

WIRRAL COUNCIL

COUNCIL EXCELLENCE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 18 NOVEMBER 2010

REPORT OF THE INTERIM DIRECTOR OF CORPORATE SERVICES

MAINSTREAMING ACTIVITIES – STAFF DIVERSITY FORUMS

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to recommend a review of staff diversity forums with a view to mainstreaming their activities to achieve maximum benefits for the Council and its employees.

2. Background

- 2.1 Staff diversity forums were established during 2007/2008 and 2008/2009 as part of the Council's process of being awarded 'achieving' status (formerly level 3) of the Equality Framework for Local Government, and have been allocated £2,000 each per annum to:

- Support the development of staff policies and procedures.
- Provide input into the development of the Council's equality schemes.
- Advise the Council on meeting its statutory obligations with regard to equality legislation.
- Advise service areas on diversity related issues.
- Support the Council in achieving workplace related awards (for example Investors in People)
- Empower staff from 'equality protected' groups to have a voice within the Council, i.e. women, lesbian/gay/bisexual people, black/minority ethnic people, disabled people.

- 2.2 The Chairs of each staff diversity forum are members of the Corporate Equality and Cohesion Group, and also provide regular updates on the forums' progress.

- 2.3 Membership of the staff diversity forums has been open to all relevant staff, endorsed by the former Chief Executive of the Council.

3 Recent Achievements by Staff Diversity Forums

- 3.1 Disability Staff Forum:

- Participated in a working group to develop Council policy regarding disability related absence recording
- Recently established a time-limited sub-group to look at dyslexia within the workplace

3.2 Black and Racial Minority Staff Forum:

- Working in partnership with the Community Safety Team to further develop hate crime reporting and the establishment of a Hate Crime MARAC.
- Won an award from the North West Employers Organisation for the 'integration via football' event which encouraged the participation of numerous diverse football teams.

3.3 Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual Staff Forum

- Developed an action plan in order for the Council to be assessed for Stonewall's Equality Index scheme.
- The rainbow flag was raised at five Council buildings to acknowledge the International Day Against Homophobia (17 May).
- Participated in Liverpool's first Pride event.

3.4 Women's Forum

- Provided a seminar for female staff regarding career opportunities and career progression.
- Working in partnership with Technical Services department to design a survey for female staff to further understand perceptions, behaviours and attitudes within the department.

4. How many staff are members of the Diversity Forums?

Staff Diversity Forum	Number of Members
Women's Diversity Forum	6 staff attend quarterly meetings, and approximately 30 people receive information via email
Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual Diversity Forum	8 staff attend 6-weekly meetings, and 1 person receives information via email
Disability Diversity Forum	16 staff attend 6-weekly meetings, 4 staff attend a dyslexia sub-group, and approximately 50 people receive information via email
Black Workers' Group	13 staff attend 6-weekly meetings

5. How have the Diversity Forums utilised their budgets?

Staff Diversity Forum	2009 / 2010 Budget Spend	2010 / 2011 Budget Spend to 31 August 2010
Women's Diversity Forum	Nil spend	£336 on attending the Merseyside Women's Awards event
Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual Diversity Forum	£75 on five rainbow flags to be flown on Council buildings for IDAHO day	£64 on travel expenses for regional LGB strategy event
Disability Diversity Forum	£500 on mental health training (1 trainer and information packs)	Nil spend

Black Workers' Group	£10 Members' training (minute taker) £350 Black History Month Achievement Awards £171.50 Forum End of Year Celebration (arranged as an incentive to attract new members and to also thank existing members for all their hard work during the year) £200 Pyramid Performance Activity £350.75 advert in wage slips £208 Chinese new year event Sub-total = £1290.25	Nil spend
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6. Reaching 'Excellent' status of the Equality Framework for Local Government

6.1 Part of the criteria for being awarded 'Excellent' status includes:

- 'There are forums for all equality stakeholders to share experiences and to evaluate the Council's progress on equal pay, under-representation, flexible working, access to training and development and promotion of an inclusive working culture based on respect.'

7. Recommendations

7.1 The Head of Policy and Performance, Head of HR and Organisational Development and staff diversity forum Chairs to meet to undertake a review, including completion of an equality impact assessment, with a view to mainstreaming staff forum activities to achieve maximum benefits for the Council and its employees.

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