

Title: Diversity Strategy 2012-14	Meeting: Board	
Report authorised by: Jamie Carswell, Director of Investment Services	Date of the meeting: 19 February 2013	Item No. 8
Report author: James Caspell, Customer Insight Officer (Diversity)	Classification: Open	Report type: Decision
Business Priorities: <p>To be the best performing housing organisation in Tower Hamlets by the end of 2014.</p> <p>We are committed to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Achieve the highest rate of resident satisfaction; ▶ Have the highest performance for the money we spend; ▶ Ease overcrowding through reducing under-occupation and illegal sub-letting by a third; and, ▶ Have a workforce that reflects the community we serve through creating opportunities for BME staff and Women staff to progress into more senior positions. 		
Impact for Customer: <p>THH is committed to promoting equality and diversity among our customers and the wider community. Our Equality and Diversity Policy Statement drives our Diversity Strategy and Action Plan, which sets out our current priorities to improve the living and working environment for all of our residents and partner organisations.</p> <p>These three principles outline our vision for equality and diversity:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Accessible: We will provide services that are appropriate but flexible enough to meet people’s needs and preferences so that all residents can access the services they need and want. ▶ Inclusive: We will tackle poverty and inequality and help our residents fulfil their individual potential, to be part of communities and be able to participate in wider Tower Hamlets life. ▶ Fair and seen to be fair: We are a fair and ethical organisation and place to work. Decisions we make are fair, and everyone can see and understand why we made them. 		
Diversity Impact: <p>We have a made a lot of progress in recent years in relation to equality and diversity, but can still go further. By continuing to place the Equality Framework at</p>		

the heart of our approach to improvement, we are aiming to become the first housing provider in the Borough that secures Level 3 – “Excellent” – of the Equality Framework for Social Housing.

As a public body the Equality Act 2010 requires us to meet certain statutory duties. In line with the Equality Act 2010, the draft Diversity Strategy 2012-14 will help us to:

- ▶ Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation;
- ▶ Advance equality of opportunity between people and community groups;
- ▶ Foster good relations between people and community groups.

Cost and Income Implications:

In the current economic climate, public sector providers are being asked to do more with less. Every action proposed in the draft Diversity Strategy 2012-14 has been based on what we have learned about our residents and staff in the last few years, and we know that delivering improved outcomes in relation to equality and diversity will be crucial to improving performance and satisfaction overall.

We know that certain community groups will benefit from tailored support around financial inclusion, such as that which we have provided to the Somali community and younger tenants.

Risk Management:

- 2.0 Political, Legislative and Regulatory Change
- 3.0 Making a Difference
- 5.0 Organisational Coherence

Summary:

As a business, diversity is not optional, it is part of everything we do – both as a service provider and as an employer.

Our second Diversity Strategy builds on what we have done through the 2009-12 Diversity Strategy, and outlines the evidence-based priorities moving forwards over a two year period.

Recommendations:

That the Board:

1. Approves the draft Diversity Strategy 2012-14, Diversity Policy and Action Plan
2. Considers how it can monitor and ensure the delivery of outcomes as outlined in the Diversity Strategy 2012-14 Action Plan. This could be through:
 - a) Nomination of one (or more) Board Diversity Champion(s);
 - b) Six monthly review of progress through Diversity Scorecard;
 - c) Periodic reports on specific areas of strategic interest (e.g. developing a diverse and progressive workforce).

1 Introduction

- 1.1 In September 2011 SMT commissioned the refresh of THH's Diversity Strategy, so that it was aligned with our vision to be the best housing provider in Tower Hamlets by 2014, and also for us to become the first in Tower Hamlets to achieve Level 3 of the Equality Framework.
- 1.2 Through our Diversity Strategy 2009-12, Tower Hamlets Homes has delivered a range of improvements to services. Through extensive consultation with residents, staff, partners and board members, new and continuing priorities have been identified to deliver further improvement in the draft Diversity Strategy 2012-14.

2 How the Diversity Strategy 2012-14 helps us to achieve our vision

- 2.1 By aligning the Diversity Strategy with the five outcome areas of the Equality Framework for Social Housing, we can ensure that we continue to develop the best housing services in Tower Hamlets by 2014, with services which are accessible, inclusive and fair for residents and staff.
- 2.2 Following from our successful peer review in 2011 at the "Achieving" Level of the Equality Framework, we are committed to being self-assessed at "Excellent" - the highest level of the Equality Framework - by March 2013, with a peer review accrediting this assessment soon after.

3 Equalities and Diversity Implications

- 3.1 The delivery of tangible, positive improvements is being delivered through the Diversity Scorecard, Diversity Champions Network and Diversity Working Group.
- 3.2 Where commissioned, the Business Development Team provides additional skills, knowledge and expertise in identifying areas for improvement and turning evidence of inequality and poor performance into action to rectify this.
- 3.3 Recent examples include the award-winning Somali Tenant Engagement Project, Leasehold Resident Profiling Project, and provision of support for older and vulnerable residents.
- 3.4 Our Diversity Strategy 2012-14 aims to create neighbourhoods and workplaces where residents and staff feel acknowledged as uniquely different, but equally valued.
- 3.5 Through consultation, priority areas for improvement have been identified as:
- **Ease overcrowding** - by knowing our customers;
 - **Promote financial Inclusion** - through partnership and leadership;

- **Improve resident scrutiny and engagement** - improving services and meet diverse needs of all, for example through the Inquiry Into Ageing;
- **Accessible homes, inclusive neighbourhoods** - through a focus on access and customer care, for example for disabled and older residents
- **A workforce that reflects the community** - improving the recruitment and career progression of women and BME staff at all levels of the organisation.

4 VfM Implications:

- 4.1 By implementing a more targeted and segmented approach to communications and customer service, we can ensure that we get it right “first time” across a range of services – whether this is a repair, or providing opportunities to engage.

5 Legal Implications

- 5.1 The Diversity Strategy 2012-14 contains policy and actions that ensure that we will work within all current and relevant anti-discrimination laws.

- 5.2 Below is not an exhaustive list, but legislation includes includes:

- Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974
- Human Rights Act 1998
- Fixed Term Employees (prevention of less favourable treatment) Regulations 2002
- Civil Partnership Act 2004
- Gender Recognition Act (GRA) 2005
- Racial and Religious Hatred Act 2006
- Equality Act 2006
- Work and Families Act 2007
- Equality Act 2010

6 Crime and Disorder Implications

- 6.1 In responding to domestic violence, Domestic Violence Champions are based in each office to support frontline staff. All Neighbourhood Housing Officers are trained to identify and record domestic violence and make appropriate referrals including emergency accommodation. Training has also been provided to caretakers, technical staff, and to repairs contractors’ operatives.

- 6.2 The Diversity Strategy 2012-14 outlines how we will work with our partners and the community to promote good relations between all groups and to develop community cohesion. This includes working to reduce the incidence of hate crime, domestic violence and anti-social behaviour in our properties and neighbourhoods.

7 Health and safety

- 7.1 The Diversity Strategy 2012-14 outlines proposes that we further improve how we respond to and monitor domestic violence and hate crime, ensuring that performance and satisfaction improves.
- 7.2 The Strategy also commits THH to combat harassment of staff. Harassment relates to repeated, unreciprocated and unwelcome comments, looks, actions, suggestions or physical contact which is found objectionable and offensive and which might threaten an employee or create an intimidating or uncomfortable environment. The Equality Act makes employers potentially liable for harassment of employees by people (third parties) who are not employees, such as customers or clients.

8 Conclusion

- 8.1 By aligning the Diversity Strategy with the five outcome areas of the Equality Framework for Social Housing, we can ensure that we continue to develop the best housing services in Tower Hamlets, with services which are more accessible, inclusive and fair for residents and staff.