

Report

Report to:	South Lanarkshire Council
Date of Meeting:	22 September 2021
Report by:	Executive Director (Finance and Corporate Resources)

Subject:	Equity Working Group Progress Report
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1. Purpose of Report

1.1. The purpose of the report is to:-

- ◆ Report on the work of the Equity Working Group to date and recommend next steps.

2. Recommendation(s)

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

- (1) that the work undertaken by the Equity Working Group be noted;
- (2) that consideration be given by the Council at its statutory meeting in May 2022 to increase the membership of the Equal Opportunities Forum to allow representation by all Political Groups within the Council and to expand its terms of reference to allow the Forum to continue the work of the Equity Working Group;
- (3) that feedback from the Equity Working Group focus groups be used to review the current recruitment policy;
- (4) that mandatory equalities training be introduced for elected members and officers; and
- (5) that the Equity Working Group continuing to meet into the final cycle of Committee meetings ending 2 March 2022 to allow the group to undertake the remaining tasks outlined in paragraph 6.1 below be agreed.

3. Background

3.1. At its 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.

The Terms of Reference for the Equity Working Group is provided as Appendix 1 to the report.

4. Work undertaken by the Group

4.1. The Working Group has held 6 meetings to date, an overview of the topics covered is provided in Table 1.

Meeting Date	Items Considered
23 November 2020	Terms of Reference
18 January 2021	Recruitment Process within South Lanarkshire Council Recruitment of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Candidates to South Lanarkshire Council Workforce
15 February 2021	Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) Survey Results Focus Group Questions Positive Action versus Positive Discrimination Recruitment Questions
26 April 2021	Equality Training Review Outcomes from Focus Groups Update from the Public Sector Leadership Summit (Race Equality in Employment)
1 June 2021	Mainstreaming Equalities progress report and equality outcomes for 2021-2025 The Language of Diversity An Overview of Unconscious Bias
16 August 2021	Equity Working Group progress report

Table 1

4.2. To date the Group has:-

- ◆ gained an understanding of the mechanics of the recruitment process within the Council and discussed what could be done differently to encourage BAME applicants
- ◆ considered a report from officers on the recruitment of BAME candidates to the Council
- ◆ examined feedback received from the BAME recruitment survey and discussed next steps
- ◆ agreed questions for use at focus groups for respondents of the BAME survey and examined feedback resulting from these focus groups
- ◆ requested a review of Equalities training for all Council Employees and Members and noted the new proposals that would be referred to the Corporate Management Team for discussion, and for consultation with representative groups including Trade Unions. This includes proposals for mandatory training and refresh training for employees and members.

- ◆ been made aware of the developments in race equality in employment, most recently an update from the Public Sector Leadership Summit held in response to a report published in November 2020 on race equality, employment and skills inquiry by the Scottish Parliament's Equalities and Human Rights Committee

5. Equity Working Group and the Equal Opportunities Forum

- 5.1. There are parallels between the work of the Equal Opportunities Forum and the Equity Working Group, although it should be recognised that the latter has been established to carry out a specific task and report back to Council.
- 5.2. There was discussion at the 26 April 2021 meeting of the Group that there should be closer cooperation between the Working Group and the Equal Opportunities Forum, and they should "speak with one voice". To best achieve this, consideration around Equal Opportunities Forum membership and terms of reference should be given by the Council at its statutory meeting in May 2022. This will enable the Forum to continue the work of the Equity Working Group.

6. Next Steps

- 6.1. There is some further work for the Equity Working Group to examine, including exploring the recruitment actions in other public sector organisations, such as Police and NHS, to identify areas of good practice. Also, the establishment of diversity champions within schools and a better understanding of the reporting of racial incidents within schools. It is proposed that the Equity Group continue to meet during the final cycle of Committee meetings as agreed by the Executive Committee on 25 August 2021 until those actions are completed.
- 6.2. The recent focus on race equality has led to discussions about other aspects of equality, such as disability and gender, which could be explored more fully in future by the Equal Opportunities Forum.

7. Employee Implications

- 7.1. New and existing employees will be expected to undertake a programme of equalities training as outlined in the report considered by the Equity Group on 26th April 2021.
- 7.2. New and existing elected members will also be expected to undertake a similar programme of equalities training, outlined in the same report.

8. Financial Implications

- 8.1. There are no financial implications.

9. Climate Change, Sustainability and Environmental Implications

- 9.1. There are no implications for climate change, sustainability, or the environment as a result of this proposal.

10. Other Implications

- 10.1. There is a public commitment to race equality in employment on the Council's website, and our progress will be monitored and reported through our Equalities Mainstreaming update reports.
- 10.2. The reliance on personal data from employees and applicants, in order to monitor progress, is an area which needs to be better communicated and understood. This information is provided voluntarily, and is often incomplete, as people are not aware of how the data is used and for what purpose.

11. Equality Impact Assessment and Consultation Arrangements

11.1 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.

Paul Manning

Executive Director (Finance and Corporate Resources)

7 September 2021

Link(s) to Council Values/Ambitions/Objectives

- ◆ Promote economic growth and tackle disadvantage
- ◆ Improve Quality of Life for Everyone in South Lanarkshire
- ◆ Focussed on People and Their Needs

Previous References

- ◆ South Lanarkshire Council of 23 September 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:-

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Equity Working Group

Terms of Reference

1 Powers and Responsibilities

1.1 A short-life working group established 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
- ◆ refer any recommendations to ensure equitable treatment to South Lanarkshire Council for consideration

2 Membership

2.1 7 members (Political balance: 2 SNP; 2 Labour; 1 Conservative; 1 Independent Group and 1 Liberal Democrat), with 1 named substitute member from each Group

2.2 To be chaired by Councillor Razzaq, as agreed by South Lanarkshire Council at its meeting on 23 September 2020.

2.3 Quorum - 3

3 Meeting Arrangements and Practice

3.1 To meet as required until the Working Group reports its recommendations to South Lanarkshire Council.

3.2. Meetings not held in public - Internal Working Group.