

EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES FORUM

Minutes of meeting held via Microsoft Teams on 16 June 2021

Chair:

Councillor Bert Thomson

Councillors Present:

Councillor Janine Calikes, Councillor Maureen Devlin, Councillor Mary Donnelly, Councillor Eric Holford, Councillor Ann Le Blond, Councillor Katy Loudon, Councillor Jim McGuigan, Councillor Mo Razzaq (*substitute for Councillor Martin Lennon*)

Councillors' Apologies:

Councillor Martin Lennon, Councillor Joe Lowe

Attending:

Finance and Corporate Resources

A Bell, Personnel Officer; C Calder, Manager, Seniors Together; G Bhatti, Employee Development and Diversity Manager; E A McGonigle, Administration Officer; K McVeigh, Head of Personnel Services

Social Work Resources

S McGuigan, Planning and Development Officer; B Perrie, Planning and Performance Manager

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 31 March 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 – Social Work Resources

A report dated 14 April 2021 by the Head of Children and Justice Services and Chief Social Work Officer (Social Work Resources) was submitted on work being undertaken by Social Work Resources to meet the commitments of the “South Lanarkshire Working for You” Mainstreaming Equalities Report 2017 to 2021.

Details were provided on the strategic and operational work being undertaken, or planned, by the Resource in terms of the following Council equality outcomes:-

- ♦ improve services for older people
- ♦ protect vulnerable children, young people and adults
- ♦ tackle disadvantage and deprivation and support aspiration
- ♦ encourage participation in physical and cultural activities
- ♦ provide vision and strategic direction

Details were also provided on a new Mainstreaming Equality Report and revised outcomes which had been developed for 2021 to 2025. The Resource would lead on Equality Outcome 5 – Improve Health, Care and Wellbeing for the most vulnerable in our communities – and would incorporate the following actions:-

- ◆ advance the Care facilities programme
- ◆ redesign community support services for adults and older people
- ◆ continue to support carers, continue to care in good health and wellbeing
- ◆ protect front line staff and carers with access to Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)
- ◆ manage the (hosting) transition of Mental Health Services (Nursing and Physiotherapy Services) from the North Health and Social Care Partnership to the South Health and Social Care Partnership

Service delivery arrangements for the Resource had been impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic and revised business operations and robust resilience arrangements were required to manage this. Alongside other Resources, Social Work Resources had set out its COVID-19 recovery plans in June 2020. Residential Care for older people had undergone significant transformation in the way that care was delivered as a result of the pandemic, and the Service had to respond at pace to changing guidance to ensure all safety measures were in place and that care was delivered to the highest standard.

Over the course of 2020/2021, the Resource carried out 8 Equality Impact Assessments related to the Council's proposed efficiencies and 1 assessment related to policies and plans, as detailed in paragraph 4.2 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 Social Work Resources to take forward the Council's commitment to mainstreaming equality and diversity in strategic planning and performance.

Officers responded to a member's questions on various aspects of the report.

The Forum decided: that the report be noted.

[Reference: Minutes of 12 December 2018 (Paragraph 3)]

4 See Hear Framework

S McGuigan, Planning and Development Officer, Social Work Resources gave a presentation on the See Hear Framework, the national strategic framework for meeting the needs of people with a sensory impairment in Scotland.

The See Hear agenda was taken forward by the Council alongside the Health and Social Care Partnership and the Third Sector. The Council had a duty to provide services to everyone who needed them and could be found to be in contravention of the Equalities Act 2010 and British Sign Language (Scotland) Act if it failed to do so.

The presentation provided detailed information on the following areas:-

- ◆ background to the See Hear Strategic Framework, including the commissioning of research in 2016 by North and South Lanarkshire Health and Social Care Partnerships which informed the development of a See Hear Strategic Working Group and strategic plan
- ◆ objectives identified in the strategic plan:-
 - ◆ introduction of basic sensory checks
 - ◆ workforce learning and development

- ◆ Local Partnership service planning
- ◆ health and wellbeing of carers
- ◆ information sharing
- ◆ review of compliance
- ◆ multiculturalism
- ◆ problems faced by sensory impaired people
- ◆ sensory impairment and mental wellbeing:-
 - ◆ age related sensory impairment
 - ◆ dementia
 - ◆ communication
- ◆ the Strategic Action Plan developed by the Partnership to support the aims of the Framework
- ◆ progress to date
- ◆ work undertaken to support service users during the COVID-19 pandemic

S McGuigan, having responded to members' questions, was thanked for her informative presentation.

The Forum decided: that the presentation be noted.

Councillor McGuigan joined the meeting during this item of business

5 Seniors Together 'Use it or Lose it' Project

A report dated 1 June 2021 by the Executive Director (Finance and Corporate Resources) was submitted providing an update on the development of the Seniors Together 'Use it or Lose it' Project in South Lanarkshire.

An ageing population and the related increase in chronic diseases had a major impact on the healthcare systems of most western countries. Chronic diseases could be prevented through a combination of a healthy diet, avoidance of tobacco products and regular physical activity. Monitoring physical activity was a valuable parameter to define if a person was performing enough physical activity to prevent chronic disease or if they were manifesting early symptoms of those diseases. COVID-19 had exacerbated those issues and had resulted in a backward step for older people living in South Lanarkshire who were trying to maintain some level of independence and management of their own health.

Members of Seniors Together who had regularly attended activity classes set up in conjunction with partners at South Lanarkshire Leisure and Culture (SLLC) prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, had reported poor mobility and loss of confidence as a result of being at home for such a long period. Seniors Together provided ongoing support and engagement with its members using a range of interventions, including social media and Microsoft Teams. During recent conversations, members highlighted that it was time to take control and look at innovative ways of increasing mobility at home to prevent falls and increase confidence.

A funding proposal for a small falls prevention pilot had been submitted to the Safer South Lanarkshire Board. This involved a small study group of 20 participants from Seniors Together and SLLC who were involved in activity programmes prior to the pandemic and were selected to participate in the Use it or Lose it project.

Participants of the Use it or Lose it project would be provided with a Fitbit to monitor activity levels, a Samsung tablet if no access to a smart phone and a resource pack with information on guided exercise. As COVID-19 restrictions eased, participants would be signposted to SLLC facilities where weekly Social Sessions would take place using Microsoft Teams.

The impact of the project on older residents of South Lanarkshire who had experienced poor mobility as a result of COVID-19 would be evaluated, using the Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale (WEMWBS).

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

The Forum decided: that the report be noted.

Councillors Calikes, Donnelly and Le Blond left the meeting during this item of business

6 Urgent Business

There was no urgent business.