

Northwards Housing – HR & Equality Sub-Committee Meeting

**Hexagon Tower
Tuesday 26th September at 7.00pm**

Chair: Martin McKevitt

Present:	Martin McKevitt (MM) Ade Alao (AA) Joan Fitzgerald (JF) Fionnuala Stringer (FS) Fatima Adamjee (FA) (Part) Sue Pemberton (SP)	Board Member & Chair Board Member Board Member Board Member Board Member Co-optee
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In Attendance:	Robin Lawler (RL) Lisa McBurnie (LMcB)	Chief Executive Human Resources Manager
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ITEM	SUBJECT	ACTION
1	<p align="center">Welcome and Introductions</p> <p>Quorum Confirmed. SP was welcomed to her first meeting as a Co-optee.</p>	
2	<p align="center">Apologies for Absence</p> <p>June Hitchen (JH)</p>	
3	<p align="center">Confidential Matters/Declarations of Interest</p> <p>There were no declarations of interest. The only confidential item is confidential minutes from 25th July 2006.</p>	
4	<p align="center">Minutes of Last Meeting held on 25th July 2006</p> <p>The public minutes were approved with one correction; item 11 should state that MM is an liP panel member & not an assessor.</p> <p>The confidential minutes were agreed as a correct record.</p> <p>Both minutes were signed by MM as Chair.</p>	
5	<p align="center">Matters Arising</p> <p>a) Disabled Focus Group is to meet again shortly. SP to be invited to attend.</p>	OS

6	<p>Probationary Policy & Procedure LMcB explained the report which seeks to develop the Council's policy & procedure which Northwards has inherited. The key points of development are the introduction of a right of appeal by the probationer. The policy & procedure has been discussed in the Employee Forum.</p> <p>SP asked whether there is a mentoring scheme. LMcB confirmed that there is, but it is intended to use "buddying" for new employees.</p> <p>AA asked whether 3 months was too short a period for probation to know how the member of staff would be able to meet the requirements of their role. LMcB responded by stating that 3 months is the accepted period & that this has been previously agreed with trade unions. There is also the opportunity to extend the probationary period if there are concerns about an employee's performance & attitude.</p> <p>AA also asked whether weekly review meetings was too demanding on managers. RL responded by stating that the intention is to bring more rigour & consistency into the process, but also that the turnover of staff is relatively low.</p> <p>FS expressed concern that more difficult aspects of the job would not be faced by new employees in the first 3 months.</p> <p>After discussion, it was agreed to defer this report to the next meeting & to seek legal advice upon the probationary period.</p> <p>FA joined the meeting</p>	LMcB
7	<p>Absence Reporting LMcB explained the status report on sickness absence which is to come to this Sub-Committee on a monthly basis. She outlined the standard report templates.</p> <p>MM commented that sub-totals in Appendix 2 appeared to be incorrect. LMcB apologised & undertook to make the corrections.</p> <p>SP asked out disability related absences, such as hospital appointments. LMcB confirmed that this was allowed outside the sickness absence arrangements & did not form part of the sickness statistics.</p> <p>MM commented on the sickness levels in the public sector. RL advised that there are cultural & organisational issues which</p>	

<p>8</p> <p>9</p> <p>10</p> <p>11</p> <p>12</p>	<p>affect absence levels in public sector compared to private firms.</p> <p>After discussion, the sickness absence reporting arrangements & standard reports were noted.</p> <p>Investors in People (IiP) LMcB introduced the progress report on IiP. She advised that the intention is to submit an application in December/January with auditing of our portfolio of evidence & interviews scheduled for March 2007.</p> <p>The Sub-Committee noted progress with IiP & asked to receive a further verbal update in November.</p> <p>Staff Appraisal Scheme LMcB gave an update on progress with staff appraisals using the new scheme & the appraisal toolkit. Overall 12% of appraisals have been completed across the organisation, but much higher levels of completion in some sections.</p> <p>The update was noted.</p> <p>Succession Planning LMcB gave a verbal update on work being undertaken to plan ahead for retirement & movement of staff. The aim is to be more proactive by predicting future staff vacancies & to reduce our reliance on temporary & agency staff.</p> <p>RL advised that staff turnover provides an opportunity to change the profile of the staff to better reflect the community we serve & to introduce more flexible staffing arrangements, such as trainee posts.</p> <p>The Sub-Committee noted the report.</p> <p>Interpretation & Translations Policy & Procedure RL introduced Northwards' policy & procedure which is intended to assist good communication with our tenants & customers. The intention is to review performance against the policy & procedure in 12 months. We have & will continue to draw upon best practice in this area.</p> <p>AA suggested that value for money needs to be considered in this area.</p> <p>The report was noted.</p> <p>Equality Standard Level 1</p>	<p>LMcB</p>
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13	<p>RL explained the report & accompanying schedule which confirmed Northwards' attainment of Level 1 of the Equality Standard using an independent assessor from Leeds City Council. The report also looks ahead to attainment of Level 2 by end of December. The intention is to seek Level 3 by March 2007.</p> <p>The report was noted.</p> <p>Equality & Diversity Update RL updated on 2 matters: a) Diversity Workbook has been successfully completed by 100% of staff. b) E&D Officer interviews take place week commencing 2nd October.</p> <p>The report was noted.</p>	
14	<p>Any Other Business</p> <p>There was no other business</p>	
15	<p>Date of next meeting</p> <p>Next meeting: Tuesday 24th October @ 7.00 pm in Hexagon Tower. Apologies: JF</p>	