

EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES FORUM

Minutes of meeting held via Microsoft Teams on 15 September 2021

Chair:

Councillor Bert Thomson

Councillors Present:

Councillor Mary Donnelly, Councillor Eric Holford, Councillor Katy Loudon, Councillor Mo Razzaq (*substitute for Councillor Maureen Devlin*)

Councillors' Apologies:

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

Attending:

Community and Enterprise Resources

L Hughes, Fair Trading Officer; A McKinnon, Head of Facilities, Waste and Grounds Services

Finance and Corporate Resources

A Bell, Personnel Officer; G Cochran, Administration Assistant; E Maxwell, Personnel Adviser; G McCann, Head of Administration and Legal Services; E A McGonigle, Administration Officer; K McVeigh, Head of Personnel Services

Housing and Technical Resources

A Craigen, Section Leader (Surveys); J Forbes, Property Manager (Assets and Estates Services)

Also Attending:

H Williams, Women's Aid, South Lanarkshire and Renfrewshire; K Wallace, Trade Union Representative, Unite the Union; M Kennedy, Chair of the Joint Consultative Forum

Order of Business

The Forum decided:	that the items of business be dealt with in the order minuted below.
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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 16 June 2021 were submitted for approval as a correct record.

The Forum decided:	that the minutes be approved as a correct record.
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3 Gender Inequality and Why it is Important

H Williams, Women's Aid, South Lanarkshire and East Renfrewshire, gave a presentation on gender inequality and why it was important.

The presentation provided information on the following areas:-

- ◆ a definition of men's violence against women from 'Equally Safe' which highlighted the need to understand this within a societal context and not in isolation from the norms, social structure and gender roles within the community
- ◆ disparities and inequalities between the sexes had become embedded in the baseline of public policies and allocation of public resources
- ◆ detailed analysis on why gender mattered which included statistics from 2018 that highlighted gender disparities including:-
 - ◆ 85% of those aged 16 to 64 who were inactive due to caring duties were women
 - ◆ 8% of women in employment aged 16+ were self employed compared to 16% of men
 - ◆ 13% of women in employment aged 16+ were employed in an occupation within the health and social care sector compared to 3% of men
 - ◆ the median hourly earnings (excluding overtime) for women was £11.81 per hour compared to £13.89 per hour for men
 - ◆ only 761 women completed a STEM Modern Apprenticeship in 2018/2019 compared to 8,144 men
- ◆ Public Sector Equality Duties – gender equality should be positively advanced through policy and practice
- ◆ recognition that equality did not equal sameness

H Williams, having responded to members' questions, was thanked for her informative presentation.

The Forum decided: that the presentation be noted.

4 Accessibility Report on Operational Properties

A report dated 25 August 2021 by the Executive Director (Housing and Technical Resources) was submitted providing an update on the activities being carried out by Property Services, Asset and Estates Team regarding the development of a new customer focused accessibility survey and property summary.

Accessibility had started as a Statutory Performance indicator (SPi) which was a very technically focused appraisal which took into account several factors such as building regulations, time of construction, ability to be adapted and service being delivered. In recent years, this had been changed to a Key Performance indicator (KPi), however, the methodology for assessing buildings had remained substantially the same.

Following customer feedback, it was recognised that whilst the KPi was useful for benchmarking properties, it was not of much assistance to service users. A review was, therefore, carried out into what information on accessibility was collected and how this could be presented differently to assist customers, visitors and building users.

To date, the following activities had been progressed:-

- ◆ the Access Audit checklist survey sheet, used to capture information on each building, had been reviewed and amended, as outlined in Appendix 1 to the report
- ◆ a new Property Accessibility summary sheet, where technical information was translated into a customer focused statement on key areas of accessibility, had been created, attached as Appendix 2 to the report
- ◆ at the start of 2021, an initial pilot programme of 6 properties to test the process had been completed
- ◆ a set list of terms used in a summary sheet to provide consistency had been agreed

All operational properties were surveyed by the Council's in-house Building Surveyors as part of a 4-year rolling programme. This survey activity captured information on legislative responsibilities which included fire compartmentation, condition and insurance details. The new

accessibility assessment would now form part of that survey programme. The next step would be to discuss how the results from the surveys could be shared with service users, for example, adding information to the South Lanarkshire Leisure and Culture (SLLC) website and booking information.

Discussion took place in relation to the Council HQ building in Almada Street, Hamilton and the following matters were raised:-

- ◆ concerns about disability access which required to be addressed as a matter of urgency
- ◆ consideration to be given to what adaptations could be implemented to the building given its listed building status
- ◆ the needs of all councillors, members of the public and Council staff were not currently being met
- ◆ disability should be given the same level of priority as health and safety issues, such as fire safety
- ◆ further consideration on this issue to be given at an early meeting of this Forum

The Chair, on behalf of the Forum, would write to the Chief Executive to ask about disability access at Council HQ and other Council facilities to see if there could be a review programme and implement any works that were required.

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

The Forum decided:

- (1) that the changes in the Council's approach to surveying and reporting on accessibility be noted; and
- (2) that the Chair, on behalf of the Forum, write to request that consideration be given to the matters raised and that any necessary improvements be programmed and implemented as soon as possible.

5 Annual Report on Mainstreaming Equalities and Diversity – Community and Enterprise Resources

A report dated 31 August 2021 by the Executive Director (Community and Enterprise Resources) was submitted on strategic and operational work being undertaken by Community and Enterprise Resources to meet the commitments within the Mainstreaming Equalities Progress Report 2019 to 2021 and Mainstreaming Equalities Report 2021 to 2025.

The Council had published its "Mainstreaming equalities progress report 2019 to 2021" and "Mainstreaming equalities report 2021 to 2025" in April 2021. The new Equality Outcomes set for 2021 to 2025 would focus on actions to produce results intended to achieve specific and identifiable improvements in people's life chances. The Resource would lead on Equality Outcome 2:-

- ◆ 'Older people, those from vulnerable groups and individuals who live alone are protected from scams and nuisance calls and their wellbeing is improved through increased awareness and preventative action'

This Outcome would be progressed by Environmental Services Consumer and Trading Standards Services and details were attached at Appendix 1 to the report.

The Resource continued to build on progress and remained committed to embedding equalities across all aspects of service provision. The equality activity of the Resource was aligned to and reported against the following 7 Council plan “Connect” objectives:-

- ◆ improve services in later life
- ◆ protect vulnerable children, young people and adults
- ◆ improve the road network, influence improvements in public transport and encourage active travel
- ◆ support local economy by providing the right conditions for inclusive growth
- ◆ support our communities by tackling disadvantage and deprivation and supporting aspirations
- ◆ improve achievement, raise educational attainment and support lifelong learning
- ◆ work with communities and partners to promote high quality thriving and sustainable communities

Progress of activity against each of the 7 equality objectives and details of the differences each had made was detailed at Appendix 2 to the report.

Service delivery arrangements for the Resource had been impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic and resilience arrangements and controls were put in place to manage the impacts of the pandemic. The Resource had responded at pace to changing guidance and ensured all safety measures were in place so that services continued to be delivered where possible. Where physical distancing was not possible, some services were either transformed or temporarily ceased. Equality initiatives that had been impacted by COVID-19 across the Resource were detailed in Appendix 2.

The Resource had a key role in delivering the Council’s Equality Outcomes and the following actions were detailed in the Resource Plan:-

- ◆ ensure there was adequate provision for the community to travel within South
- ◆ monitor the parking requirements for disabled users on an ongoing basis
- ◆ ensure the transport provision reflected the needs of the community
- ◆ help businesses within the community grow and develop
- ◆ ensure inclusive design was adhered to when designing buildings in South Lanarkshire
- ◆ ensure vulnerable groups were consulted regarding changes to buildings in their communities

Over the course of 2020/2021, the Resource carried out 3 Equality Impact Assessments (EQIAs), as detailed in paragraph 4.2 of the report. An additional 9 EQIAs were completed for the 2021/2022 savings proposals.

The Chair, on behalf of the Forum members, welcomed the report and expressed appreciation of the work and activities being undertaken by Community and Enterprise 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 6 March 2019 (Paragraph 5)]

6 Scams Prevention Project

L Hughes, Fair Trading Officer, Community and Enterprise Resources gave a presentation on the Scams Prevention Project.

The aim of the project was to:-

- ◆ reduce financial harm for vulnerable people on the doorstep, by telephone, mail or online
- ◆ support people to live independently in their homes for longer

The presentation provided detailed information on:-

- ◆ methodology:-
 - ◆ a package of preventative measures, including practical solutions and assistive technology
 - ◆ Scam Alert Network, Friends Against Scams and Scam Marshalls
 - ◆ promotion of Buy With Confidence scheme
 - ◆ creation of links between relevant departments
 - ◆ taking a more holistic approach
 - ◆ creation of a referral system with clear lines of communication
- ◆ referral partners
 - ◆ Fire and Safety
 - ◆ Care and Repair
 - ◆ Seniors Together
 - ◆ Neighbourhood Watch Scotland
 - ◆ Home Energy Scotland
 - ◆ Police Scotland
 - ◆ Banks
- ◆ data relating to scams, including costs, numbers and the age demographics of victims
- ◆ referral routes

The Forum decided: that the presentation be noted.

7 Urgent Business

There were no items of urgent business.