



Orkney & Shetland Valuation Joint Board



GENDER EQUALITY SCHEME

1. Introduction

- 1.1. This document is intended to outline Orkney & Shetland Valuation Joint Board's Gender Equality Scheme.
- 1.2. Orkney & Shetland Valuation Joint Board is a small authority which was established in 1996 and discharges three statutory functions concerning local taxation and electoral registration on behalf of its two constituent authorities – Orkney Islands Council and Shetland Islands Council. The Board has a full time equivalent staff of 12, split between its two offices situated in Kirkwall, Orkney and Lerwick, Shetland.
- 1.3. The Board is made up of five representatives nominated by each of the constituent local authorities. The Board appoints and oversees the work of the Assessor & Electoral Registration Officer who is the Chief Officer of the Board. The Board is supported in the discharge of its functions by a Clerk and a Treasurer. Both these posts are currently filled by senior officials of Shetland Islands Council. Due to the Board's small size, Shetland Islands Council acts as its lead authority and supplies the Board with Administrative Support, Financial Management and Human Resources. Staff terms and condition and employment policies have been adopted from that of Shetland Islands Council.
- 1.4. The 3 statutory functions of the Assessor and Electoral Registration Officer are as follows -
 - The preparation, publication and maintenance of the Valuation Roll which lists all properties in the area subject to non-domestic rates and their rateable values.
 - The preparation, publication and maintenance of the Council Tax Valuation List which lists all dwellings in the area subject to Council Tax and their valuation band.
 - The preparation, maintenance and publication of the Register of Electors which lists the names of all persons eligible to vote at Westminster, European, Scottish and local Elections.

2. Gender Equality Scheme

2.1. General Duty

Under the Sex Discrimination Act 1975 and, more specifically, the Sex Discrimination (Public Authorities)(Statutory Duties)(Scotland) Order 2007, certain public authorities including Valuation Joint Boards are subject to a general duty to promote gender equality. In carrying out any of its functions the Board and its officers must have due regard to the need to –

- eliminate unlawful discrimination and harassment
- promote equality of opportunity between men and women

The general duty expects public authorities to fulfill their general duties whilst taking due regard of both “proportionality and relevance”, i.e. attention should be paid to the relevance of gender issues to the service being provided with a greater regard being paid to services which have a greater relevance to gender issues.

The above general duties came into force on 7 April 2007.

In fulfilling these general duties on behalf of the Valuation Joint Board, the Assessor & ERO will promote equality of opportunity by ensuring that all employees are trained in the promotion of gender equality and their responsibilities under the Gender Equality Scheme.

2.2. Specific Duties

The Board also has a specific duty to –

- Prepare and publish a gender equality scheme showing how it will fulfill its duties and achieve its gender equality objectives.
- Put in place arrangements for involving staff and service users in examining how its policies and practices affect gender equality both in the workplace and in its service delivery.
- Formulate overall gender equality objectives, and consider the need to have objectives to address the causes of any gender pay gap.
- Ensure that the scheme sets out the actions which it is intended will be taken to
 - gather information to gauge the effect of its policies and practices on gender issues affecting its employees and service delivery.
 - use the information to review the implementation of the scheme’s objectives
 - assess the impact of its current and future policies on gender equality.
 - consult with employees, their representatives and service users.
 - ensure implementation of scheme objectives.
- Implement the scheme and its actions for gathering and using information within 3 years.
- Review and revise the scheme at least every 3 years.
- Produce annual progress reports.

2.3 How The Board Will Fulfill Its Duties

Orkney & Shetland Valuation Joint Board is committed to equality of opportunity in the workplace and in its service delivery and is committed through its various equality policies to preventing all forms of discrimination.

In looking to its specific duty in evolving gender equality policies, the Board acknowledges that its extremely small size makes consultation processes separate from those of its constituent authorities both impractical and likely to cause unnecessary duplication of work to local consultees. The Board will therefore seek to integrate its consultation processes with that of its constituent authorities, Orkney Islands Council and Shetland Islands Council, and agree with them how the Board can contribute to the promotion of gender equality within the workplace and the community. The Board will liaise with the constituent authorities on any matters arising from their consultation processes which concern the delivery of the Board's three statutory functions.

2.4 Employment

The Assessor & ERO will monitor, by gender, the number of staff in post and all applications for employment, training and promotion. Such monitoring already exists in relation to the Board's Race Equality and Disability Equality Schemes and henceforth the results of the monitoring process will be published separately along with annual Performance Indicators.

In the advertising of all posts in the Board's establishment, and in the subsequent appointment process, the Board's officials will be guided by the Gender Equality Policies of its lead authority, Shetland Islands Council.

Consultation will be carried out on an ongoing basis with the Board's own staff who will be encouraged to raise any concerns they have on Gender Equality issues.

2.5 Staff Awareness and Training

All members of staff will be made aware of the contents of this policy document and the Board's duties in relation to Gender Equality. All new staff will be made aware of Gender Equality as part of their induction process.

The Board will liaise with its constituent authorities on the provision of adequate staff training on matters relating to Gender Equality.

2.6 Action Plan

A copy of the Board's Action Plan is attached as an appendix to this document.

2.7 Complaints

Any complaints from members of the public concerning matters of Gender Equality will be dealt with under the Board's existing Complaints Procedure but the number of

such complaints will be separately monitored and published.

2.8 Publication

This Scheme will be circulated to all Board members, officials and members of staff. Copies are available from the Board's offices at 8 Broad Street, Kirkwall, Orkney, KW15 1NX and Charlotte House, Commercial Road, Lerwick, Shetland ZE1 0LX. Copies will also be available on the web-site www.orkney-shetland-vjb.co.uk .

3.0 Duration

This scheme is intended to cover a three year period up to June 2010 when it will be formally reviewed. The scheme may also be reviewed prior to that date should such action be deemed appropriate by the Board in response to comments and consultations by individuals, gender groups or regulatory authorities.

ACTION PLAN

Task	Start Date	End Date
Liaison with constituent authorities on the results of their consultations on gender equality to identify issues concerning the exercise of the Board's functions.	June 2007	Continuous process
Liaison with constituent authorities to identify ways in which the discharge of the Board's functions may affect gender issues.	June 2007	Continuous process
Review the need for, and availability of, staff training facilities.	June 2007	December 2007
Review current procedures followed in the discharge of the statutory functions of the Assessor & ERO and assess for their impact on gender issues in service delivery.	June 2007	December 2007
Ensure that the impact of any new legislation concerning the statutory functions of the Assessor & ERO are assessed for their impact on gender issues.	June 2007	Continuous process
Publication of results of monitoring processes.	May 2008	Annually
Review Action Plan for effectiveness.	Continuous process	