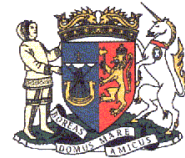




**ORKNEY AND SHETLAND
VALUATION JOINT BOARD**



Equalities Mainstreaming & Equalities Outcomes

Annual Progress Report 2019

Introduction

Through the Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties) (Scotland) Regulations 2012, the Orkney and Shetland Valuation Joint Board (the Board) has since 1 October 2010 continued to reaffirm its commitment to equality. It has consolidated all its previous equalities commitment under its Single Equality Scheme. The new Act and Regulations consolidates all the previous Equalities legislation: (Sex Discrimination Act 1975, Equal Pay Act 1970, Race Relations Act 1976, Disability Discrimination Act 1995, Employment Equality (Religion or Belief) Regulations 2003, Employment Equality (Sexual Orientation) Regulations 2003 and Employment Equality (Age) Regulations 2006), which are now repealed (with the exception of Schedules 6 and 8 to the Employment Equality (Age) Regulations 2006 which remain in force.

The 2010 Act and 2012 Regulations defines the 8 protected characteristics of Age, Disability, Gender Reassignment, Marriage and Civil Partnership, Pregnancy and Maternity, Race, Religion or Belief, Gender, and Sexual Orientation. Discrimination on these grounds is unlawful.

The Orkney and Shetland Valuation Joint Board desires to continue to promote equality and eliminate any form of inequality through the way it conducts its business either through its employment opportunities, the way it deals with the public in general and the way it conducts its business with any of its stakeholders. I have a desire to ensure that these ends will continue to be met by developing processes and practices to meet these goals.

This Annual Report continues the process towards these ends by developing an all-encompassing approach to equality right across the Board's activities.

Dennis M Stevenson
Assessor and Electoral Registration Officer
Orkney and Shetland Valuation Joint Board
April 2019

1. Achievements in the year to 2019

Making the Single Equality Scheme work

- Making sure that all areas of equalities such as age, disability, gender, race, sexual orientation, religious belief etc. are properly understood within the workplace environment through systematic training and development initiatives. *The Board have embraced the “Equality and Human Rights Commission’s Guidance to Workers” to educate staff and to guide managers in equality issues. This guidance is helping to maintain a good ethos on equality in the two offices of the Board.*
- Making staff aware of the Board’s new Single Equality Scheme published on the Board’s Website www.orkney-shetland-vjb.co.uk
- Continuing to bring together possible equalities issues through staff discussions and exploring ways to resolve them through management discussions.
- Updating and monitoring statistical information on staffing profiles by gender, disability, age and race.

2. Identifying activities in office policies

- Continual reviewing of office policies to ensure that they are consistent with equalities legislation.
- Seeking ways to change policies if they are out of line with equalities legislation through staff discussion and management decision making. ***The office identified and implemented a need to furnish electoral registration canvassers with basic instructions of how to complete electoral registration forms in the minority languages in Orkney and Shetland to take with them on canvass door-to-door visits. This helped to get completed forms back from a number of people. We identified a need to update and reword our annual Household Enquiry Form (HEF) to make the registration return process clearer; this resulted in online returns increasing from 13% to nearer 30% from 2015 onwards. We have continued to monitor this process up to 2019. In light of the proposed Canvass Reform due in 2020 we propose to only monitor this area meantime.***
- Continuing to monitor any complaints to ensure that any equalities issues line up with equalities legislation.
- ***Agreement by The Keeper of Records to our Records Management Plan on 31st July 2017 under the Public Records (Scotland) Act 2011. This identifies and manages all records held, information processing, personal data retention and subsequent disposal of information and equipment. This continues to be monitored to reflect best practice.***
- ***Addressing all issues associated with the introduction of the Data Protection Act 2018 and the General Data Protection Regulations with effect from 25th May 2018 and continuously to 2019.***

- ***Undertaking a complete review of the Boards website and undertake to make this more user friendly and up to date during 2019.***

3. Communicating any issues to the Board and Management

- Changing any policies and informing staff of any changes – ***On-going.***
- Informing the Board of issues that require Board solutions and decisions. *(If solutions have a financial impact on the Board's budget Board approval must be sought).* ***The Board are still considering the need for a more satisfactory office in Orkney which will give improved access to disabled people, although disabled access facilities are currently in place.***
- ***It was identified and implemented, in relation to staff who carry out the door-to-door canvassing for electoral registration purposes, to receive overtime payments as an alternative to receiving time off in lieu. It was seen that there was unfairness because those that were part-time or job share would receive no real benefit to getting extra time off work. The Board agreed to this allowing some the option of receiving extra money. This has also been extended to all staff as a result of extra workloads experienced under exceptional recent events such as two back to back elections during 2017.***
- Improving access to Board's web site. ***Undertaking a complete review of the Boards website and undertake to make this more user friendly and up to date during 2019.***
- Other initiatives such as website translation are being explored. ***No further progress has been made in this area as resources have not allowed the time to spend on modernising the website to allow improved language translation.***

4. Employment

- The current staff profile is monitored according to race, disability, gender and age. Monitoring results are shown in the Appendix at the end of this report. ***Since 2015 onwards the Board has moved away from 100% White Ethnic Profiles. The previously achieved 50:50 distribution between Genders has been departed from up to 2019 although further progress has been made on wider spread in the Employee Age Distribution. It has to be recognised that in a small organisation consisting of two island areas with 12 full time equivalent staff, this proves extremely challenging.***
- Any job applicants and actual recruitments are similarly monitored by race, disability and gender. ***The employment monitoring is contained within the Appendix at the end of the Equalities Mainstreaming & Equalities Outcomes 2019 report. We provide training and educational opportunities to make colleague staff aware of any staff disabilities and how to cope/deal with potential scenarios.***

5. Training

- Training continues to be delivered to staff on a “Need-to” basis by senior management. All staff are encouraged to request training in areas they feel there is a need and line managers discuss the need for such training with the Assessor. The Assessor & ERO makes use of any free training that is available through each constituent Council and it is up to senior staff to identify the availability and relevance of such training initiatives. ***“Your rights to equality at work, training, development, promotion and transfer” has been made available to all staff employed by the Board. Training in the use of Electoral Registration Software continues to be provided to those that operate in the electoral registration service by senior staff. We have two Trainee Valuers positions, one in each island area, undertaking full professional qualifications with the aim of becoming qualified Chartered Valuation Surveyors.***
- The guidance to equality issues provided by the Equality and Human Rights Commission continues to be used as a first source of advice on equalities issues and has been made available for reference by staff on the Board’s file server.
 - Guidance for Employers
 - Guidance for Service Providers
 - Guidance for Service Users
 - Guidance for Workers

The PDFs have been put together for guidance and the Assessor & ERO believes that it is a valuable resource to help identify areas that the Board can use in their pursuance of equity across the Board’s services and in dealing with issues that may arise on a daily basis.

6. Conclusions

The Orkney and Shetland Valuation Joint Board, the Assessor, the Assistant Assessor and the Depute ERO are responsible for the management of the services of the Board which cover Valuation for Rating, Banding of houses for Council Tax and Electoral Registration and they will continue to take improvement action to ensure equal opportunity for all. Actions for the year to 2020 will include the following:

- To continue to take action to eliminate any unlawful treatment in all areas relating to recruitment, consistency in working hours and time off, consistency in career development through training, dealing with the public.
- The Assessor, Assistant Assessor and Depute ERO will ensure that all staff are treated fairly and that equality is kept at the forefront of the office’s ethos.
- Continue to monitor personnel.
- Continue to seek improvements to the office website in the area language translation.
- To continue to seek solutions to equality issues as they arise on a day-to-day basis.

- Ensure adequate training is given on the basis of post requirement and that it complies with equalities requirements.
- Ensure that all office operations and data processing is in accordance with the Data Protection Act 2018 and the General Data Protection Regulations.

Dennis M Stevenson
Assessor and Electoral Registration Officer
April 2019