

**Northwards Housing – HR & Equality Sub-Committee Meeting**

**Hexagon Tower  
Tuesday 24<sup>th</sup> October at 7.00pm**

**Chair: Martin McKevitt**

**Present:**      Martin McKevitt (MM)                      Board Member & Chair  
                     Ade Alao (AA)                                      Board Member  
                     Fatima Adamjee                                   Board Member  
                     Sue Pemberton                                    Co-optee

**In Attendance:**  
                     Robin Lawler (RL)                                Chief Executive  
                     Lisa McBurnie (LMcB)                         Human Resources Manager

<b>ITEM</b>	<b>SUBJECT</b>	<b>ACTION</b>
<b>1</b>	<b>Welcome and Introductions</b>  The meeting was not quorate.	
<b>2</b>	<b>Apologies for Absence</b>  Joan Fitzgerald Fionnuala Stringer	
<b>3</b>	<b>Confidential Matters/Declarations of Interest</b>  There were no declarations of interest. There will be one confidential item under Any Other Business	
<b>4</b>	<b>Minutes of Last Meeting held on 26<sup>th</sup> September 2006</b>  These were noted by the members present. Approval of minutes is deferred to the next Sub-Committee meeting.	
<b>5</b>	<b>Matters Arising</b>  a) <b>Disabled Focus Group</b> meeting still to be arranged. SP to be invited.  b) <b>Probationary Policy &amp; Procedure</b> to be brought back to Sub-Committee in December having taken legal advice & discussed with Trade Unions.	<b>OS</b>  <b>LMcB</b>

	<p>c) The preferred candidate for <b>E&amp;D Officer's post</b> originally accepted, but has now declined the appointment. There is a second appointable candidate &amp; it is proposed to make an offer of employment to them. This post is required to continue the valuable work undertaken by OS during her secondment from her substantive role.</p>	<b>LMcB</b>
<b>6</b>	<p><b>Code of Practice on Racial Equality in Housing</b>  RL gave a verbal report advising that the Commission for Racial Equality (CRE) had recently published a revised Code of Practice on Racial Equality in Housing. This Code is "the first to bring together the broad range of services that fall within housing, both public &amp; private" &amp; replaces previous statutory codes of practice in rented &amp; non-rented housing (1991 &amp; 1992 respectively). The revisions to the Code has been necessitated by "marked changes in the way housing is provided &amp; managed in England."  The code is available at <a href="http://www.cre.gov.uk/gdpract/housing_code.html">http://www.cre.gov.uk/gdpract/housing_code.html</a></p> <p>The Code clearly applies to Northwards Housing. RL advised that the intention is to bring a report to a future Sub-Committee meeting explaining the implications &amp; how we need to incorporate relevant actions into our E&amp;D Action Plan.</p> <p><b>The Sub-Committee noted the report.</b></p>	<b>RL/OS</b>
<b>7</b>	<p><b>Disability Equality Scheme</b>  RL explained this late item which had been previously circulated. The Disability Discrimination Act 2005 introduces a duty upon public bodies (general duty) to promote disability equality which comes into effect in December 2006. The Act is backed by a statutory Code of Conduct which gives more detail what the duty will involve.</p> <p>SP advised that there is a general duty upon Northwards to produce a Disability Equality Scheme (DES), but agreed with RL that it would be best practice to develop our own scheme. RL advised that work is to be jointly undertaken with the Council &amp; then bring a further report to the Sub-Committee recommending how the DES could best be developed for Northwards.</p> <p><b>The Sub-Committee noted the report.</b></p>	<b>RL/OS</b>
<b>8</b>	<p><b>Equality &amp; Diversity Action Plan Update: September 2006</b>  RL explained the updated E&amp;D Action Plan which shows progress on E&amp;D issues from December 2005 to September 2006. The updated Action Plan identifies by colour coding completed actions, work in progress &amp; actions still outstanding. The intention is to bring the next quarterly update to the Sub-</p>	

	<p>Committee in January 2006. MM asked if the next update should show progress over the previous quarter. RL undertook to provide this information.</p> <p><b>The Sub-Committee noted progress against the E&amp;D Action Plan to September 2006.</b></p>	<b>RL</b>
<b>9</b>	<p><b>Age Discrimination</b> LMcB explained the new legislative arrangements regarding age discrimination which came into effect from 1st October 2006. The report set out how Northwards will respond to the new requirements having taken legal advice. Managers have been briefed upon the implications &amp; a briefing note is being prepared to cascade to all staff.</p> <p>In discussion it was agreed not to amend education &amp; employment history sections on the job application form, but rather to monitor outcomes from recruitment similar to monitoring arrangements for women, BME &amp; disabled applicants.</p> <p>SP advised that Irish Republic is ahead of UK &amp; it may be sensible to monitor Irish case law.</p> <p><b>The Sub-Committee noted the report</b></p>	<b>LMcB</b>
<b>10</b>	<p><b>Organisational Health Indicators: September 2006</b> LMcB introduced the report &amp; table which set out progress against BV indicators covering organisational health issues. She explained that good progress has been made against targets set for 2006/7, with the exception of top 5% of earners from BME background or with a disability. LMcB advised that Northwards is now starting to benchmark performance against other ALMOs.</p> <p>AA suggested that, recognising that MCC targets were the starting point for setting Northwards' targets, the bar been set too high for senior management representation. It was agreed to critically review the position in setting targets for 2007/8. It was further agreed to break down these figures by team/department in January when the new HR system comes on line.</p> <p><b>The Sub-Committee noted the report.</b></p>	<b>LMcB</b>
<b>11</b>	<p><b>Equality &amp; Diversity Employment Policy</b> LMcB explained the report which seeks to put in place policy &amp; procedures which prevent discrimination &amp; promote equality &amp; fairness in the workplace. She agreed that there is a need to review the Comprehensive E&amp;D Policy previously approved by the Board to ensure that it is still consistent with this policy. <b>The Sub-Committee approved the policy &amp; is recommending approval to the Board.</b></p>	<b>LMcB/OS</b>

<b>12</b>	<p><b>Absence Performance: September 2006</b> LMcB gave an update on absence performance to 30th September which shows a cumulative figure of an average of 4.2 days per employee. If this pattern continues Northwards should achieve its target of 10 days per employee for the year. It was noted that there had been good progress in addressing absence, particularly long term sickness. Currently, 3 employees are long term sick compared to 10 in December 2005.</p> <p>The Sub-Committee welcomed the improved performance &amp; asked that a further analysis be undertaken to explain the variation between staff teams &amp; offices.</p> <p><b>The Sub-Committee noted the report.</b></p>	<b>LMcB</b>
<b>13</b>	<p><b>Retirement Policy &amp; Procedure</b> LMcB explained that the purpose of the policy &amp; procedures is to ensure compliance with the age discrimination legislation which allows employees to choose to work beyond their normal retirement age. The procedures are intended to ensure that staff are advised of this right &amp; to ensure that it is exercised correctly.</p> <p><b>The Sub-Committee agreed the policy &amp; procedure &amp; are recommending to the Board for approval.</b></p>	
<b>14</b>	<p><b>Investors in People (IiP) Update</b> LMcB gave a verbal update on progress with IiP accreditation. Margo Singer has previous experience of IiP with the Council &amp; will lead for Northwards.</p> <p><b>The report was noted &amp; a further written update was requested for November.</b></p>	<b>LMcB</b>
<b>15</b>	<p><b>Succession Planning Update</b> LMcB gave a verbal update on succession planning. From her analysis to date:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 17 leavers (representing 6.8% of staff) have left since December 2005, of whom 9 were Neighbourhood Wardens;</li> <li>- 2 people are due to retire before 31/3/07;</li> <li>- 14.8% of employees are temporary or agency staff, particularly in Technical Services.</li> </ul> <p>The intention is to forward plan for leavers &amp; subsequent recruitment.</p> <p><b>The report was noted.</b></p>	
<b>16</b>	<p><b>Training</b> RL advised that training has been arranged for Board Members</p>	

	<p>following the appraisal exercise. In future this will be referred to as "learning" rather than "training" to reflect the active participation of Board &amp; staff.</p> <p><b>The report was noted.</b></p>	
<b>14</b>	<p><b>Any Other Business</b></p> <p><b>a) Job Evaluation-</b> confidential item; see confidential minutes</p>	
<b>15</b>	<p><b>Date of next meeting</b></p> <p><b>Tuesday 28<sup>th</sup> November @ 7.00 (Hexagon Tower)</b></p>	