

Northwards Housing – HR & Equality Sub-Committee Meeting

Hexagon Tower
Tuesday 28th October 2008 at 7:00pm

Chair: Martin McKevitt

Present: Martin McKevitt (MM) Board Member
Rachel Christie (RC) Board Member
Joan Fitzgerald (JF) Board Member

In Attendance: Steve Wood (SW) Director of Business Services
Lisa McBurnie (LMcB) Head of HR
Tara Kelly (TK) Equality and Diversity Officer

ITEM	SUBJECT	ACTION
1	<p>Welcome and Introductions</p> <p>It was confirmed that the meeting was quorate.</p>	
2	<p>Apologies for Absence</p> <p>Apologies had been received from June Hitchen, Fatima Adamjee and the Chief Executive.</p>	
3	<p>Declaration of Interests / Confidential Matters / Equality & Diversity Matters Arising</p> <p>There were no Declarations of Interest.</p> <p>Equality and Diversity implications were noted on particular reports.</p>	
4	<p>Minutes of the Last Meetings</p> <p>The minutes and confidential minutes of the last meetings held on 24th June and 23rd September were approved and signed by the Chair.</p>	
5	<p>Matters Arising</p> <p>a) Health and Safety</p> <p>SW reported that he proposed asking Alan Lawrenson, Head of Health and Safety to come to the November meeting and present the latest Health and Safety Action Plan which was being updated. This was agreed.</p> <p>b) Consultation on Greater Manchester Future Transport</p> <p>In the absence of the Chief Executive, it was agreed that this item</p>	SW

	would be carried forward and that an update report would be made at a future meeting.	RL
6	<p>Creating Sustainable Communities Course</p> <p>Sub-Committee received a report on the outcomes, feedback and positive practice arising from the Creating Sustainable Communities Course which had been organised in conjunction with Salford University and the Academy for Sustainable Communities.</p> <p>MM reflected on his participation on the course. He felt the sessions had been a good team building exercise for Northwards and plenty of good ideas had come from the events. The work done and discussions held had shown how difficult it was to deal with the creation of sustainable communities that met everyone's ambitions.</p> <p>MM commented that the disappointing part of the sessions was that they had lacked focus and direction at times and the website tool was not very user friendly. However, with a good mixture of people and plenty of discussion, the overall impression had been a positive one.</p> <p>Sub-Committee noted the report, particularly the positive practice elements.</p>	
7	<p>Customer Profiling</p> <p>TK provided an update for Sub-Committee on progress with collecting information about customers. Last time a report had been presented a collection rate of 61% had been reported but this had now risen to over 70%. The team were still working towards achieving an 80% figure by mid November and were also putting plans together to collect the remaining 20%.</p> <p>The information collected was already being used in a variety of ways and Sub-Committee had already seen some of the output from that work in relation to the Language Review and the Workforce Profile information. In answer to a question TK confirmed that the communications needs information was being used.</p> <p>The one challenging area from the data collected remained the statistic on disabled tenants at 38% of the customer base. A lot of these were physical disabilities or long-term illnesses. Further work was required to address issues that came from this information.</p> <p>Sub-Committee noted the report.</p>	

8	<p>Labour Turnover</p> <p>LMcB presented a status report on labour turnover summarising the organisation's retention levels and stability rates.</p> <p>The data showed a 3% turnover rate for the first five months of the year (2008-09) compared with 6% for 2007-08 and 7% for 2006-07. The data was therefore very consistent and Northwards was on track to achieve the 6% target for 2008-09.</p> <p>RC asked about comparisons with others and LMcB reported that whilst she did not have detailed figures to hand, compared to other industries and the Council, Northwards figure was extremely favourable.</p> <p>Sub-Committee noted the report.</p>	
9	<p>Organisational Health Indicators</p> <p>LMcB presented a report setting out current performance against the suite of Organisational Health Indicators and proposing some amendments in targets.</p> <p>In relation to PIs around the top 5% of earners, LMcB commented that it was difficult to change these figures easily given the fact that there has been little or no movement.</p> <p>The target for absence had been set previously at 9.5 days and whilst the current figures were tracking towards 10.3 days the recommendation was to stick with the original target.</p> <p>Following review and based on known recruitment plans and work being undertaken by Workforce Planning it was felt appropriate to increase the target for disabled employees in the workforce to 7% (previously 6%).</p> <p>With the Customer Profiling information now available it was appropriate to adjust the BME employees in the workforce target to 10% in line with the profiling. Current performance was just over 9%.</p> <p>LMcB commented that with the current work being undertaken and the success in achieving performance close to current targets, it was hoped to set some more challenging targets in future years.</p> <p>Sub-Committee approved the revised targets</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Top 5% of earners that are women – 47% b) Disabled employees in the workforce – 7% c) BME employees in the workforce – 10% 	
10	Learning and Development Policy	

	<p>LMcB presented a brand new policy that had been in development for some time but which now was ready to roll out as part of a wider focus on Learning and Development across the organisation.</p> <p>The intention behind the policy was to make Learning and Development real and be clear about the roles and responsibilities of individuals, managers and the HR team.</p> <p>Sub-Committee welcomed the new policy and commented that it was a clear document being clear about roles as well as ensuring the focus was on culture and evaluation as well as provision.</p> <p>Sub-Committee approved the policy.</p>	
<p>11</p>	<p>Maternity, Adoption and Paternity and Maternity Support Policies</p> <p>LMcB presented revised policies covering Maternity, Adoption and Paternity and Maternity Support Leave. The intention behind the updated policies and the associated workflows and documentation was to set out responsibilities clearly and provide generic documentation to assist Managers, all of whom have different styles.</p> <p>LMcB confirmed that Impact Assessments had been carried out on all three policies.</p> <p>SW brought Sub-Committee's attention to a differential in the Maternity Policy on entitlements for individuals who had come across to Northwards under TUPE or who had been recruited since. It was the intention to look at harmonising this policy at some point in the future.</p> <p>Sub-Committee approved the policy.</p>	
<p>12</p>	<p>Northwards Appraisal</p> <p>As requested at the last meeting of Sub-Committee, LMcB presented a summary of the current appraisal process in Northwards. The approach was a competency based appraisal that was more geared to attitude rather than tasks.</p> <p>Building on some of the comments of Sub-Committee arising from reflections on the results of the Employee Satisfaction Survey, it was clear that the appraisal process needed a rethink and relaunch. The new framework would be helped by the Learning and Development Policy.</p> <p>LMcB explained that Stuart Barley, Interim People Development Manager was currently carrying out a quality check and</p>	

	<p>discussing with Managers their ideas on improving the scheme.</p> <p>Based on the information available to date about the current appraisals, Sub-Committee asked for a report to be prepared setting out an overview of the Personal Development Plans and how this would further shape the Learning and Development plans.</p> <p>Sub-Committee were concerned that people did not seem to be buying into the appraisal process and that there did not seem to be much commitment to a six month review framework. LMcb commented that these areas were being picked up as part of the new framework. RC made some suggestions for changing the forms and these would be fed into the process also.</p> <p>Sub-Committee noted the update.</p>	LMcb
13	<p>Absence Report</p> <p>SW presented the absence report for September and took Sub-Committee through a couple of the key features on current performance. The current trend was tracking towards a figure of 10.3 days for the year, higher than target (9.5 days).</p> <p>As requested at the last meeting, a summary of the long-term absence cases had been provided and LMcb took Sub-Committee through some of the detail. She gave some more up-to-date information on statuses and return to work dates.</p> <p>Sub-Committee noted the report.</p>	
14	<p>Board Report Format</p> <p>Following on from some recent Impact Assessment Training, TK presented Sub-Committee with some proposals to change the current Equality and Diversity Implications section of Board and Sub-Committee reports with a new set of boxes for completion. The intention was to support the Board and Sub-Committees in ensuring that Equality Impact Assessments are always carried out before new policies are brought for approval.</p> <p>The intention behind the questions was to highlight where the implications are and ensure that assessments are being carried out properly.</p> <p>Sub-Committee thought this was a good idea and approved the template.</p>	
15	<p>Equality Standard Level 3</p> <p>TK updated Sub-Committee on the outcome of the recent</p>	

	<p>Equality Standard Level 3 application which had been unsuccessful. She commented that we had always known that there was a gulf between Levels 2 and 3 and that the assessment that Northwards was not quite at Level 3 had been a positive, if not slightly disappointing, process.</p> <p>A large amount of evidence had been provided to an external consultant and a peer review assessment had also taken place which had resulted in a number of positive comments and the assessors had been very impressed.</p> <p>The key issue which had meant that Level 3 had not been achieved was around how much evidence was available to support changes in practices or policies. There needed to be more team responsibility for Equality and Diversity rather than being done centrally, and whilst this was happening, we had not been able to provide sufficient evidence to the assessor. Plans were underway to demonstrate actions better within team improvement plans and look at how the current systems could better embed actions.</p> <p>TK informed Sub-Committee that a written report from the consultant was still awaited and was due shortly. She also advised Sub-Committee that the current standard was under review and might become more outcome focussed in the future. It would also now pick up all six Equality strands on a more equal basis than before.</p> <p>Sub-Committee congratulated TK on her efforts and the hard work involved.</p> <p>Sub-Committee noted the feedback.</p>	
<p>16</p>	<p>Any Other Business</p> <p>There was no further business for Sub-Committee to consider.</p>	
<p>17</p>	<p>Date of Next Meeting</p> <p>The next meeting would be on Tuesday 25th November at 7:00pm at Hexagon Tower.</p> <p>With thanks, the Chair closed the meeting at 8:05pm.</p>	