

# EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES FORUM

Minutes of meeting held via Confero and in the Council Chamber, Council Offices, Almada Street, Hamilton on 21 September 2022

## Chair:

Councillor Mo Razzaq (after item 2)

## Councillors Present:

Councillor Janine Calikes, Councillor Ross Clark, Councillor Poppy Corbett, Councillor Grant Ferguson, Councillor Mark McGeever (Depute – after item 3), Councillor Kirsten Robb, Councillor Dr Ali Salamati, Councillor Bert Thomson, Councillor Gavin Keatt (*substitute for Councillor Monique McAdams*)

## Councillor's Apology:

Councillor Monique McAdams

## Attending:

### Finance and Corporate Resources

A Bell, Team Leader, Consultation, Organisational Development and Equality; G Cochran, Administration Assistant; E A McGonigle, Administration Officer; P MacRae, Administration Adviser; K McVeigh, Head of Personnel Services

### Housing and Technical Resources

J Read, Strategy and Policy Adviser

## Also Attending:

M Kennedy, Chair of the Joint Consultative Forum; K Wallace, Unite the Union

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## 1 Declaration of Interests

No interests were declared.

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## 2 Appointment of Chair

Councillor Clark, seconded by Councillor Salamati, moved that Councillor Calikes be appointed as Chair of the Equal Opportunities Forum.

Councillor Thomson, seconded by Councillor McGeever, moved as an amendment that Councillor Razzaq be appointed as Chair of the Equal Opportunities Forum.

Prior to the vote, and as requested by a member, each candidate outlined the qualities they would bring to the role of Chair.

On a vote being taken electronically, 5 members voted for the motion and 5 for the amendment. As the vote was tied, the appointment of Councillor Razzaq as Chair of the Equal Opportunities Forum was decided by a cut of a standard pack of playing cards.

**The Forum decided:** that Councillor Razzaq be appointed as Chair of the Equal Opportunities Forum

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## 3 Appointment of Depute Chair

Councillor Clark, seconded by Councillor Salamati, moved that Councillor Calikes be appointed as Depute Chair of the Equal Opportunities Forum.

Councillor Razzaq, seconded by Councillor Thomson, moved as an amendment that Councillor McGeever be appointed as Depute Chair of the Equal Opportunities Forum.

On a vote being taken electronically, 5 members voted for the motion and 5 for the amendment. On the casting vote of the Chair, Councillor McGeever was appointed as Depute Chair of the Equal Opportunities Forum.

**The Forum decided:** that Councillor McGeever be appointed as Depute Chair of the Equal Opportunities Forum

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#### **4 Working Together With Our Gypsy/Traveller Community**

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J Read, Strategy and Policy Adviser, Housing and Technical Resources gave a presentation on Working Together With Our Gypsy/Traveller Community.

The Council had 2 Gypsy/Traveller sites which were constructed over 30 years ago and had met design standards at that time. Both sites remained consistently in high demand and had low turnovers. Whilst the sites continued to meet minimal standards, there was recognition that the needs of residents had changed over time, with families growing and the type of accommodation changing. There had been a long standing approach to engagement with site residents, with dedicated site officers for both sites supported by local management teams.

The presentation provided detailed information on the following key areas:-

- ◆ the long-term investment plans that had been co-developed and finalised with residents as the COVID-19 pandemic hit
- ◆ the strong desire from residents to maintain progress in relation to investment works and service improvements within the following 3 outcomes:-
  - ◆ improving community engagement and empowerment
  - ◆ tackling digital exclusion and reducing social isolation
  - ◆ reducing fuel poverty and improving energy efficiency
- ◆ the prestigious awards won by the Partnership in 2022:-
  - ◆ 'Innovation in Building Diversity and Inclusion' – The Municipal Journal (MJ) Achievement Awards 2022
  - ◆ 'Excellent People, Excellent Outcomes' - COSLA

The Council was committed to continue the work with residents of both Gypsy/Traveller sites to ensure that needs would be met alongside ensuring their culture and way of life was understood. Progress would be made through the site masterplans and there would be ongoing engagement with residents so that they would be empowered to help make key decisions about how the sites looked and in relation to the services provided.

Having responded to members' questions, the Strategy and Policy Adviser was thanked for the informative presentation.

**The Forum decided:** that the presentation be noted.

*In terms of Standing Order No 14, the Chair adjourned the meeting at 3.11pm for a 5 minute period. The meeting reconvened at 3.16pm without the attendance of Councillor Thomson*

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## 5 Annual Report on Mainstreaming Equalities and Diversity – Housing and Technical Resources

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A report dated 1 September 2022 by the Executive Director (Housing and Technical Resources) was submitted:-

- ◆ providing an overview of progress made in relation to mainstreaming equalities within Housing and Technical Resources during 2021/2022
- ◆ highlighting the key actions being progressed during 2022/2023

The Resource Equality and Diversity Co-ordinating Group (EDCG) was responsible for ensuring progress had been made in relation to the Equality and Diversity work plan and supported a consistent approach to mainstreaming equality and diversity across the Resource.

The COVID-19 pandemic had disproportionately impacted vulnerable and disadvantaged individuals and groups within communities. Although restrictions had eased, work had continued across the Resource to mitigate the impact of COVID-19 on potentially vulnerable individuals and groups had remained a focus of attention during 2021/2022.

Details were provided on key areas of progress by the Resource during 2021/2022 under the following headings:-

- ◆ Home+ Affordable Housing Supply Programme
- ◆ Adaptions Programme
- ◆ Housing and Homelessness – through the Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan (RRTP)
- ◆ Technology Enabled Care Programme
- ◆ Housing and Dementia
- ◆ Refugee Resettlement Programme
- ◆ Gypsy/Travellers
- ◆ Equality Data Collection and Knowing Our Customers
- ◆ Support to Victims of Domestic Abuse
- ◆ Translation and Interpretation Services
- ◆ Consultation, engagement and customer feedback
- ◆ Complaints – none recorded within the equalities category during the period
- ◆ Employee Learning and Development

Details were provided on national and local policy developments that the Resource had contributed to during 2021/2022 and 2022/2023. The Resource EDCG would continue to oversee the work in relation to mainstreaming across the Resource during 2022/2023 and the key priorities were fully detailed at section 6.2 of the report.

Officers responded to members' questions and comments in relation to the following:-

- ◆ various matters in relation to the Refugee Resettlement Programme and the UK Government's 'Homes for Ukraine' scheme
- ◆ consultation and engagement with LGBTI+ groups, people who were care experienced, and the deaf community
- ◆ consideration of using more flexible approaches in terms of referrals to the Adaptations Programme
- ◆ the use of technology in buildings to support the deaf community in the event of a fire
- ◆ whether consideration would be given to incorporating bariatric adaptations to future builds
- ◆ the use of Equality Impact Assessments and the Fairer Scotland Duty assessments across Resources

**The Forum decided:** that the report be noted.

*[Reference: Minutes of 31 March (Paragraph 3)]*

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## **6 Urgent Business**

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There were no items of urgent business.

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## **Chair's Closing Remarks**

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The Chair advised that, in order to develop a Forward Programme for consideration at the next meeting, an email would be circulated to Forum members with suggested topics for inclusion at future meetings, as well as inviting any other contributions from members.