

Report

Report to:	Equal Opportunities Forum
Date of Meeting:	9 May 2018
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 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 Resource 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 and work is now ongoing by Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) and the Scottish Government to reflect on the impact the Duties are having on improving the delivery of services and employment practices.

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 assessment
- ◆ 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 over 750 assessments and enables individuals to highlight actions linked to their Resource, Service or the Council plan. The benefit of this is to streamline future reporting on equality activity related to the organisations equality outcomes
- ◆ 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 2017 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 the Council and the UK General Parliamentary elections to employees who attended the Network and also to members of the public who come along to partnership meetings, eg 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, delivered on a quarterly basis within the next session due to take place on 28 June 2018.

5.3.3 The training is well received and people, although initially reluctant and at the time unsure of being there, leave with knowledge they feel will make a difference.

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 industry accessibility standards. As well as machine testing and a built-in Read Speaker tool, the service develops new forms and content with the customer in mind and test 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 the 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 themed 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:

- ◆ the annual **Forever Active Survey** is delivered to ensure the project is able to provide a Collective Voice for older people and represent them on a range of statutory groups including the South Lanarkshire Integration Joint Board, the Strategic Commissioning Group and the Scottish Older Peoples Assembly
- ◆ **Mobile Men's Shed Project** – With recent funding from the Big Lottery a Mobile Men's Shed Project will be delivered to assist in reducing loneliness and isolation in older men. Further support will be provided to assist local communities to develop their own static sheds. Ongoing support will be provided to those sheds currently up and running in South Lanarkshire
- ◆ **The Good Health Project** – funded by the South Lanarkshire Health & Care Project, is continuing to engage with older people in two localities of South Lanarkshire, East Kilbride & Whitehill. Free of charge, participants have engaged in socialisation, cultural activities, sports and keep fit as well as training in confidence building, Mindfulness and dealing with anxiety. Participants from this project are now going on to engage in other volunteering activities within their wider communities while improving their own physical and mental health & wellbeing
- ◆ **Active Days Programme** - has now developed into six different days throughout the South Lanarkshire area, the most recent addition being in Blackwood.

6.3. **South Lanarkshire Disability Partnership**

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 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 2017/18 included:-

- ◆ participation in the development of council policies;
- ◆ continual discussion and submission of suggestions in relation to major planning applications;
- ◆ partnership working with South Lanarkshire Access Panel,

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 2017
- ◆ 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 courses: deaf awareness, forced marriage and recruitment & selection and the law;
 - ◆ partnership working with Trade Unions to deliver a stress 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 45.9% 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.

South Lanarkshire Council’s Supported Employment programmes has 4 strands which focus in on the particular needs of young people with significant additional support needs in their transition from school to employment, education and training with an aftercare support for 1 year to sustain these destinations. There is a particular strand which is an employer-led internship model for people with learning disabilities and autism.

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). Some specific developments in relation to the Equality and Diversity Strategy in this area over the past year include:

- ◆ recognising the growth of smartphone/mobile devices as a communication channel, IT Services launched a Mobile Web service to extend the reach of the Council website;
- ◆ the service has launched the new user friendly Council website in response to the needs of its users;
- ◆ consultation with a mix of age groups – retired, young, older, 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 Society of IT Managers (SOCITM) Better Connect website audit, Royal National Institute of the Bline (RNIB) will annually check usability and accessibility of the Council website.

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 2018 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.

12.2 Other actions will include preparing the draft British Sign Language (BSL) Plan as required by the BSL (Scotland) Act 2015. The draft plan will be written in conjunction with North Lanarkshire Council and NHS Lanarkshire and will include input from the D/deaf and Deaf/blind community of Lanarkshire.

12.3 The second Gaelic Language plan will also be produced 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.

16.2. There was also no requirement to undertake any consultation in terms of the information contained in this report.

Paul Manning

Executive Director (Finance and Corporate Resources)

16 April 2018

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

6 December 2016

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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