



Report of the Head of Scrutiny and Member Development

Scrutiny Board (Central & Corporate Functions)

Date: 2nd March 2009

Subject: Fair Play Partnership Diversity Champion Project

Electoral Wards Affected:

Specific Implications For:

Equality and Diversity

Community Cohesion

Narrowing the Gap

1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 In September 2008 this Scrutiny Board published a final Inquiry report entitled, '*Embedding Equality, Diversity and Cohesion and Integration*'. One of the Board's recommendations in its report was; **"That Members commit to undertaking the equality and diversity assessment provided by the Fair Play Partnership"**. This recommendation was supported by the responsible Executive Member, Councillor Richard Brett.
- 1.2 In line with this agreed recommendation Fair Play undertook a 'Diversity Driver' exercise with Members. The Diversity Driver is a practical diagnostic tool which helps assess strengths and areas for improvement around the themes of leadership, people, policy, strategy, partnerships and resources. Two sessions were held between Members and the Fair Play Partnership on 12th December 2008 and 8th January 2009. These sessions were led by Liz Bavidge, Chair of the Partnership.
- 1.3 A record of these sessions is presented as Appendix 1 and 2. Liz Bavidge has been invited to today's meeting to report on these sessions and answer any questions from Members. In addition Geoff Turnbull from the Council's Equality Team will be in attendance.

2.0 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 By way of background Members will recall that Leeds City Council has signed up with the Fair Play Partnership who will work with Elected Members to develop their knowledge, understanding and future role in driving forward the Equality and Diversity agenda.
- 2.2 There has been equality and diversity training in place for Elected Members for several years. However, the most recent ethical audit, presented to the Member

Development Working Group, highlighted equality training for Elected Members as an improvement area. In addition it is also an action in the Equality and Diversity Scheme 2008-2011 and will support our accreditation to Level 4 of the Equality Standard by December 2008.

2.3 Fair Play (who are an independent not for profit organisation) have received funding to deliver their programme from Yorkshire Forward. Leeds is the only local authority to be invited to take part. The other organisations come from a range of sectors which include:

- The Rugby Football League
- Northern Rail
- Accent Group
- East North East Homes
- Frank Haslam Milan
- Connaught
- First Direct
- Pennine Housing

3.0 CONCLUSIONS

3.1 Following the two sessions, officers from the Council's Equality Unit working along side Fair Play and the Council's Member Development Officer have identified the need to draw up an action plan which includes, amongst other actions, addressing the following;

That not everyone seeks the views of the 'less visible':

3.2 The need to involve a greater number of Members in valuing diversity. At present some are unaware of issues and see equality/diversity as being purely about race/ethnicity.

3.3 This may need to be done through a variety of learning approaches and moving away from equality 'jargon' towards terminology that is more meaningful/relevant to Members. The new Equality Framework and potential 'Champions of Diversity' (one for each diversity strand) may be drivers help to gain leadership and engagement.

The need to raise the awareness of diversity issues among elected Members

3.4 To identify to what extent Members are reluctant to engage due to being unaware of what language and actions are appropriate when discussing equality and diversity issues?

3.5 That Equality/Diversity issues be made integral to other learning and development activities - not seen as isolated learning events but embedded in other training where appropriate.

3.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

3.1 Members are asked to;

- Discuss with Fair Play the results of the two sessions
- Consider and endorse the need for the development of an action plan which would include addressing the issues identified in paragraphs 3.2 to 3.5 above

- Write to the Executive Member (Central & Corporate) giving the Board's observations and conclusions.

Background Papers

Scrutiny Board Final Inquiry Report '*Embedding Equality, Diversity and Cohesion and Integration*'. September 2008