**Equality Forum:**

**Terms of Reference**

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**19 March 2018**

**Version 2.0**

**Contact: Jane Fowler**

**Head of Improvement and HR**

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| **Version** | **Date** | **Amended** |
| **2.0** | **19 March 2018** | **This document replaces the TOR produced in 2013.** |
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**Equality Forum: Terms of Reference**

**Background:**

These terms of reference replace the previous version, written in 2013.

Argyll and Bute Council set up the Equality Forum in 2013 to enable issues relating to equalities to be raised. In turn, the forum helps Argyll and Bute Council to deliver its obligations as set out in the Equality Act (2010) (the ‘Equality Act’).

The Equality Act has two main purposes:

1. To harmonise discrimination law
2. To strengthen the law to support progress on equality.

The Equality Act brought together previous pieces of discrimination legislation with the intent of adopting a single approach and making the law as clear as possible.

The Equality Act identifies nine protected characteristics. These are:

* Age
* Disability
* Gender reassignment
* Marriage and civil partnership
* Race
* Religion and belief
* Sex
* Pregnancy and maternity
* Sexual orientation.

The Equality Act put in place General Duties. These are:

* To eliminate discrimination
* To advance equal opportunities
* To foster good relations.

In addition, the Equality Act set out Specific Duties that apply to public authorities. These Special Duties require Argyll and Bute Council to:

* Report on the progress it makes on mainstreaming the equality duty
* Publish a set of equality outcomes, and report on progress on achieving them
* Assess and review the impact new or revised policies or practices may have
* Gather and use information about the council’s employees to help better deliver on its equalities duties
* Publish gender pay gap information
* Publish statements on equal pay and occupational segregation
* Consider criteria and conditions in relation to public procurement awards.

Part 1 of the Equality Act, which details the public sector duty regarding socio-economic inequalities, was not enacted with the legislation outlined above. However, in November 2017, Scottish ministers made the Equality Act 2010 (Commencement No 13) (Scotland) Order 2017, which brings this Part into force from 1 April 2018.

The Socio-Economic Duty requires that the council (in common with other public bodies) considers, whenever it makes a major decision, what it can do to reduce poverty and inequality. The Socio-Economic Duty is known informally as the Fairer Scotland Duty.

**Introduction:**

The purposes of the Equality Forum are:

1. To consider equality issues and their impacts on service users in Argyll and Bute.
2. To raise equality issues that affect staff and their employment.

**Group objectives:**

The principal objectives of the Forum are:

1. To raise key issues relating to equalities. In addition to considering issues relating to the legislation and the protected characteristics, the Forum seeks to proactively anticipate changes to the equalities agenda.
2. To consider policy development, including employee-related policies.
3. To raise the profile of equality within Argyll and Bute Council. This includes enabling links and contacts to be made between relevant groups.
4. To provide an avenue to enable consideration of Equality Impact Assessments
5. To provide an arena to share good practice and learning opportunities relating to service delivery across the organisation.
6. To promote activities designed to raise awareness of equality-related issues and themes.
7. To encourage the participation in activities from employees.

**Outside the scope of the Equality Forum:**

The forum does not have a policing role. The role of ensuring compliance with equalities legislation lies with the council’s Chief Officers and, where employee matters are involved, Improvement and HR.

**Membership:**

The membership of the Equality Forum will be as follows:

1. Membership will include a chair, a representative from HR and Organisational Development, a representative from the HSCP and other interested partners, representatives from the Trades Unions, and employees from all departments within the council.
2. The chair will be a member of the council’s Senior Management Team.

To ensure continued representation of interests from across the organisation, when a member leaves the Equality Forum, a replacement will be sought from the same department as the leaver.

Names of Equality Forum members, along with their Service, Department, and, if applicable, the focus of their interest, will be published on the Hub.

Members:

1. Have a responsibility to actively engage with the work of the forum.
2. Have a role in feeding information to / from their department, service or organisation to / from the Equality Forum
3. Have a role in raising equality issues both from a service delivery and an employee perspective.

**Frequency and Notice of Meetings:**

1. The Equality Forum will normally be quarterly, with meetings lasting approximately two hours each. Members may attend via remote access or in person.
2. Additional meetings may be arranged if need arises.
3. Where necessary, communication may take place between meetings via email.

**Administration:**

1. All members of the forum are invited to identify agenda items. Such items, and appropriate documentation, should be sent to the chair’s PA at least seven working days before the meeting.
2. It is the responsibility of the chair’s PA to ensure that agendas and minutes are distributed in a timely manner.
3. Whenever possible, minutes will be distributed to all members of the forum within ten working days of the meeting to which they apply.
4. Agendas, minutes and details of the membership will be published on the Hub. Responsibility of maintaining the information on the Hub lies with the chair’s PA.

**Reporting arrangements:**

1. The progress of the forum and its activities will be reported periodically by the chair to the Strategic Management Team.
2. Specific issues will be reported or forwarded to the HR Board and / or SMT as appropriate.

**Review of the Equality Forum Terms of Reference:**

1. The ToR will be reviewed at times as mutually agreed hereafter, and at least every three years.