

Northwards Housing – HR & Equality Sub-Committee Meeting

Hexagon Tower
Tuesday 25th July at 7.00pm

Chair: Martin McKevitt

Present: Martin McKevitt (MM) Board Member & Chair
Ade Alao (AA) Board Member
June Hitchen (JH) Board Member
Fionnuala Stringer (FS) Board Member

In Attendance: Robin Lawler (RL) Chief Executive
Steve Wood Director of Business Services
Olivia Stokes (OS) Equality & Diversity Manager
Lisa McBurnie (LMcB) Human Resources Manager

| ITEM | SUBJECT | ACTION |
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| 1 | Welcome and Introductions Quorum Confirmed | |
| 2 | Apologies for Absence Joan Fitzgerald | |
| 3 | Confidential Matters/Declarations of Interest There were no declarations of interest. Item 13 is confidential. | |
| 4 | Minutes of Last Meeting held on 20th June 2006 These were agreed as a correct record and signed by MM as Chair. | |
| 5 | Matters Arising a) LMcB reported that training has commenced on the Sickness Absence Toolkit & we have already seen a 2 day reduction in sickness absence to end of Quarter 1 compared to previous Quarter. b) OS advised that E&D Officer post is to be advertised 25th July. | |

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| | c) Diversity Workbook now 97% completed by staff. | |
| 6 | <p>Partnership Agreement: BME Residents Network for Manchester</p> <p>OS explained the report & explained that Northwards Housing is to join this partnership, subject to the objectives & targets being clearly set & the agenda embracing the diverse communities in North Manchester. She advised that there is a joining fee of £500 to fund the administration costs of the partnership.</p> <p>Members raised a number of issues, particularly concerning the involvement of North Manchester residents, but noted the report & asked for a progress report in due course.</p> | OS |
| 7 | <p>Disabled Focus Group</p> <p>OS reported upon the first meeting of the focus group for Disabled Tenants which had met on 17th July & was attended by 7 people. The agenda paper summarised the issues raised by the Group, the main concern being the Equipment & Adaptations service.</p> <p>In response to questions, OS said that she felt that there was good interest in the Group & that we can build on the first meeting. Further reports highlighting issues raised by this Group will brought to the Sub-Committee.</p> <p>The Sub-Committee noted the report.</p> | OS |
| 8 | <p>Community Sponsorship Strategy</p> <p>OS spoke to the paper which is recommending that Northwards Housing adopts a community sponsorship strategy to provide small scale financial support to community activities, events, projects & groups in North Manchester which benefit our tenants & their families. It is recommended to set aside £5000 in the current financial year. This funding will be reviewed as part of the budget setting for 2007/8.</p> <p>The Sub-Committee welcomed the strategy & the simple application form. It was suggested that this strategy could be linked to volunteering where Northwards staff undertake projects with local community groups. It was also suggested that the Joint Venture Company may also support community activities.</p> <p>AA said that we need to be careful with the use by groups &</p> | |

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| | <p>projects of Northwards' logo. It was agreed that permission should be sought to use the logo.</p> <p>The Sub-Committee approved the strategy & agreed that consultation be undertaken with Area Panels. This will require the approval of the Board.</p> <p>Recommendation to the Board: The Board is recommended to approve in principle a Community Sponsorship Strategy & to consult with Area Panels on how the strategy could benefit local community groups in North Manchester.</p> | |
| 9 | <p>No Quit Policy & Procedure</p> <p>LMcB introduced her paper which recommended the introduction of a No Quit policy in order to protect the investment which Northwards Housing has made in its staff & to mitigate the risk of Employment Tribunal claims. She said that she had used the approach embodied in the policy for 3 staff in last 6 months. The intention is to be more proactive than simply sending an exit survey after someone had left.</p> <p>The policy is accompanied by simple procedures, including standard letters to be used by managers.</p> <p>In response to questions, LMcB confirmed that 9 people had left the employ of Northwards Housing since January, of whom 2 had retired.</p> <p>The Sub-Committee approved the policy & procedures & is recommending adoption to the Board.</p> <p>Recommendation to Board: The Board is recommended to approve the No Quit policy & procedures.</p> | Board |
| 10 | <p>Whistle Blowing Policy & Procedure</p> <p>LMcB explained the policy & procedure for Whistle Blowing where staff can confidentially raise concerns with the conduct of particular officer's o the delivery of services. This is drawn from the Council's policy & procedure, but adapted to Northwards' requirements.</p> <p>The Sub-Committee approved the Whistle Blowing policy & procedure & is recommending to the Board.</p> <p>Recommendation to Board: The Board is recommended to approve the Whistle Blowing policy & procedure.</p> | Board |

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| <p>11</p> | <p>Northwards' Positioning on Investors in People LMcB explained her report which summarises Northwards' position with regard to securing Investors in People (IiP) accreditation by March 2007. The report draws upon the diagnostic exercise commissioned in May from Chamberlink, who are an IiP assessor. LMcB stated that there are 3 key issues in preparing for IiP:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Employee Appraisal scheme- which has now been adopted & launched with staff; - Consultation with staff & Trade Unions through briefings, surveys & Joint Consultative Committee; - Positive & open Leadership throughout Northwards for which a strategy is under development. <p>MM expressed surprise, as a IiP assessor himself that Northwards did not meet any of the ten assessment indicators required for IiP. He questioned Chamberlink's evaluation. In response, SW stated that Chamberlink's report was not consistent with the assessor's verbal feedback as they completed the diagnostic exercise. Nonetheless, LMcB's timetable & action plan sets out how IiP will be achieved by March 2007.</p> <p>The report also included information on leadership competencies currently being developed for managers, but which could apply to all staff to a greater or lesser extent.</p> <p>The Sub-Committee noted progress towards IiP accreditation & asked to receive monthly verbal progress reports.</p> | <p>LMcB</p> |
| <p>12</p> | <p>Communication Champions LMcB gave a verbal update on the Communication Champions group which has representation from all teams. First meeting held when it was agreed that the group's first task is to recommend another name for the group.</p> <p>The report was noted.</p> | |
| <p>13</p> | <p>Proposed Co-Option onto HR & Equality Sub-Committee This is a confidential item. See confidential minute.</p> | |
| <p>14</p> | <p>Any Other Business</p> <p>a) Area Panel Tours JH asked for information as to how many people are joining these tours & whether Board Members have been invited.</p> <p>b) August Sub-Committee</p> | <p>SW</p> |

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| | RL to check whether the meeting will be quorate because of holidays & to discuss cancellation with MM. | RL |
| 15 | Date of next meeting Tuesday 29th August @ 7.00 (Hexagon Tower) Apologies: JH | |