

Northwards Housing – HR & Equality Sub-Committee Meeting

Hexagon Tower, Conference Room 3
Tuesday 20 June 2006 at 7.00pm

Chair: Martin McKevitt

Present: Martin McKevitt (MM) Board Member & Chair
Joan FitzGerald (JF) Board Member
Ade Alao (AA) Board Member
June Hitchen Board Member

In Attendance: Robin Lawler (RL) Chief Executive
Olivia Stokes (OS) Equality & Diversity Manager
Lisa McBurnie (LMcB) Human Resources Manager

ITEM	SUBJECT	ACTION
1.	Welcome and Introductions Quorum Confirmed.	
2.	Apologies for Absence Fionnuala Stringer.	
3.	Confidential Matters/Declarations of Interest There were no confidential matters and no items where Board Members declared an interest. Equality and Diversity matters will be dealt with under agenda item 11.	
4.	Minutes of Last Meeting held on 29th March 2006 The public and the confidential minutes were agreed as a correct record and signed by MM as Chair.	
5.	Matters Arising There were no matters arising not on the agenda.	
6.	Equality Impact Assessments OS introduced this report which proposes a methodology for	

ITEM	SUBJECT	ACTION
	<p>Northwards Housing to undertake its own Equality Impact Assessments (EIA). This exercise will build on the EIAs undertaken by the Council of parts of the Housing Service, but draws upon the experience of Sheffield Homes, a 3 Star ALMO with excellent E&D practice. This is a requirement to achieve Equality Standard Level 2.</p> <p>After discussion about the workload commitments of managers and training requirements, it was agreed by the Sub-Committee that the methodology be piloted starting with the highest impact services. OS is to bring back the results of the pilot EIAs, together with a programme of EIAs for the next year.</p> <p>Recommendation to the Board: That Northwards Housing adopts the Equality Impact Assessment Toolkit & requests that pilot EIAs be undertaken.</p>	
7.	<p>Hate Incident Policy & Procedures & Performance Standards</p> <p>OS presented the report which is seeking Sub-Committee endorsement for the Hate Incident Policy, Procedures and Performance Standards which have been approved by the Chief Executive under his delegated powers in order to be able to submit to the Inspection Team.</p> <p>In approving the report, MM asked about the use of powers of eviction where tenants have been found guilty of perpetrating hate crime. RL advised that the power was available, but requires the sanction of the Court. JF welcomed this, but stated that action must be based on evidence. JH asked that Northwards Housing strongly challenges bad behaviour and asked that the deadline for removal of racist graffiti is reviewed, particularly for prominent and sensitive sites.</p> <p>The Sub-Committee endorsed the Hate Incident Policy, Procedures and Performance Standards.</p>	
8.	<p>Equality & Diversity Staffing Proposals</p> <p>RL reminded the Sub-Committee that OS has been acting up on E&D issues, but is due to revert to her substantive post in mid-August. There is therefore a need to appoint a dedicated E&D Officer to continue the good work that OS has initiated.</p> <p>OS explained the role of the post and that the person will be line managed by her. In response to AA's question about the</p>	

ITEM	SUBJECT	ACTION
	<p>salary for the post, OS advised that this is PO1 reflecting the grade for similar posts in the Council and the fact that they will have to represent Northwards Housing in the community and with partners. A job description and person specification were attached to the report.</p> <p>Recommendation to the Board: The Sub-Committee is recommending to the Board that a dedicated post of Equality & Diversity Officer is recruited at a grade of PO1 to work within the Service Improvement Team.</p>	
9.	<p>Equality & Diversity Monitoring of Tenant Involvement OS presented a report analysing the involvement of various diversity groups with Northwards Housing compared to the make up of the population in North Manchester. The report identified those groups where further action is required to increase involvement.</p> <p>MM asked whether Census and local data would assist with the proper assessment of involvement. OS replied that data sources are being developed, but are often drawn on different categories of age and ethnicity.</p> <p>The Sub-Committee noted the report and the efforts being made to engage the whole community.</p>	
10.	<p>Race Equality Scheme The Sub-Committee agreed to note the contents of Manchester City Council's Race Equality Scheme 2005-8 (RES) and understood Northwards Housing's contribution to delivering the Council's race equality objectives. Furthermore, the Sub-Committee agreed that Northwards Housing should voluntarily produce its own RES.</p> <p>Recommendation to the Board: The Sub-Committee is recommending to the Board that Northwards Housing contributes to the Council's Race Equality Scheme and voluntarily produces its own Scheme.</p>	
11.	<p>Involvement with Refugee Week OS outlined the purpose and programme for Refugee Week. Northwards Housing is sponsoring the event at Trinity Church on Cheetham Hill Road on 22nd June in order to develop links with the refugee community in North Manchester.</p>	

ITEM	SUBJECT	ACTION
	<p>The Sub-Committee noted the programme for Refugee Week and the involvement of Northwards Housing.</p>	
<p>12.</p>	<p>Equality & Diversity Update OS had one further matter to update the Sub-Committee. That is, 85% of staff have successfully completed the Diversity Workbook test.</p> <p>The Sub-Committee noted this matter and welcomed the commitment of staff.</p>	
<p>13.</p>	<p>Application Form LMcB explained the purpose and layout of the new job application form linked to Northwards Housing's branding of "Moving Forward Together" for all staffing matters. This links to work with diverse communities in North Manchester and discussions with MANCAT.</p> <p>AA welcomed the clear use of Values in the application form and asked whether it would be available on line. LMcB confirmed that it would.</p> <p>MM asked about support for job applicants with poor literacy and numeracy skills. LMcB explained that this is under consideration.</p> <p>The Sub-Committee noted and supported the new application form.</p>	
<p>14.</p>	<p>Absence Reporting & Toolkit LMcB explained the report which outlined sickness absence in April which showed sickness running at an average of 3.2% across the organisation. Sickness absence will be reported to the Sub-Committee on a monthly basis as it is a published Best Value indicator.</p> <p>The report went on to explain the enhancements being made to the absence procedures, particularly Return to Work documentation and generic letters to employees. LMcB explained the Managers' Toolkit which is available as a support for managers in dealing with sickness absence.</p> <p>MM asked whether consideration is being given to rewarding good attendance and JH suggested recognition awards similar to those offered by the Council.</p>	

ITEM	SUBJECT	ACTION
	<p>LMcB advised that rewarding good attendance is to be discussed by the Communications Champions Group as whatever is introduced has to be supported by staff. She went on to explain the recognition awards given through Staff Briefings, which had been well received.</p> <p>The Sub-Committee noted the sickness levels for April and welcomed the Managers' Toolkit.</p>	
15.	<p>Board Training & Appraisals</p> <p>RL advised that the Board had requested this Sub-Committee to develop the training and development programme for Board Members as set out in Enlighten's report following individual Board Member Appraisals. He explained actions being taken to arrange training as set out in the training and development programme.</p> <p>The Sub-Committee noted the report and asked to receive regular updates.</p>	
16.	<p>Any Other Business</p> <p>a) Potential Co-optee</p> <p>RL advised the Sub-Committee that a potential co-optee has been identified. This is Sue Pemberton, who is a tenant and a member of the Disability Rights Commission, and who has advised on DDA works to Monsall Street Office. It was agreed that MM and RL would meet Sue and would then bring a report to the Sub-Committee. The Board will have to ratify the decision of the Sub-Committee if she is asked to join as a co-optee.</p>	
17.	<p>Date of next meeting</p> <p>Tuesday 25 July at 7.00pm – Hexagon Tower.</p>	