

# Report

Report to:	<b>Equal Opportunities Forum</b>
Date of Meeting:	<b>23 February 2022</b>
Report by:	<b>Executive Director (Finance and Corporate Resources)</b>

Subject:	<b>Annual Report on Mainstreaming Equalities and Diversity – Finance and Corporate Resources</b>
----------	--

## 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 2021 to 2025

## 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 Resources 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 which are to:-

- ◆ eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act
- ◆ advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not
- ◆ foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not

3.3. The first 4-year cycle for the Specific Duties ended in April 2017. The Scottish Government and the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) are currently reviewing the Scottish Specific Duties with a view to revising these in 2025 in time for the next Mainstreaming Reports.

#### **4. Resource and Service Planning**

4.1. The Resource Plan identifies the Resource's corporate responsibility regarding equalities and diversity as a headline priority. Objectives noted are:-

- ◆ lead partnership approaches to tackling the causes and effects of poverty and equality
- ◆ deliver effective employability services to support economic recovery
- ◆ embed equalities and workforce planning in recovery process
- ◆ promote equality and the wellbeing of staff
- ◆ improve the skills, flexibility, and capacity of the workforce
- ◆ deepening community engagement
- ◆ facilitate communication and consultation on the Council, its policies, and its services

4.2. Officers from the Resource provide both lead and support roles for several equalities related working groups, networks and forums including:-

- ◆ the Corporate Equality and Diversity Working Group and any of its short life groups, for example, 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 Network – Caring, Disability, Ethnicity and lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans (LGBT) Matters
- ◆ Seniors Together in South Lanarkshire and the Older People's Assembly
- ◆ partnership working arrangements with other public agencies and the voluntary sector, for example, 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 Customer Service Excellence (CSE)
- ◆ the short term Equity Working Group established by elected members to consider race and recruitment

#### **5. COVID-19 Impacts**

5.1. The ongoing effects of the COVID-19 pandemic have continued to impact across all Council services. There have been continuing challenges meeting and consulting with people face to face since March 2020, therefore, alternative methods have been used, including the use of online technology.

#### **6. Mainstreaming Equalities**

6.1. 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.

6.2. 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 approximately 918 assessments. A review of the online toolkit is currently

underway with the revised toolkit incorporating the requirements of the Fairer Scotland Duty

- ◆ 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 Joint Consultative Committees (JCCs). It is further evidenced through their annual reporting to this Forum and in the updates they provided as part of the 2021 mainstreaming equalities progress report

6.3. 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.

6.4. **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.

6.5. **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 must be communicated effectively both to employees and members of the community. Community participation and empowerment team engages with communities and citizens to ensure all groups are involved in how our services are shaped for the future. 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 new legislation and industry accessibility standards. Accessibility is tested using online tools as well as citizens and the website has an application which reads out text for those with visual impairments or for those whose first language is not English. The Service develops new forms and content with the customer in mind and tests early with members of our community, including those with disabilities
- ◆ Community participation and empowerment team engaged with communities and citizens during the pandemic delivering essential items. They worked with local people to ensure all groups are involved in how our services are shaped

6.5.1. Future contributions are anticipated to be:-

- ◆ in 2022/2023 we will be developing a revised website

6.6. **Consultation, Involvement and Engagement** are a key aspect to the impact assessment process which 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.

6.6.1. The Community Engagement Team works with communities to help them identify and meet their local priorities. They work together with members of the Community Planning Partnership who are working together to make South Lanarkshire a better place to live and work. The aim is to work with communities to deliver better services targeted at reducing poverty and tackling inequalities and deprivation across South Lanarkshire.

6.6.2. Activities to note include:-

- ◆ A development session with the Community Planning Partnership (CPP) board, focusing on communities of interest, which gave them the chance to learn more about and identify ways to support New Scots, older people and the deaf community. Actions from this session are being progressed.

6.6.3. The team continue to support the community and third sector partnerships and link in those needing assistance from the wellbeing helpline with the help available in their community. Benefits identified from this work include:-

- ◆ developing stronger links with community groups
- ◆ increasing volunteering capacity
- ◆ creating locality partnerships and networks where organisations are working together to address local need
- ◆ local coordination networks continue to meet and have adapted their own structures, for example in East Kilbride the third sector organisations meet informally on a regular basis, in Larkhall the network has become the formalised Larkhall Community Partnership, and in Clydesdale the network meets at regular intervals to ensure coordinated planning with the Council and Voluntary Action South Lanarkshire (VASLan)

6.6.4. Neighbourhood Planning continues to focus support on the areas in South Lanarkshire facing the greatest inequalities of outcome, engaging with communities to identify priorities and solutions which they can work on alongside delivery partners. Progress on neighbourhood planning has continued virtually with stakeholders, and in some cases trials of blended meetings where this has been safe. Some face to face engagement work has been possible and we continue to progress the plans in Whitehill, Fernhill and Eddlewood while supporting ongoing work in areas with completed plans. This has included ongoing engagement to make sure the priorities represent the current needs of the community and the delivery of the small scale place based participatory budgeting programme, giving communities in neighbourhood planning areas a total of £43,000 to fund small projects that meet their priorities.

## **7. Partnerships**

7.1. The Resource supports several partnerships including:-

7.2. **Seniors Together in South Lanarkshire:** 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 an Executive Group and an Operational Group that delivers a series of responsive focus and consultation groups, the project facilitates older people to access services and opportunities to enhance their retirement. Seniors Together provides ongoing support and engagement to its members using a range of interventions including more recently Social media and technology such as Microsoft Teams, to have ongoing conversations and consultations with them and talking about issues of importance including living with long-term illnesses and the impact of COVID-19. The

project is supported by the Council's Spokesperson for older people who attends the Executive group and represents them on the National group of Local Authority older people Champions

7.2.1. Activities of note have included:-

- ◆ Men's Shed development and Mobile Men's Shed Project – Seniors Together is the lead agency for the support and development of men's sheds in South Lanarkshire. With funding from the National Lottery Community Fund, a Mobile Men's Shed Project is being delivered to assist in reducing loneliness and isolation in older men. Further support is provided to assist local communities to develop their own static sheds and ongoing support is provided to those sheds currently up and running in South Lanarkshire; this has now resulted in the establishment of more static sheds with a new total of 15 sheds in South Lanarkshire. Every shed has its own individual membership with an average of 50 men registered at each
- ◆ there are now 3 sheds going through the Asset Transfer process

7.2.2. Recent conversations with members highlighted that after being at home in lockdown for so long it was time to take control and look at innovative ways of increasing mobility at home to prevent falls and improve confidence so that re-engaging with life after the pandemic would mean that they would experience improved health, improved mobility and be resilient as well as independent rather than dependant.

7.2.3. A new initiative was developed using wearable devices which were purchased (Fitbits) for a small study trial with participants selected from Seniors Together and South Lanarkshire Leisure and Culture (SLLC) to take part. The devices are worn on the wrists and are programmed to ensure that the person moves regularly and has a fitness programme to follow that will build strength and balance. The participants are supported by the Seniors Together team and are connected to each other through a weekly social online and outdoor walks when applicable. Early results are very good.

7.2.4. A further special edition newsletter was distributed to 100 older people and the Seniors Together Salt Stick Initiative was taken on as a mainstream project by Scottish Fire and Rescue Service, so that older people across all of South Lanarkshire could benefit from the initiative which started out as a pilot from the project.

7.2.5. The 2021 year ended at Seniors Together with 40 older people attending an online event hosted by Seniors Together and chaired by the spokesperson to continue to support members to keep in touch with each other and the project as well as enhancing their IT skills. The aim will be to increase the numbers of these events so that our older members of the community can feel more connected to each other and less lonely during the pandemic.

7.3. **South Lanarkshire Disability Partnership (incorporating the South Lanarkshire Access Panel):** 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 communication between the organisations and the community and to give people with disabilities an opportunity to influence policy and service provision.

7.3.1. Virtual face to face meetings of the Partnership have started again having been on pause completely during the COVID-19 lockdown period.

7.3.2. As well as the normal business meetings of the Panel they have met virtually with:-

- ◆ representatives from Network Rail in connection with the proposed redesign of three railway stations; train stations within South Lanarkshire Council's region: Thorntonhall, the new Hairmyres station and East Kilbride
- ◆ Clyde Cycle Park who are building a closed road cycle circuit in Cambuslang to discuss accessibility issues
- ◆ Cooper Cromar Architects in connection with a development at the Clyde Industrial Estate in Rutherglen (just off the M74 and Cambuslang Road)

## 8. Performance Measurement

8.1. 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:-

- ◆ maintenance of the "Customer Service Excellence" standard
- ◆ 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
  - ◆ reviewing and designing a suite of equalities online courses
  - ◆ introducing a mandatory element to equalities training
  - ◆ partnership working with Trade Unions

## 9. Employment

9.1. **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 Joint Trade Union Committee (JTUC) members who 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.

9.2. Equal pay is always a constant focus of attention, and the Resource is working in the best interests of the Council and its employees to ensure that we have a fair and equitable pay structure and job evaluation scheme.

9.3. Regarding our Statutory Performance Indicators in relation to the percentage of women coming in the top 5% of salaries, women now make up 55.27% of our employees in this range. The increase in these figures is due to the significant number of females who have received an increment or have been regraded and or promoted, thus increasing their earnings at the grades included in the top 5%.

9.4. A particular focus of work is in relation to attracting and engaging people who identify their ethnic origin as BAME (Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (defined as all ethnic groups except white ethnic groups)). We started this process with a survey that has been issued to current employees, candidates who have been unsuccessful in securing a council job and organisations who support people who identify their ethnic background as BAME. Respondents have been invited to self-nominate to take part in online focus groups to further explore the issues. Response rates have been low; however, several people have volunteered to be part of a follow-up focus group.

Evaluation of the survey results is underway. Findings from the survey will be used to improve the recruitment process and will be reported to the appropriate Committees.

- 9.5. Personnel services teams have adapted processes and arrangements in response to covid restrictions with robust partnership working arrangements in place with Trade Unions to ensure services and employees are supported to maintain a safe working environment.

## **10. Employee Development and Vocational Training Programmes**

- 10.1. 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 disability, impact assessment, Deaf Awareness and British Sign Language (BSL).
- 10.2. When recruiting for the Modern Apprentice programme, we include positive about disability messages in all adverts, diverse images are used on marketing materials, and we have an increased use of Social Media to promote any vacancies. Any participants who fall into the looked after care leavers are tracked to ensure positive destinations following the programme. Identified care leavers are also guaranteed an interview. A small group of care leavers have secured places on our Trades, Social Care and Child Care apprenticeships via a Modern Apprenticeships promise – this is being offered in partnership with Finance and Corporate Resources, Education and relevant employing Resource. Skills Development Scotland (SDS) offer enhanced funding for care leavers and people with disabilities and/or health issues and/or learning disabilities.
- 10.3. South Lanarkshire Council's Supported Employment Team delivers 5 employability/transitional programmes supporting young people with significant additional support needs and or communication disorders such as autism and or a learning disability. One of the programmes work with young people in their transition from school to employment, education, or training with an aftercare support for 1 year to sustain these destinations. The other is a Social Inclusion Project, a gaming café in the evenings promoting communication to clients with autism. This is currently delivered online due to the current climate.
- 10.4. Post school we offer employability training and support in to paid employment through a one-year employer-led internship model at Hairmyres Hospital called Project SEARCH with various partners – NHS Lanarkshire, New College Lanarkshire and ISS Facilities Management. The team also delivers a one-year course run in partnership with New College Lanarkshire and ASC Clothing in Eurocentral, Pathways to Textile Care and Warehousing. This provides participants with the opportunity to gain experience, skills and many qualifications with the aim of gaining paid employment.
- 10.5. Finally, we have a Scottish Government Young Persons Guarantee funded programme. Young adults unemployed aged 16 to 24 are set up online, while receiving a training allowance to learn employability skills, then progressing to work placements for a period of up to 3 months. A wage subsidy is offered to employers to employ the young person for a period of up to 6 months.

## **11. Communication/Support**

- 11.1. The Employee Network is an ongoing area of work whose aim is to raise awareness of the Council's equality commitment both internally to employees as well as to the community. Each of the 4 themes can be attended by any employee and the Network

is there to not only provide support to individuals but also to influence the work of the Council, shaping policies and practice.

11.2. 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.

## **12. Finance and Information Technology Services**

12.1. IT provides a critical support function to all Resources of the Council as the single provider of Information and Communications Technology (ICT).

12.2. 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.

## **13. BSL activities**

13.1. The BSL steering group continues to meet and work on the actions from the BSL Plan. We are continuing to work to include more BSL content on the Council's website. A survey will be carried out early 2022 to ask BSL users in our community what information they would specifically like to see included as BSL content. This will help us meet our actions from the BSL plan and also help to meet the Public Sector Equality Duty.

13.2. A series of BSL videos to supplement English videos demonstrating the use of assistive technology have been recorded in house and are now available for this equipment.

## **14. Equity Working Group**

14.1. The Resource has supported the work of the Equity Working Group established at the Council meeting on 23 September 2020. The Council considered a motion submitted in terms of Standing Order No 19 and agreed to the establishment of an all-party Equity Working Group that was tasked to:-

- ◆ consider the officers' report on recruitment disparities between white and BAME applicants
- ◆ investigate and identify any sources of inequity
- ◆ develop consensus on effective ways to address any sources of inequity
- ◆ recommend measures to ensure equitable treatment to Council

14.2. The Working Group has held 9 meetings to date and has considered a variety of topics, presentations from external organisations and have received awareness training delivered by Resource Officers.

14.3. Reports taken to the group for consideration included:-

- ◆ the recruitment process within South Lanarkshire Council
- ◆ recruitment of BAME candidates to South Lanarkshire Council workforce



- ◆ consideration of the BAME Survey Results
- ◆ directed the Focus Group questions
- ◆ the detail of the Equality Training Review
- ◆ the outcomes from Focus Groups
- ◆ an update from the Public Sector Leadership Summit (Race Equality in Employment)
- ◆ noted the content of the Mainstreaming Equalities progress report and equality outcomes for 2021 to 2025

14.4. External organisations who gave presentations to the Group included:-

- ◆ Amina
- ◆ NHS Lanarkshire
- ◆ Police Scotland

14.5. Awareness training covered the following subjects:-

- ◆ Positive Action versus Positive Discrimination
- ◆ The Language of Diversity
- ◆ An Overview of Unconscious Bias

## **15. Action Plan**

15.1. During 2022 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 Equality Act and the Scottish specific duties.

15.2. In terms of the BSL Plan, work towards achieving the actions contained in the action plan will continue to be co-ordinated with North Lanarkshire Council and NHS Lanarkshire and will include input from the D/deaf and Deaf/blind community of Lanarkshire. Links will also be made to the SeeHear Strategy Action Plan.

15.3. Work is ongoing to progress the actions of the second Gaelic Language Plan approved by Bòrd na Gàidhlig on 21 April 2020 published on the Council's website in English and Gaelic.

## **16. Employee Implications**

16.1. 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.

## **17. Financial Implications**

17.1. 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.

## **18. Climate Change, Sustainability and Environmental Implications**

18.1. There are no implications for climate change, sustainability or the environment in terms of the information contained in this report.

## **19. Other Implications**

19.1. 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.

## **20. Equality Impact Assessment and Consultation Arrangements**

20.1. 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.

20.2. 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)**

1 February 2022

### **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**

- ◆ Equal Opportunities Forum - 21 August 2019
- ◆ Equal Opportunities Forum – 11 November 2020

### **List of Background Papers**

- ◆ None

### **Contact for Further Information**

If you would like to inspect the background papers or want further information, please contact:-

Gill Bhatti, Employee Development and Diversity Manager

Ext: 5604 (Tel: 01698 455604)

E-mail: [gill.bhatti@southlanarkshire.gov.uk](mailto:gill.bhatti@southlanarkshire.gov.uk)