



Central Scotland Valuation Joint Board -

RACE EQUALITY SCHEME

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ASSESSOR/ELECTORAL REGISTRATION OFFICER

Reviewed October, 2008

N/DOCS/BB/VJB/OCT08

RACE EQUALITY SCHEME

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ABOUT THE ASSESSOR

The Assessor is responsible for three functions and services to the constituent authorities. These are the compilation and maintenance of the Electoral Register, the maintenance and annual publication of the Council Tax Valuation List and the maintenance of the non-domestic Valuation Roll. There are around 217,000 registered electors in the area, residing mainly in the 132,000 or so domestic subjects shown in the Council Tax Valuation List. The Valuation Roll has some 11,000 entries with a total rateable value of over £267m. The Assessor's service operates from one central location employing around sixty personnel.

Although the Race Relations Act places statutory obligations the service has always been conscious of avoiding discrimination.

A copy of the Joint Board's Equal Opportunities Policy Statement is attached. (Appendix 1)

GENERAL DUTY

Through the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000, the Government has placed a general duty on all public bodies, including local authorities, to promote race equality - taking action to prevent acts of race discrimination before they occur. In practice this translates into a requirement to:

- Eliminate unlawful racial discrimination
- Promote equal opportunities
- Promote good race relations between people from different racial groups.

The duty makes the promotion of racial equality central to the way that the Assessor's service operates, improving our services to everyone. The Assessor will strive to eliminate discrimination by auditing all policies and procedures to ensure that they do not discriminate and by making any necessary amendments. The Valuation Joint Board will promote equality of opportunity by ensuring that all employees are trained in the promotion of good race relations and our responsibilities under the Race Equality Scheme. Promotion of good relations between people of different racial groups will be achieved by the implementation of good communication strategies, which will ensure active consultation as well as positive initiatives to involve the wider community as consumers of our services.

SPECIFIC DUTIES

We are required to formally review and publish an updated Race Equality Scheme every three years which sets out our functions and services relevant to the general duty. This is next due by the 30th of November 2011.

In addition, the Valuation Joint Board has to set out its arrangements for :-

- Assessing and consulting on the policies it proposes to adopt
- Monitoring adverse impact of its policies on the promotion of race equality
- Publishing the results of assessments, consultations and monitoring
- Ensuring public access to information and to services
- Training staff in issues relevant to the duty

In order to meet both the general duty and the specific duties of the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000, Central Scotland Valuation Joint Board has published this Race Equality Scheme. The Scheme is a timetabled and realistic plan, setting out our arrangements for meeting the general and specific duties in terms of race relations. Its aim is to help us eliminate unlawful racial discrimination and promote racial equality.

Race equality will be more relevant to some of our services and functions than others, but, in this context, relevance is about how our actions affect people rather than the number of people they affect. Although minority ethnic communities make up small percentage of the population we serve, our functions and policies affect those members of the community directly and indirectly, and are therefore relevant to race equality. The Valuation Joint Board's Race Equality Scheme will help to ensure that citizens and employees will not suffer from direct or indirect discrimination on racial grounds.

HOW WE WILL MEET THE GENERAL DUTY

We will make measured progress in achieving race equality by

- Making sure policies are properly targeted
- Improving our systems to deliver suitable and accessible services to meet the needs of the community
- Increasing confidence in our service
- encouraging us to be more aware of possible problems

HOW WE WILL MEET THE SPECIFIC DUTIES

The Valuation Joint Board has assessed its public services for impact on race equality and has drawn up an action plan for the next three years.

Timetables for action can be found within the Action Plans at Appendix 2 of this document. It is intended to appoint a responsible officer for overseeing each action. Whilst a list of our functions and policies can be found in Appendix 3.

MONITORING THE IMPACT OF SERVICES ON DIFFERENT RACIAL GROUPS

- Services provided by the Valuation Joint Board will be monitored on an ongoing basis to check their effects on different racial groups and whether there is any adverse impact on those groups. If changes are required these will be carried out over the three years of the Race Equality Scheme and timescales will be outlined in the Action Plans.

CONSULTATION

Consultation is a priority within the Race Equality Scheme.

As the Assessor's service is too small to attempt to undertake the necessary consultation on its own we have used Clackmannanshire Council – our Joint Board service provider to assist in our consultations.

ENSURING PEOPLE FROM ALL ETHNIC GROUPS HAVE ACCESS TO INFORMATION AND SERVICES

All new policies since 2007 have been impact assessed and a programme is being drawn up to review all existing policies and assess their impact to ensure that they do not adversely affect people from an ethnic minority.

A contract with Language Line has been agreed and employees have been trained in its use. Employees have used the service for both Electoral and Valuation matters where it proved itself to be a very useful tool.

Since 2006 any forms issued by the office are sent in an envelope that highlights, in five ethnic languages, that a translation of the contents of the envelope is available. This has prompted one request to date.

We intend to review the five ethnic languages to ensure that they continue to reflect the principal ethnic minorities in our area.

An Equality Champion has been appointed within the organisation and Equality issues are a standing item on the agenda for Management Team meetings. The organisation participates in a local Equality forum and is keen to be involved in other similar forums.

Over the next three years we will focus on trying to engage more with local ethnic communities to ensure that they are aware of their rights, entitlements and duties in respect of the services that we provide.

We have used a local Polish paper to highlight the Electoral Registration process and it is intended to investigate if other ethnic publications could be used in future.

It is intended to provide an annual review of progress on Race Equality matters

We will continue our efforts to ensure people from all groups have access to information on the services we provide.

With the assistance of our local authority contacts we will disseminate information on services and provision throughout the community and take steps to ensure that comments and feedback are taken on board.

The feedback from the consultation exercise will inform service development and delivery and will enable the Valuation Joint Board to evaluate its provision for inclusiveness and accessibility and will inform any necessary amendments in policy or procedure.

EMPLOYEE TRAINING

All managers and have been trained in the last two years on Equality issues. It is hoped to extend this to all employees in future. It is intended to review our training policies to ensure that equalities are covered as part of the formal induction process as well as forming part of the training reviews. The development of role specific training is also to be investigated.

The training has been delivered by Clackmannanshire Council.

MEETING THE SPECIFIC DUTIES UNDER THE ACT IN TERMS OF EMPLOYMENT

The Valuation Joint Board monitors employees in the following categories;

- the numbers of staff in post and applicants for employment by racial group
- those who receive training
- those who are promoted within the organisation
- employees who are involved in disciplinary proceedings
- those who leave employment.

The current ethnic make up of the office is as follows

Ethnic Background	Number of Employees
White Scottish	49
Other White British	6
Not Stated	3

In 2005 our employment application pack has been reviewed and recruitment applications have been monitored and statistics kept.

In 2008 we advertised two permanent positions for which we received ten applications, seven were from White British, two applicants chose not to state ethnic origin and one applicant stated their origin as "other". The two successful candidates were White British.

We intend to review our job advertising strategies to ensure people from ethnic minorities are aware of the opportunities within Central Scotland Valuation Joint Board and our aim to promote Race Equality.

Analysis of the results will provide information to inform for any future amendments.

In 2008 we introduced a new Anti Harassment Policy to send a clear signal that discrimination and harassment will not be tolerated within our organisation.

COMMUNICATION

Employees of the Valuation Joint Board will be informed about our progress on Race Equality through in-house communication and through Service Plans and Best Value reviews. The public will be kept informed through focus groups, consultative forums, the RAHMAS partnership, involvement in local voluntary sector organisations and through the press and our website.

Appendix 1

Equal Opportunities Statement

EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES POLICY STATEMENT

The Valuation Joint Board believes that equality of opportunity should be a guiding principle in all of its activities. The Board is actively working towards the elimination of Policies and Practices which discriminate. It is opposed to any form of discriminatory practices on grounds including:-

- gender
- marital status
- religious belief
- disability
- race
- ethnic origin
- colour
- nationality
- political belief
- sexual orientation
- socio-economic status
- age

We are actively working towards the elimination of all discriminatory practices.

Legal Framework:

The Joint Board is committed to adhering to the principles of domestic legislation as presented in the following Acts:

Equal Pay Act 1970

Sex Discrimination Act 1975

Race Relations Act 1976

Disability Discrimination Act 1995

The Race Relations Amendment Act 2000

The Race Relations Act 1976 (Amendment) Regulations 2003

Equal Pay Act 1970 (Amendment) Regulations 2003

Employment Equality (Sexual Orientation) Regulations 2003

Employment Equality (Religion or Belief) Regulations 2003

Disability Discrimination Act 2005

The Employment Equality (Age) Regulations 2006

Equality Act 2006

The Equality Act (Sexual Orientation) Regulations 2007

In addition the Joint Board will adhere to European Directives, information on which will be made available on a regular basis.

Applicable to all staff.

Updated by Central Scotland
Valuation Joint Board
22nd June, 2007

Appendix 2

3 Year Action Plan

Appendix 3

List of Functions and Policies

ASSESSOR & ELECTORAL REGISTRATION OFFICER		
LIST OF FUNCTIONS AND POLICIES ASSESSED AS RELEVANT		
Service	Function/Policy	Relevance High/Medium/Low
Electoral Registration	Management of production of Electoral Registers	Medium
	Administration of absent voting	
Administration	Ensuring effective community access to information e.g. through the SAA website or by providing interpreting/translation services as required	Medium
	Overseeing/administering the comments and complaints process	Medium
	Management of CSVJB's responsibilities under Freedom on Information and Data Protection	Low
Non Domestic Rating	Ensuring access and provision of service via the first point of contact for members of the public or other organizations seeking information about services available from CSVJB	Medium
	Management of the production and maintenance of the Valuation Roll	Medium
	Administration/Management of appeals	Medium
Council Tax	Management of the production and maintenance of Council Tax Valuation List	Medium
	Administration/Management of appeals	Medium

Appendix 4

Useful Contacts

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Clackmannanshire Council

Francine Orr
Greenfield House
Alloa FK10 2AD
Tel. 01259 452018
Fax. 01259 452170
e-mail: forr@clacks.gov.uk

Stirling Council

Fiona MacLeod (Chair of Diversity Working Group)
Head of Strategy and Governance
Corporate Services, Stirling Council
Old Viewforth
Stirling FK2 8ET
Tel. 01786 442507
e-mail info@stirling.gov.uk
website www.stirling.gov.uk

Falkirk Council

Human Resources
Corporate & Commercial Services
Municipal Buildings
West Bridge Street
Falkirk FK1 5RS
Tel. 01324 506070
e-mail hr@falkirk.gov.uk

Equality and Human Rights Commission &

Scottish Human Rights Commission The Optima Building,
58 Robertson Street,
Glasgow, G2 8DU
Tel. 0141 228 5910 (non helpline calls only)
Fax. 0141 228 5912
email scotland@equalityhumanrights.com
Helpline 0845 604 5510 - Main number
0845 604 5520 - Textphone
0845 604 5530 - Fax

Central Scotland Racial Equality Council

Community Education Centre
Rooms 8 & 9
Park Street
Falkirk FK1 1RE
Tel. 01324 610950
Fax. 01324 610955
E-mail: csrecl@aol.com

The Electoral Commission

Trevelyan House
30 Great Peter Street
London SW1 2HN
Tel. 020 7271 0500
Fax. 020 7271 0505
e-mail : info@electoralcommission.org.uk
website : www.electoralcommissison.org.uk

Language Line

Megan Smith (Project Manager)
Tel. 020 7520 1426
Fax. 020 7520 1450
e-mail: megan.smith@languageline.co.uk
website : www.languageline.co.uk

Dundee Interpreting Service

Tel. 01382 434910
Fax. 01382 431542

Central Scotland Chinese Association

Joyce Tai (Co-ordinator Family Centre)
39A Bannockburn Road
Stirling FK7 0DP
Tel. 01786 471291

Stirling Islamic Centre

Burghmuir
Stirling FK7 7NZ
Tel. 01786 474324
website : www.musalla.org/centres/stirling

Pakistan Social & Welfare Association

Stirling Islamic Centre
Burghmuir
Stirling FK7 7NZ
Tel. 01786 474324

Falkirk Muslim Association

Islamic Centre
6 Burnhead Lane
Falkirk FK1 1UG
Tel 01324 611018
website : www.musalla.org/centres/falkirk

Alloa Islamic Centre

Musalla As-Salaam
97 Whins Road
Alloa FK10 3RF
Tel. 01259 724623
website : www.musalla.org/centrs/alloa

Indian Community Centre

17 Inverallan Drive
Bridge of Allan
Stirling FK9 4JR

Arabic Community

Ibrahim Almonhsen
6 Achray Drive
Stirling FK9 5DR