

Northwards Housing – HR & Equality Sub-Committee Meeting

Hexagon Tower
Tuesday 27th March 2007 at 7.00pm

Chair: Martin McKevitt

Present:

Fatima Adamjee	Board Member
Ade Alao	Board Member
Joan Fitzgerald	Board Member
Sue Pemberton	Co-optee

In Attendance:

Robin Lawler (RL)	Chief Executive
Steve Wood (SW)	Director of Business Services
Lisa McBurnie (LMcB)	Human Resources Manager
David Preston (DP)	Human Resources 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 Martin McKevitt, Rachel Christie and Tara Kelly. In Martin's absence, Fatima agreed to Chair the meeting.</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 and accurate record.</p>	
5	<p>Matters Arising</p> <p>Item 7- Work & Families Act 2006 The changes in maternity pay arrangements are to be communicated to employees at the March Staff Briefings.</p> <p>Item 8- Investors in People LMcB to set up a Reference Group for IiP.</p>	LMcB

	<p>Item 9- Business Plan SW confirmed that "training" has been changed to "learning" throughout the version of the Business Plan presented to March Board.</p> <p>Item 10- Board Training & Development Programme SW advised that the suggestions from this Sub-Committee had been incorporated into the programme presented to March Board. AA & RL have discussed the proposed Board Away Day & will bring a proposal to May Board.</p>	
6	<p>Updated Equality & Diversity Action Plan 2006/7 RL outlined the purpose of the E&D Action Plan & explained that the Plan describes the considerable action taken to 31st March 2007 in support of Northwards' commitment to E&D. The Plan will now be refreshed & re-presented with appropriate actions for 2007/8. The Plan will continue to reflect the structure of the Diversity Key Line of Enquiry, but incorporating section 6 in other sections. AA welcomed the review of the Plan & asked that JH as Board Champion be involved in reviewing the Plan. It was requested that in the covering reports to this Sub-Committee that there is a summation of the actions in the Plan showing how many completed, how many on time & how many overdue & percentage in each category. The Sub-Committee noted progress against E&D Action Plan 2006/7 & requested that a revised Plan be prepared for 2007/8.</p>	<p>RL/TK</p> <p>JH</p> <p>RL/TK</p>
7	<p>Organisational Health & Equality Performance Indicators LMcB outlined progress against current indicators to 31st December 2006 & proposed 3 new indicators for 2007/8 in line with the revised Performance Management Framework approved by March Board. The 3 new indicators relate to: PI 1- % of staff satisfied with Northwards as their employer (as measured by the annual employee survey) PI 8- % of staff turnover PI 9- % of Lesbian, Gay & Bi-Sexual employees in workforce These were agreed, but with the suggestion that PI 9 be extended to include Transgender. SP advised that the new Equality Commission was considering whether this category should be incorporated with other sexuality groups or be a stand alone group. The targets for 2007/8 were deferred for discussion at April Sub-Committee when year end performance for 2006/7 will be known. It was requested that, in setting targets, the performance of top quartile performing ALMOs was considered. It was accepted that it may not be appropriate to set a target for LGB employees until reliable data is available for current numbers in the workforce. It was recognised that staff may not initially have the confidence in Northwards to declare their sexuality. The report was noted, but targets for Performance Indicators for 2007/8 was deferred until April Sub-Committee.</p>	<p>LMcB</p>

8	<p>Absence Performance</p> <p>DP explained sickness absence performance to week ending 4th March. This shows a total absence per employee of 9.6 days against a target of 10 days for 2006/7. It is anticipated that the target will be achieved at year end. This compares with performance in 2005/6 of 11.7 days absence per employee.</p> <p>The Sub-Committee acknowledged the figures & congratulated the HR Team on meeting the target & driving down absence from 2005/6.</p> <p>DP advised that line managers are now taking ownership of sickness absence which contributes to this improving performance. He explained that trend data is now available by team.</p> <p>A report is to be brought to April Sub-Committee recommending an absence performance target for 2007/8 once year end outcome is known & looking at best performing ALMOs.</p> <p>The report was noted.</p>	LMcB/DP
9	<p>BME Representation in Workforce</p> <p>DP presented the report which explained BME representation in Northwards' workforce by ethnic group & by grade. The information is based on the latest annual personal details form completed by all staff. However, 17.7% of employees chose not to declare their ethnic origin, as is their right.</p> <p>From 2007/8 Northwards will capture information on the sexuality of job applicants & this will be included as a question on next personal details form issued to staff.</p> <p>The report was noted & the Sub-Committee asked for quarterly reports on the matter.</p>	LMcB/DP
10	<p>Health & Safety Review</p> <p>SW advised upon work being undertaken to review Northwards' policy & practice with regards to H&S. He advised that an Internal Audit Report has been prepared with two general recommendations. However, it was recognised that a more in depth review was required which has been undertaken by Michael Booth, a H&S Officer with the Council. Initial results have been received & a formal report will be submitted to April Sub-Committee reporting on the outcome of the review & the recommendations. An H&S Action Plan will be developed in consultation with H&S Working Group to be established.</p> <p>AA asked that the expertise of the CDM Team be drawn upon, but not to the exclusion of good H&S practice across the organisation. SW agreed & stated that staff "buy in" is required if H&S practice is to be embedded.</p> <p>AA also suggested a H&S workbook similar to that used for E&D. SW advised that this was already under consideration.</p> <p>RL advised that consideration will also be given to the value of external H&S accreditation, such as RoSPA.</p> <p>The report was noted & a further report was requested.</p>	SW

11	<p>Job Evaluation LMcB gave a brief verbal update on progress with Job Evaluation & advised that the results are still awaited from the Council for surveying & technical staff which is creating some distrust & discontent with staff. Northwards has bought the software used by the Council & DP has been trained as an analyst. The intention is to job evaluate Northwards staff, where appropriate, either by a desktop exercise or by interviewing staff using software. The trade unions are on board. Now that funding has been secured for Neighbourhood Wardens there is a need to job evaluate this group. Sub-Committee noted progress with Job Evaluation.</p>	
12	<p>Training RL advised that he & LMcB are evaluating the Housing e-academy as a potential on line learning tool for staff & the Board. A report will be brought in due course.</p>	
13	<p>Any Other Business</p> <p>a) Inspection Action Plan In line with the approach agreed by the Board, RL circulated an extract of the Inspection Action Plan with those actions under the scrutiny of this Sub-Committee. None of these actions are within the 5 Recommendations in the Inspection Report, but are comments/issues referred to in the body of the Report. The update was noted & further reports were requested.</p> <p>b) Salary Review SW advised that whilst job evaluation will deal with the salaries of the majority of Northwards' staff, this process does not include senior managers in the organisation. It is therefore proposed to use the Northern Housing Consortium to benchmark salaries in the sector & to provide independent advice to the Board. In line with other ALMOs, it is proposed to establish a Remuneration Panel comprising 3 Board Members to take advice from the consultants & to make recommendations to the Board. The terms of reference will be brought to the first meeting of the Panel for agreement. The matter was discussed earlier by Resource & Audit Sub-Committee who nominated Harvey Norton onto the Panel. It was agreed by this Sub-Committee to nominate Martin McKeivitt & Joan Fitzgerald to serve on the Panel. Recommendation: The Board is recommended to establish a Remuneration Panel to consider the salaries of senior managers & to agree that the members are Harvey Norton, Martin McKeivitt & Joan Fitzgerald. The Panel will make recommendations to the Board on this matter & the Board will decide.</p>	RL
14	<p>Date & Time of Next Meeting: Tuesday 24th April @ 7.00 Ade Alao's apologies were noted for this meeting.</p>	