

WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL

Report by the Chief Executive

Community Participation Committee: 21 June 2006

Subject: Community Participation in the Disability Equality Scheme

1. Purpose

- 1.1** The report sets out the Council's approach to the involvement of the disabled community in the development of its policies and services, and proposals for the expansion of community involvement in the Disability Working Group.

2. Background

- 2.1** The Disability Discrimination Act 2005 ('the Act') requires each public authority to publish a Disability Equality Scheme by December 2006. The scheme should address fundamental disability issues:

- Equality in the delivery of key services
- The promotion of equal opportunities
- Equality in employment
- The elimination of harassment
- The elimination of discrimination
- The promotion of positive attitudes
- The encouragement of participation in public life
- The need to take account of disability even if it involves more favourable treatment of disabled people.

- 2.2** The Act requires authorities to demonstrate that they involve disabled people in the pursuit of these objectives, and to include the arrangements for this in their Disability Equality Schemes.

- 2.3** West Dunbartonshire Council has a significant record in engaging with the disabled community. The Council supports a large number of representative groups through funding and professional input, and has developed forums such as its Planning & Implementation Groups and the Disability Working Group. It has hosted conferences and has supported studies into the needs and priorities of disabled people.

3. Main Issues

Disability-Focused Services

- 3.1** The development of policy and practice in areas such as community care, children requiring additional support for learning, and the employment of disabled people includes planning groups which involve disabled people or their carers.

The Disability Working Group

- 3.2** The Disability Working Group (DWG) addresses policy and practice in the wider sweep of Council responsibility which lies beyond disability-focused services but which is still critical to disabled people. It consists of representatives of Council services and of the disabled community. Community representation is focused mainly on the West Dunbartonshire Access Panel, and the DWG recognises that this should be broadened out to include a wider range of disabled people and disability issues, including the key issues of mental health, learning disability and the role of carers.

'Disability' Groups

- 3.3** There is an undefined number of groups with an interest in disability issues, which can be loosely divided into three categories:
- 'Representative' groups such as the Dumbarton Mental Health Forum and Clydebank Forum on Disability which set out to articulate the interests of disabled people.
 - Groups such as the Clydebank Asbestos Group and the Seniors Forums which address other issues but have a consequent interest in disability.
 - Groups whose primary aim is to provide social contact and activity for their members.

An Approach to Representation on the Disability Working Group

- 3.4** The Disability Working Group is considering a three-tier approach to expanding its representation.
- Representative groups would be invited to have a place on the DWG.
 - Other groups would be supported to participate in the DWG on an *ad hoc* basis in relation to specific issues.
 - The Council and the DWG would keep all groups and interested individuals informed about disability issues, and the work of the group, through a newsletter.

4. Personnel Issues

- 4.1** There are no personnel issues raised by this report.

5. Financial Implications

- 5.1** The cost of these proposals will be met within existing budgets and there are therefore no financial implications.

6. Conclusions

- 6.1** The Council's Disability Working Group needs to widen its community representation in order to address all aspects of disability and in order to meet our obligations under the Act. The report has suggested that this should be achieved by inviting the main representative forums to join the group, by enabling other groups to participate as appropriate, and by communicating with a wide range of community groups in a newsletter format.

7. Recommendations

- 7.1** The committee is asked to consider these proposals and to comment on how the Council should involve the disabled community in the development of its policies and services.

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Wards Affected: The proposals in the report affect all Council wards