

EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES FORUM

Minutes of meeting held via Microsoft Teams on 24 November 2021

Chair:

Councillor Bert Thomson

Councillors Present:

Councillor Maureen Devlin, Councillor Mary Donnelly, Councillor Eric Holford, Councillor Katy Loudon

Councillors' Apologies:

Councillor Janine Calikes, Councillor Ann Le Blond, Councillor Martin Lennon, Councillor Joe Lowe, Councillor Jim McGuigan

Attending:

Education Resources

L Obre, Quality Improvement Officer; F Thomson, Locality Manager (Clydesdale)

Finance and Corporate Resources

G Bhatti, Employee Development and Diversity Manager; G Cochran, Administration Assistant; N Docherty, Administration Assistant; E A McGonigle, Administration Officer; K McVeigh, Head of Personnel Services

1 Declaration of Interests

No interests were declared.

2 Minutes of Previous Meeting

The minutes of the meeting of the Equal Opportunities Forum held on 15 September 2021 were submitted for approval as a correct record.

The Forum decided: that the minutes be approved as a correct record.

3 Annual Report on Mainstreaming Equalities and Diversity – Education Resources

A report dated 4 November 2021 by the Executive Director (Education Resources) was submitted on work being undertaken by Education Resources to meet the commitments within the Mainstreaming Equalities Progress Report 2019 to 2021 and the Mainstreaming Equalities Report 2021 to 2025.

The Resource had continued to build on progress made and remained committed to embedding equalities across all aspects of service provision. Appendix 1 to the report provided an overview of a range of work undertaken across the Resource as part of its activity to contribute towards achieving the Council's equality outcomes.

The focus for the Resource remained on recovery from COVID-19 and on raising achievement and attainment, inspiring learners, transforming learning and working in partnership to strengthen communities. Priorities were outlined as follows:-

- ◆ to raise standards in literacy and numeracy and close the poverty related attainment gap
- ◆ improve health and wellbeing to enable children and families to flourish
- ◆ support children and young people to develop their skills for learning, life and work
- ◆ ensure that inclusion and equality were at the heart of what we did

Over the course of 2020/2021, the Resource had undertaken 10 Equality Impact Assessments (EQIAs), as detailed in paragraph 4.1 of the report.

Education Resources' agenda for improvement was reflected in the actions and measures identified for 2021/2022 and to take forward those priorities, the Resource would:-

- ◆ provide high quality learning experiences for all
- ◆ deliver a meaningful curriculum to support the learner journey
- ◆ use evidence to effect improvement
- ◆ build leadership capacity within a strong framework of governance
- ◆ encourage innovation and creativity
- ◆ strengthen partnership working

Officers responded to members' questions on various aspects of the report.

The Chair, on behalf of the Forum members, welcomed the report and expressed appreciation of the work and activities being undertaken by Education Resources to take forward the Council's commitment to mainstreaming equality and diversity in strategic planning and performance.

The Forum decided: that the report be noted.

[Reference: Minutes of 2 September 2020 (Paragraph 3)]

Councillor Devlin joined the meeting during this item of business

5 Amna's Presentation

F Thomson, Locality Manager (Clydesdale), Education Resources shared a video presentation entitled 'Amna's Story' which had told of her family's arrival in Scotland in March this year and how her children had benefited from accessing an after school summer camp.

The programme had helped her children to increase their cognitive skills and focus levels and they looked forward to participating in future programmes. Amna had also been able to continue with her studies at university.

F Thomson was thanked for sharing the informative video presentation.

The Forum decided: that the presentation be noted.

5 Review of Equality Training

A report dated 3 November 2021 by the Executive Director (Finance and Corporate Resources) was submitted on the progress of the review of equalities training for employees and elected members.

Equalities training was part of a wide range of training offered to all employees as part of their work with the Council. Employees, and elected members who had particular roles, were required to undertake equalities training related to their roles. In regulated services, such as education and social work, equalities training was embedded in the professional training, registration, post registration requirements and codes of conduct. Some aspects of equalities training were included in induction and code of conduct briefings for newly elected members.

A review of equality training had been undertaken which identified that:-

- ◆ a range of general and specific equalities training, both classroom and online content, was available
- ◆ the content required regular review to ensure it was current as this was an area where language and legislation, policy and approaches changed regularly
- ◆ there was no requirement for all employees to undertake equality training as part of their employment, although some employee groups did this as a matter of course
- ◆ generic learning on equalities/diversity was not mandatory for all employees, however, there was learning provision where this was embedded
- ◆ once equality training was undertaken, there was no requirement to undertake further training on a refresh cycle. As this was a subject where change was frequent, employees were not necessarily aware of current thinking and approaches, therefore, this was an area for improvement

At the Council meeting held on 22 September 2021, it was agreed that a programme of mandatory equalities training be introduced for all employees and elected members, with a refresh period of 5 years. This programme of equality and diversity training had been considered by the Equity Working Group on 26 April 2021 and was detailed at section 5.1 of the report.

The review of the current equality and diversity learning would continue and revised/new modules would be released when available. To date, the following Learn on Line modules had been revised and were available for employees and elected members:-

- ◆ Equality and Diversity Awareness
- ◆ Age Discrimination
- ◆ Race Discrimination

The Forum decided: that the report be noted.

[Reference: Minutes of South Lanarkshire Council of 23 September 2021 (Paragraph 6)]

6 Urgent Business

There was no urgent business.