

## Report to Resources Committee

5 November 2013




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**Title:** Equality and Diversity - Update

**Report of:** Managing Director

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### **Purpose of Report**

1. To provide a summary of Equality and Diversity work within the organisation in 2013/14 to date.

### **Background**

2. The Company continues to place equality and diversity at the heart of everything it does with one of the values being 'embracing equality'.
3. The Single Equality Scheme has been in place since 2008 to provide an overall approach to the Company's work on equality covering both the organisation as an employer and service provider.
4. The scheme and associated actions help to ensure that we are meeting our requirements under the Equality Act 2010.
5. The Company contributes to the wider equality agenda in Gateshead as a member of Gateshead Council's Corporate Equality Working Group, ensuring that the Company is contributing to the equality objectives set by the council.

### **Summary**

6. There are a number of activities that have taken place within the last period which support our overall goals.

### **Maintaining a corporate commitment to equality issues**

#### *Leadership*

7. It is recognised that commitment to equality needs to start at the top of the organisation to ensure that it is clear it is taken seriously. In the last period, information about various equality events such as Northern Pride has been provided to employees through the weekly homework bulletin, endorsed by our Managing Director as the Corporate Lead for Equality.

### *Procurement and contractors*

8. Following on from our contractors' equality event in March, we have continued working with 8 Degrees, a local organisation specialising in Equality and Diversity to progress our activity with contractors working in or around our homes. This supports the aim of our Single Equality Scheme to ensure that our procurement practices reflect our overall approach to equality.
9. To date a number of organisations have completed a diagnostic with 8 Degrees of their current equality practices to highlight areas where they require further work. In addition some organisations have also committed to putting their operatives through the online equality training ConstructED.
10. We have also been working with our repairs and maintenance contractor, Mears to agree the delivery of equality and diversity training to all operatives working on the contract. This has now been confirmed and will be delivered through a series of sessions with operatives to ensure they understand their requirements and expected behaviour.

### *Review of Single Equality Scheme*

11. Previous reports to this committee have noted that that a review of the Single Equality Scheme is required to ensure that it is up to date and reflects the needs and priorities of our customers and employees. To date, initial consultation with some customers has been carried out on current scheme to identify areas requiring updating. This work will be concluded in the next quarter with a draft of the scheme being provided for approval at this committee.

### *Annual Report*

12. Following September's committee meeting, the Equality and Diversity Annual Report was published on our website, and made available on request. This sets out key performance information including the breakdown of satisfaction by protected characteristics and the profile of our customer and employee base.

## **Working in partnership with customers and stakeholders to deliver equitable services**

### *Knowing our Customers*

13. Collecting customer profile information helps us to ensure that we can monitor take-up and satisfaction with our services, ultimately ensuring that we are providing the services that people need.
14. The information on individual customers also helps us to tailor services to communicate in the most effective way for them. This can include where someone requires an interpreter or needs additional time to open the door due to mobility issues.
15. This information can also be used to understand how different groups will be affected by changes we are proposing to make, for example those affected by changes regarding under occupation.

16. In the last quarter we have updated customer information on over 3300 occasions, with the majority of those being through Tyne and Wear Homes applications. As at 30 September 2013, the profile of our main tenants (19611 tenancies) was as follows:
- 58.45% female
  - 2.75% Black Minority Ethnic (BME) with highest proportion being Black African
  - 41.15% are over 60, 3.41% are under 25
  - 28.81% of households with at least one person who has a disability, with the most common reported being mobility issues and mental health.
17. We have collected 36.1% of sexuality information and 40% of religion, and continue to collect this.

#### *Community Fund*

18. The Community Fund is supported by Mears and Local Environmental Services to provide both cash and in kind support to local community groups. The aim of the fund is to support groups with initiatives that make a difference in our local communities.
19. Projects underway or completed within this period include:
- Refurbishment in Leam Lane Methodist church including the installation of an accessible toilet and baby changing facilities delivered in kind through Mears has been completed.
  - The launch of The Zumba Lounge by Inspiring Events, providing zumba sessions and social events, in particular being aimed at people with autism and other disabilities.
  - Rookie Sports have launched a series of indoor golf sessions for older people in the borough.
  - Birtley Community Partnership have received funding to support regular coffee mornings aimed at older people at risk of social isolation where they have no family or friend networks called 'Coffee with Information'.

#### *Supporting National Diversity Events*

20. As part of our overall approach to raising awareness of diversity issues the Company has supported a number of national initiatives either through disseminating information or holding events. In the last period this has included:
- **Falls awareness week** – Mears Care delivered talks in two sheltered schemes to talk to residents about the risks of slips, trips and falls and how to prevent these.
  - **Scam Awareness month** – The Company held a 'Spot the Scam' course, supported by Gateshead Council's Trading Standards section aimed at providing people with information on prevalent scams and how to spot the signs. This was particularly aimed at our older residents who have previously been more likely to be affected by scams.
  - **Adult Learners Week** – The involvement team attended an event organised by Gateshead Council's Adult Learning Section to raise awareness of learning opportunities available within the organisation.

## **Being an equal opportunities employer with a representative workforce**

### *Personal Details Review*

21. All employees were asked in September to review and confirm their personal details including monitoring information covering the protected characteristics. This information helps to show the profile of the workforce and identify areas where the organisation could be more representative of the community we serve.

### *Stonewall Workplace Equality Index*

22. In the last period, the organisation has submitted this year's entry to the index to measure our progress in workplace equality, in particular for Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual employees. This follows a series of actions that took place over the last 9 months following feedback from last year's entry. Results will be launched in the New Year and will be reported back to committee with feedback following this.

### *Mears Employability Project Work*

23. Mears have recently been working with Percy Hedley College to provide a work placement opportunity for a disabled student. The project will support Mears to ensure the placement is constructed and managed appropriately to suit all involved. A work placement will begin in January 2014, with the learner carrying out various roles within the business 1 day per week. This may lead to future apprentice roles.

### **Link to values**

24. This report relates to the following Company values: -
- Being a listening and learning organisation
  - Being motivated, trained, and committed
  - Being customer focused, innovative and professional
  - Caring and respecting
  - Embracing equality
  - A commitment to all our employees.

### **Impact on tenants**

25. Through ensuring that equality and diversity is at the heart of how we deliver services, it ensures that we provide services based on a sound understanding of the needs and priorities of our customers.

### **Risk Management Implications**

26. Not meeting the requirements of current and new diversity legislation has been identified as an operational risk for the Company, which if breached could lead to significant financial loss and risk of reputation. Regular monitoring and reporting on our progress helps to ensure that we continue to meet our requirements.

### **Financial Implications**

27. There are no financial implications directly relating to this report. There is an allocated budget to progress equality and diversity work within the Company. Any future financial implications would be reported to this committee.

### **Equality and Diversity Implications**

28. This report relates to our approach to equality as a whole, ensuring that we are considering the impact on our employees and customers of the decisions we take.

### **Value for Money Implications**

29. The Single Equality Scheme provides a focus for our approach to being an equal opportunities employer and service provider, promoting equality in relation to access to goods, facilities and services and helping us to ensure that no individual or group experiences direct or indirect discrimination.
30. Carrying out equality analysis when planning a project or service delivery allows us to identify any issues at the outset and find solutions where possible, rather than having to make potentially costly changes retrospectively.

### **Health Implications**

31. The Company's approach to equality and diversity, embedded within everything that we do will ultimately have a positive impact on people's health and overall wellbeing.
32. A number of the initiatives included within our overall approach to equality has a positive impact on the health and wellbeing of either employees or customers.

### **Environmental Implications**

33. There are no direct environmental implications arising from this report.

### **Consultation carried out**

34. Progress on equality issues are provided to the Involvement Service Improvement Group and the Disabled Persons and BME Housing Forums.

### **Recommendation**

35. The views of the committee are sought on whether it is satisfied with the progress activity relating to Equality and Diversity carried out between April and September 2013.

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Contact: Louise Taylor, Involvement and Diversity Manager      Tel No: (0191) 433 5380

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