

REPORT TO: COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE: 10TH JUNE 2008

SUBJECT: VISIT FROM THE EQUALITIES AND HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION

BY: CHIEF EXECUTIVE

1. REASON FOR REPORT

- 1.1 The Communities Committee is asked to consider an invitation from the Equalities and Human Rights Commission to visit the Council.
- 1.2 This report is submitted to Committee in terms of the Council's Administrative Scheme relating to formulating, supervising the implementation of and review as necessary the policies and practices of the Council in relation to its arrangements for promoting, fostering and maintaining equal opportunities.

2. RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 **The Communities Committee is asked to consider an invitation from the Equalities and Human Rights Commission to visit the Council.**
- 2.2 **If accepted, it will be arranged for the visit to coincide with the next Communities Committee meeting on the 19th August 2008 .**

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The Equality and Human Rights Commission opened for business in October 2007 taking on the responsibilities from the Commission for Race Equality, Disability Rights Commission and the Equal Opportunities Commission.
- 3.2 The aims of this Commission include reducing inequality, eliminating discrimination, promoting and protecting human rights and enabling greater mutual respect and better relations between communities.
- 3.3 Their role extends to all aspects of equality protected by law (age, sexual orientation, religion and belief, as well as gender, race and disability). To achieve real change they will be looking at factors that affect people's life chances and that restrict their opportunities to make real choices, not just discrimination against particular groups.
- 3.4 The Commission have highlighted that as a new organisation, this year they will begin to use the full force of their powers and influence to encourage change. They will use their powers to ensure that they investigate areas of systemic inequality, support individuals who are experiencing discrimination and ensure that public bodies fulfil their equality duties.
- 3.5 As part of their commitment to being an open and accessible organisation they are intending to visit every local Authority in Scotland during 2008 to meet with key stakeholders to discuss local and national issues.

- 3.6 The Commission would like elected members to suggest a date for the visit if accepted. A copy of the letter is attached (**Appendix 1**).

4. SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS

(a) Corporate Development Plan/Community Plan/Service Improvement Plan

The Council has made a commitment to develop a culture, which encourages both equal opportunities and the observance of equal opportunities. It will also seek to improve access to services by all sectors of the community.

(b) Policy and Legal

The Council has a legal duty to address equality issues. The risk of not meeting our duties is prosecution for non-compliance.

(c) Resources (Financial, Risks, Staffing and Property)

There are no additional resources arising from this report.

(d) Consultations

There have been no specific consultations on this report.

5. CONCLUSION

- 5.1 The Communities Committee is asked to consider the invitation from the Equalities and Human Rights Commission to visit the Council.**

Author of Report: Fiona Simpson, Equal Opportunities Officer

Background Papers:

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