

Northwards Housing – HR & Equality Sub-Committee Meeting

**Hexagon Tower
Tuesday 22nd May 2007 at 7.00pm**

Chair: Martin McKevitt

Present: Martin McKevitt Board Member
 Fatima Adamjee Board Member
 Joan Fitzgerald Board Member

In Attendance: Robin Lawler (RL) Chief Executive
 Lisa McBurnie (LMcB) Human Resources Manager
 Tara Kelly (TK) E&D Officer

ITEM	SUBJECT	ACTION
1	<p>Welcome and Introductions</p> <p>The meeting was confirmed as quorate.</p>	
2	<p>Apologies for Absence</p> <p>Apologies had been received from Ade Alao, Rachel Christie, June Hitchen & Sue Pemberton.</p>	
3	<p>Declarations of Interest / Confidential Matters / Equality & Diversity Matters Arising</p> <p>There were no confidential matters or declarations of interest to note.</p> <p>Equality & Diversity matters were noted on specific reports.</p>	
4	<p>Minutes of Last Meeting held on 27th February 2007</p> <p>The minutes of the previous meeting were approved as a correct & accurate record & duly signed by the Chair.</p>	
5	<p>Matters Arising</p> <p>Item 5- Investors In People(liP) LMcB stated that work is continuing on liP. The development of the Learning & Development Strategy is a key component.</p> <p>Item 9- BME Representation in Workforce Quarterly progress reports to be submitted to this Sub-Committee.</p>	

6	<p>Review of Equality & Diversity (E&D) Action Plan 2006/7</p> <p>TK presented a summary of the key actions in 2006/7 E&D Action Plan which shows that of a total of 153 actions, 105 have been completed, 26 are continuous actions & 22 actions are outstanding. This represents a 85.6% completion rate.</p> <p>In response to MMcK's question, TK advised that continuous & outstanding actions will be picked up in this year's E&D Action Plan (agenda item 13). This includes extending the customer profiling, reviewing hate crime reporting & carrying out equality impact assessments.</p> <p>The Sub-Committee noted the report & welcomed progress within the E&D Action Plan 2006/7.</p>	
7	<p>Housing & the Disability Equality Duty</p> <p>TK introduced her report which sought to explain the implications of the Disability Equality Duty in relation to housing. Although Northwards is bound by the General Duty, there is not a legal requirement to comply with Specific Duties. Northwards will be preparing a Disability Equality Scheme (DES) as good practice. The DES will include an action plan (which was attached to the report) & will be brought to this Sub-Committee in due course.</p> <p>MMcK asked about accessibility of all properties which Northwards manages. RL advised that not all homes are accessible, but will be adapted to meet the specific needs of tenants & their families.</p> <p>JF raised concerns about barriers for disabled people in the wider estate environment. RL explained that Northwards cannot resolve this historic legacy from when estates were built, but we will respond to the needs of disabled people & will try to improve accessibility when carrying out environmental projects.</p> <p>The Sub-Committee noted that Northwards is taking positive action to ensure disability equality is embedded throughout the organisation & noted that disabled staff & customers will be involved in developing the Disability Equality Scheme</p>	
8	<p>Diversity Key Lines of Enquiry (KLOE): Guidance Note on Legislation</p> <p>TK advised that the purpose of her report was to advise the Sub-Committee of the guidance note issued by the Audit Commission to explain legislation relevant to the Diversity KLOE.</p> <p>The Sub-Committee noted the statutory framework which relates to the KLOE & noted the emerging issues highlighted in the report.</p>	
9	<p>Northwards Experience: Work Placement Project</p> <p>LMcB introduced this report which had been prepared by Sue Pemberton as part of her placement with Northwards from the</p>	

	<p>Disability Rights Commission. The report outlines a pilot project to bring 10 local people into an unpaid work placement with Northwards for 12 weeks. It is hoped to induct the first intake in September & the first phase will be fully evaluated. A baseline will be set for participants so that we can judge what progress they've made.</p> <p>LMcB explained that the benefit to participants is to give them experience of work, to build their self confidence & to provide them with a reference which could help them to attain permanent work or training.</p> <p>In response to FA's question, LMcB advised that there are no explicit costs for Northwards, but staff need to commit to support trainees. MMcK suggested involving Board Members in the induction of participants. LMcB welcomed this suggestion.</p> <p>The Sub-Committee noted the report & gave their support for Northwards Experience.</p>	LMcB
10	<p>Absence Reporting:</p> <p>a) Absence Report for 2006/7 LMcB introduced the annual absence report for 2006/7. This shows that for 12 months to 31st March Northwards exceeded its target of an average of 10 days absence per employee by 0.45 days. Whilst this was disappointing there has been an improvement of 0.77 days on the previous year & action is being taken to address long term sickness.</p> <p>LMcB is recommending a target for sickness absence of 9.5 days per employee for 2007/8.</p> <p>Sub-Committee noted the absence performance for 2006/7 & is recommending to the Board an absence target of 9.5 days per employee for 2007/8.</p> <p>b) Absence Report for April 2007 LMcB presented the sickness absence report for April 2007 which shows an average of 1 day per employee. If continuing at this level over the year, Northwards would exceed its 9.5 day target for 2007/8. Steps are being taken to bring the absence back on target including regular meetings with line managers & a number of long term sickness cases being actively managed. However, LMcB acknowledged that we need to improve the timeliness of actions, such as home visits.</p> <p>Regular monthly absence reports will be brought to this Sub-Committee.</p> <p>The Sub-Committee noted the sickness absence report for April 2007.</p>	
11	<p>Organisational Health Indicators 2006/7 LMcB presented the report which set out progress across the range</p>	

	<p>of Organisational Health indicators for 2006/7. This shows that a number of targets were achieved. However, progress is required to achieve targets for total number of BME employees & the percentage of BME & Disabled employees in top 5% of earners. RL explained that these are targets & not quotas & that we will continue to identify actions to achieve these targets. He is also aware of under-reporting, but staff decide what they wish to declare.</p> <p>MMcK asked about Northwards' recruitment strategy & its contribution to achieving targets. LMcb explained that HR Team are working upon this strategy which will include actions such as developing/progressing existing employees, holding career days, leadership, development of own temporary staff register & ensuring that Northwards reflects the community it serves.</p> <p>Sub-Committee noted outturn against Organisational Health targets for 2006/7 & asked to receive quarterly progress reports during 2007/8.</p>	
12	<p>Northwards Training Needs Analysis 2007/8 LMcb presented the Training Needs Analysis for 2007/8 which set out training progression to date, outlined activities planned in 2007/8 & gave an update on the development of the Learning & Development Strategy. This Strategy will be brought to the Sub-Committee in June.</p> <p>RL explained that we will be using "learning" rather than "training" as the former implies an active process in which staff take responsibility for their own personal development.</p> <p>JF asked about the provision of basic English courses. LMcb advised that this was a learning need identified by caretakers. The provision of PCs to sheltered wardens & caretakers will allow them to participate in e-learning programmes.</p> <p>MMcK asked that we properly evaluate our return on investment in learning, such as learning evaluation 6 months after an event or course. LMcb welcomed the suggestion & said that this should form part of staffs' regular 1:1 sessions with their managers.</p> <p>Sub-Committee noted the Training Needs Analysis for 2007/8 & looked forward to receiving the Learning & Development Strategy at its June meeting.</p>	LMcb
13	<p>Equality & Diversity action Plan 2007/8 TK introduced the E&D Action Plan for 2007/8 which picks up continuing & outstanding actions from 2006/7 Plan & identifies some new themes. It has been developed in consultation with Managers & unlike 2006/7 Plan is a high level document. The detailed actions will site behind the E&D Action Plan within their own detailed plan.</p> <p>Sub-Committee raised a number of questions about the Plan, but</p>	

	welcomed the shorter & clearer format. RL advised that the intention is to bring quarterly progress reports to this Sub-Committee. Sub-Committee is recommending approval of the Equality & Diversity Action Plan 2007/8 to the Board.	RL
14	Job Evaluation LMcB gave a brief verbal update on job evaluation, which was noted.	
15	<p>Late Items</p> <p>a) Property Services Restructure RL introduced this report from Larry Patrick concerning restructuring of some parts of Property Services. The main proposal is to merge Development Team & Technical Services Team to create 3 Home Improvement Teams, one for each Area Panel to co-locate with contractor partners. These proposals have been discussed with staff & trade unions & have been developed in consultation with Procurement & Property Sub-Committee. The report is being considered by that Sub-Committee on 23rd May.</p> <p>The other changes have been implemented under the Chief Executive's delegated powers involving the creation of a third Senior surveyor post responsible for Voids, moving Asset Management post to Programme Planning Team & moving gas & electrical servicing to Repairs Team.</p> <p>RL advised that further proposals will be developed for Repairs Team, particularly resulting from the current Voids Review. These will be brought forward in due course.</p> <p>FA asked about staff's views & whether job losses are involved. LMcB advised that no job losses result from the proposals & that staff were initially hesitant, but are now on board after proper explanation & involvement. The proposals should assist staff progression.</p> <p>Sub-Committee noted the restructure proposals for part of Property Services.</p> <p>b) Revised Board Training Plan RL presented the revised Board Training Plan which has been updated & adjusted to reflect the Board's decision to have Board discussion sessions in lieu of training once a quarter.</p> <p>Sub-Committee approved the revised Board Training Plan.</p>	
16	<p>Any Other Business</p> <p>a) Equality Standard Level 2 Evaluation TK advised that an independent evaluation is to be carried out for Equality Standard Level 2 on 30th May. Sub-Committee will be</p>	

	advised of the outcome.	
	b) August Meeting RL asked whether it is the wish of the Sub-Committee to meet in August. Matter to be reviewed at June meeting.	
17	Date & Time of Next Meeting: Tuesday 26th June @ 7.00	