experience the world of work and gain key transferable skills such as problem solving, teamwork, confidence and communication. The programme has ten vocational areas to choose from and encourages pupils to consider non traditional areas of work at a time in their schooling when they are making important long term decisions. The programme caters for 900+ young people on an annual basis
- ◆ the "Count us in" project works across 6 secondary schools and supports 90 young people, who have become disengaged, into work placements. So far 360 young people have gone through the programme and have been successful in progressing on to vocational outcomes

- ◆ the Vocational Development Programme also caters for young people with Additional Support Needs and for Looked After and Accommodated young people. In doing so, it is providing opportunities for pupils who are often far removed from the job market
- ◆ the David Livingstone project runs as an internship model and is a multi agency partnership, bringing together the expertise of the National Trust for Scotland, Community Resources, Langside College and South Lanarkshire Council's Supported Employment programmes

9.3. The internship model at David Livingstone Centre allows young people with additional support needs the opportunity to be immersed into the workplace gaining everyday workplace skills and working towards an SVQ in horticulture.

9.4. The programme increased its number to 16 young adults, split into 2 groups attending two days per week, with a number on the Get Ready for Work scheme attending 4 days per week.

10. Communication / Support

10.1. An ongoing area of work is to raise awareness of the Council's commitment, internally to employees as well as to the community. This year, an employee survey was conducted to better understand individuals' needs in relation to the employee Committees. As a result, the Disabled Employees Committee has been renamed as the Disability Committee and a pilot is currently being conducted to hold the Committee meetings in the four geographical areas of South Lanarkshire. This has already benefited those for whom travelling to Hamilton was a barrier and has also encouraged new members to join.

10.2. Also, as a result of the survey, the Working Parents and Carers Committee has been re-established and the initial meetings have raised awareness of the Council's Carer Strategy and its Employee Assistance Programme.

10.3. The final outcome has been the establishment of the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Committee. The survey highlighted strong support for such a Committee and we are working with Stonewall Scotland and the Terrence Higgins Trust to provide relevant information and support to individuals who on a regular basis encounter discrimination.

10.4. With this in mind, the Council is committed to promoting its values externally. This is shown through its support for a range of voluntary organisations, for instance LEMAG, projects such as Seniors Together and partnership working arrangements such as the MARIM, 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 Single Equality Scheme was key to the outcomes it has set.

11. Information Technology Services

11.1. Provides a critical support function to all Resources of the Council as the single provider of Information and Communications Technology (ICT). Some specific developments in relation to the Equality and Diversity Strategy in this area over the past year include:-

- ◆ working with Education and Community Resources, Information Technology Services has completed the rollout of National Entitlement Card (NEC) to all secondary pupils. The NEC, sometimes referred to as the Young Scot Card, gives 11-25 year olds access to the following benefits: Young Scot membership, cashless catering in all South Lanarkshire secondary schools and PASS accredited proof of age
- ◆ recognising the growth of smartphone / mobile devices as a communication channel, Information Technology Services launched a Mobile Web service to extend the reach of the Council web site
- ◆ the Resource has applied a new tool which will check accessibility of the Council website (broken links, spelling errors etc)
- ◆ consultation with a mix of age groups – retired, young, older and school pupils provided valuable input into customer behaviour and will be used to help improve the Web user experience and encourage channel shift to a less expensive web channel
- ◆ as part of the SOCITM Better Connect website audit, Royal National Institute of Blind People (RNIB) will manually check usability and accessibility of the Council website
- ◆ the Service has applied a translation tool to the Council's Website which can translate any page from the website into a number of other languages

12. Finance Services

- 12.1. Working with colleagues in Legal Services, the Procurement team has included appropriate declaration in all tenders in respect of Equal Opportunities. The declarations have been expanded from the Council's previous equality duties to cover all aspects of the Equality Act 2010. Work is also ongoing to standardise tender documentation to ensure it is proactive in promoting equalities through Community Benefit obligations and living wage considerations. These requirements are included in the tender selection criteria and are assessed before any contracts are awarded. This helps ensure that Council contracts are in line with the public sector duties, promote equality of opportunity, eliminate discrimination and harassment and foster good relations and that they comply with legislation and create enforceable contractual obligations.
- 12.2. Finance Services has conducted its annual budget consultation exercise to engage with a wide variety of community members and representative groups. This has included the South Lanarkshire Youth Council, employee Committees, Disability Partnership and Access Panel, as well as Seniors Together and the Citizens Panel. The sessions have involved over 100 people and have shown continued support for the approach and methods the Council is using to make savings as well as support for the Council's priorities.

13. Action Plan

- 13.1. During 2011/12 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 new Equality Act and its forthcoming specific duties.

14. Employee Implications

- 14.1. 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.

15. Financial Implications

15.1. 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.

16. Other Implications

16.1. 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.

17. Equality Impact Assessment and Consultation Arrangements

17.1. 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.

17.2. However, as part of the Councils ongoing equality duties, the Resource regularly consults with representative groups from the community and with employees.

Paul Manning

Executive Director (Finance and Corporate Resources)

24 November 2011

Link(s) to Council Objectives/Improvement Themes/Values

- ◆ Fair and open
- ◆ People focused
- ◆ Working with and respecting others
- ◆ Excellent employer
- ◆ Tackling disadvantage and deprivation

Previous References

Equal Opportunities Forum – 13 December 2011

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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