

Item: 8

Orkney and Shetland Valuation Joint Board: 30 September 2021.

Equalities Duties.

Report by Assessor and Electoral Registration Officer.

1. Purpose of Report

To present the revised Single Equalities Scheme 2021-2024 and the Equalities Mainstreaming and Equalities Outcomes report.

2. Recommendations

It is recommended:

2.1.

That the Single Equalities Scheme 2021-2024, attached as Appendix 1 to this report, be approved.

The Board is invited to scrutinise:

2.2.

The Equalities Mainstreaming and Equalities Outcomes report for 2020/21, attached as Appendix 2 to this report.

3. Background

3.1.

The Equality Act 2010 repeals the Equal Pay Act 1970, the Sex Discrimination Acts 1975 & 1986, the Race Relations Act 1976, and the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 but consolidates and amends the above legislation and extends it to cover additional areas of equality.

3.2.

The Act came into force in stages with the first being effective from 1 October 2010 and the Public Sector Equality duty effective during 2011.

3.3.

The principal aim of the Act is to replace the above protection for race, disability and gender equality with the nine “protected characteristics” of age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, marriage and civil partnership, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.

4. Single Equalities Scheme 2021/22 to 2023/24

4.1.

The Boards Single Equality Scheme 2021/22 – 2023/24 is shown in Appendix 1 and details the Equality Act 2010, Equal Pay, Positive Action, Public Sector Duties, Specific Equality Duties, Monitoring, Customer Consultation, Access to Premises and Information and Training.

4.2.

This is the beginning of a new three year cycle of work required to meet the General Equality Duty. We will work collaboratively and individually over the following three years to achieve the Action Plan set out in section 11 of our Single Equality Scheme.

5. Equalities Mainstreaming and Equalities Outcomes

5.1.

The Orkney and Shetland Valuation Joint Board and the Assessor for Orkney and Shetland are committed to adopting the principles and the ethos of the Equality Act 2010 and the Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties) (Scotland) Regulations 2012.

5.2.

The 2012 Regulations impose a duty on certain authorities to:

- Publish a report on progress they have made to make the equality duty integral to the exercise of its functions (the 'mainstreaming equality report').
- Assess the impact of proposed new or revised policies and practice against the needs of the general equality duty. Publish a set of equality outcomes which it considers will enable it to improve its equality duty. Such outcomes will be published by the Board every 4 years.
- Publish a report on the composition, recruitment, development and retention of employees with respect to the number and characteristics of employees.
- Publish gender pay gap information, a statement on equal pay and occupational segregation between men and women - (The Orkney and Shetland Valuation Joint Board has only 14 members of staff in two separate offices and is therefore exempt from these duties).
- Consider award criteria in relation to public procurement.
- Publish its equality reports in a manner that is accessible to the public.
- Report annually on the progress made to achieve equality outcomes.

5.3.

The Equality Outcomes that are unique and specific to Orkney and Shetland Valuation Joint Board are detailed below:

- Equality Outcome 1 – Continue to make managers aware of equalities responsibilities in relation to staffing along with continued investigations of training availability at local levels.
- Equality Outcome 2 – Continued engagement at local levels to encourage voter registration of young people with help and guidance from key stakeholders.
- Equality Outcome 3 – Monitor the migration back to office working in the aftermath of remote working to enable a flexible approach to work, training and office occupation.
- Equality Outcome 4 – Continue to monitor the gender segregation of staffing while being aware of national trends and the nature of professional demographics.

6. Financial Implications

There are no financial implications arising from the contents of this report.

7. Legal Aspects

There are no legal implications arising from the contents of this report other than the duty to report under the Equality Act 2010 and the Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties) (Scotland) Regulations 2012.

8. Contact Officer

Dennis M Stevenson, Assessor and Electoral Registration Officer, Email dennis.stevenson@orkney.gov.uk.

9. Appendices

Appendix 1: Single Equalities Scheme 2021-22 to 2023-24.

Appendix 2: Equalities Mainstreaming and Equalities Outcomes Report 2021.



Orkney and Shetland Valuation Joint Board



Single Equality Scheme

2021/22 – 2023/24

Foreword

The Equalities Act 2010 provides an opportunity for The Orkney and Shetland Valuation Joint Board (the Board) to reaffirm its commitment to equality. This single Equality Scheme is the source of a positive equal opportunities agenda which includes the promotion of equality by the Board within both Orkney and Shetland.

I have a desire to continue to promote equal opportunities and this scheme forms part of the Board's wider equal opportunities policy.

Our performance in relation to the proposals contained in this scheme will be monitored and audited, and progress reported to elected members of the Board and to the people of Orkney and Shetland through the Board's website www.orkney-shetland-vjb.co.uk.

Dennis M Stevenson,
Assessor and Electoral Registration Officer,
Orkney and Shetland Valuation Joint Board,
April 2021.

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1.0. Introduction

1.1. The Board

The Orkney and Shetland Valuation Joint Board was established as part of the 1996 reorganisation of local government in terms of the Valuation Joint Boards (Scotland) Order 1995, and its primary purpose is to discharge all the functions of its two constituent authorities, [Orkney Islands Council](#) and [Shetland Islands Council](#), as valuation authorities under the Valuation Acts. The Board is a separate public body from the two constituent authorities but draws its membership from them, each nominating 5 councillors to serve on the Board. With the agreement of each Islands Council the Board has appointed the Assessor to be the Electoral Registration Officer who is responsible for the preparation and maintenance of the Register of Electors. Most of Shetland Islands Council's policies have been adopted by the Board however many have to be adapted to cover the specific functions of the Board.

1.2. Service Mission and Vision

Who Are We

The Orkney and Shetland Valuation Joint Board is an independent local authority established under The Valuation Joint Boards (Scotland) Order 1995. Due to the Board's small size, up to March 2021 Shetland Islands Council acted as its lead authority and supplied the Board with Administrative Support, Financial Management and Human Resources. From April 2021 this support is provided by the lead authority Orkney Islands Council. Current staff terms and condition of employment have been revised from April 2021 when a new pay and grading model was introduced.

Corporate & Service Plans detailing our mission and vision, what we do and how we do it are available on the Boards website.

What We Do

We compile and maintain the Valuation Rolls, Council Tax Valuation Lists and Registers of Electors for the Orkney Islands and Shetland Islands Council areas.

Corporate & Service Plans detailing our mission and vision, what we do and how we do it are available on the Boards website.

Our Aims

We aim to provide high quality, effective and responsive services to all of our stakeholders

Commitments

We are committed to:

- Listening and responding to stakeholders needs.
- Valuing staff and providing them with opportunities to develop and contribute.
- Reacting innovatively to change.
- Treating all stakeholders in a fair, consistent manner and in accordance with equal opportunities requirements.
- Striving for continuous improvement in all aspects of service delivery.

- Ensuring that we are accessible and accountable to stakeholders.
- Pro-actively planning workloads and deploying resources.

2.0. The Equality Act 2010

The Equality Act 2010 repeals the Equal Pay Act 1970, the Sex Discrimination Acts 1975 & 1986, the Race Relations Act 1976, and the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 but consolidates and amends the above legislation and extends it to cover additional areas of equality.

The Act came into force in stages with the first being effective from 1 October 2010 and the Public Sector Equality duty effective during 2011. Other areas of the Act may not be implemented.

The principal aim of the Act is to replace the above protection for race, disability and gender equality with the following nine “protected characteristics”

2.1 “Protected Characteristics”

Age – relates either to a person or persons of similar age. The Act protects people of all ages. However, different treatment because of age is not unlawful if you can demonstrate that it is a proportionate means of meeting a legitimate aim. Age is the only protected characteristic that allows employers to justify direct discrimination.

Disability – a person or persons have a disability if they have a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long term adverse effect on their ability to carry out day to day activities which would include tasks like using a telephone, reading a book or using public transport. The Act includes a new protection from discrimination arising from disability. This states that it is discrimination to treat a disabled person unfavourably because of something connected with their disability (e.g. a tendency to make spelling mistakes arising from dyslexia). This type of incrimination is unlawful where the employer or other person acting for the employer knows, or could reasonably be expected to know, that the person has a disability. This type of discrimination is only justifiable if an employer can show that it is a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim. Additionally, indirect discrimination now covers disabled people. This means that a job applicant or employee could claim that a particular rule or requirement the Board has in place disadvantages people with the same disability. This is unlawful unless it can be justified. The Act also includes a new provision which makes it unlawful, except in certain circumstances, for employers to ask about a candidate’s health before offering them work.

Gender reassignment – a person or persons who are proposing to undergo, are undergoing or have undergone a process (or part of a process) for the purpose of reassigning the person's sex by changing physiological or other attributes of sex. A reference to a transsexual person is a reference to a person who has the protected characteristic of gender reassignment. The Act no longer requires a person to be under medical supervision to be protected – so a woman who decides to live as a man but does not undergo any medical procedures would be covered.

Pregnancy and maternity – Breastfeeding mothers are protected against discrimination for the first six months. After six months a breastfeeding mother is protected through the sex discrimination provisions in the Equality Act. The additional protection for the crucial first six months after a woman has given birth is in recognition of the fact that she needs

the strongest possible protection against discrimination that may occur in the early months when it is most important to the health of both mother and child.

Marriage and civil partnership – includes only a person or persons who are married or have civil partners.

Race – a person or persons referred to by colour, nationality and ethnic or national origins.

Religion or belief – a person or persons of any religion or of no religion at all. Also includes a person or persons of any religious or philosophical belief or no belief at all. Discrimination because of religion or belief can occur even where both the discriminator and recipient are of the same religion or belief.

Sex – a reference to a person is to a man or a woman while a group reference is to persons of the same sex.

Sexual Orientation – means a person's sexual orientation towards persons of the same sex, persons of the opposite sex or persons of either sex. A reference to a person is to a person of a particular sexual orientation while a group reference is to persons who are of the same sexual orientation.

The Act also makes explicit the concept of 'dual discrimination', where someone may be discriminated against or treated unfairly on the basis of a combination of two or more of the protected characteristics.

2.2. Discrimination Defined

Direct discrimination

Direct discrimination occurs when a person (including local authorities, trade unions, employment agencies, vocational training bodies etc) discriminates against another if, because of their protected characteristic they are treated less favourably than others.

Discrimination by association

Already applies to race, religion or belief and sexual orientation. Now extended to cover age, disability, gender reassignment and sex. This is direct discrimination against someone because they associate with another person who possesses a protected characteristic.

Perception discrimination

Already applies to age, race, religion or belief and sexual orientation. Now extended to cover disability, gender reassignment and sex. This is direct discrimination against an individual because others think they possess a particular protected characteristic. It applies even if the person does not actually possess that characteristic.

Indirect discrimination

The Act harmonises the different definitions of indirect discrimination and extends the definition to now include age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation.

Under the Act it is an offence to directly or indirectly discriminate against, harass or victimise a person because they have one or more protected characteristic, or because they are associated with someone who has a protected characteristic.

Indirect discrimination occurs when a policy or action appears neutral but its impact particularly disadvantages people with a protected characteristic, unless the person applying the provision can justify it as a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim.

Harassment

Harassment involves unwanted conduct which is related to a relevant protected characteristic and has the effect or purpose of violating an individual's dignity or creating a degrading, hostile, humiliating, intimidating, or offensive environment for the complainant. The Act also includes harassment based on perception and association.

Employees will now be able to complain of behaviour that they find offensive even if it is not directed at them, and the complainant need not possess the relevant characteristics themselves.

Third party harassment

Covers age, disability, gender, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, and sexual orientation. The Act makes the Board liable for harassment of their employees by people (third parties), such as customers or clients, who are not employees of the Board. The Board is only liable when harassment has occurred on at least two previous occasions, the employer is aware that it has taken place, and has not taken reasonable steps to prevent it from happening again.

Victimisation

Occurs when a person subjects an individual to detriment because the individual has brought proceedings under the Act, the individual has given evidence or information in connection with proceedings under this Act, the individual has done any other thing for the purposes of or in connection with the Act, or the individual has made an allegation (express or otherwise) that the person or any other person has contravened the Act.

A person is not protected from victimisation if they have maliciously made or supported an untrue complaint.

The Board will, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation, will advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a protected characteristic and persons who do not share it and will foster good relations between persons who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

3.0. Equal Pay

The Equal Pay Act 1970 is replicated with only a few amendments. The long term objective for all organisations is to try to achieve equality in working contracts for women and men, and the Board is committed to this.

Through its adoption of the Collective Agreement between Shetland Islands Council, Orkney Island Council and Unison, the implementation of a new pay and grading model was implemented from April 2021. Through this the Board seeks to achieve pay equality

through the adoption of the new pay scheme. The Scheme is consistent with the principles of equal pay for work of equal value. The overall pay gap remains a concern but given that this results from the predominance of men in higher grades and women in lower grades, it is out with the scope of this report.

The Board will, through recruitment and promotion, attempt to remove any imbalance when appropriate opportunities arise. The Act allows an employee to bring a claim on pay discrimination even when no direct male or female comparator is employed.

The Board will publish salary information, ethnic employment rates, and disability employment rates.

4.0. Positive Action

Prior to the 2010 Act 'positive action' was permitted to allow employers to encourage applications for employment from under represented groups.

"Positive action" does not mean positive discrimination. Recruitment or promotion will still be based on merit. A person cannot be appointed just because he or she possesses a protected characteristic. That would be positive discrimination, which continues to be unlawful in the UK.

The Board will consider employing a person because of their protected characteristic(s) from a number of equally qualified candidates with other similar comparative merits.

The Board will take proportionate measures to overcome any perceived disadvantage or to meet specific needs for a person with a protected characteristic, much along the lines of providing facilities for disabled persons.

5.0. Public Sector Duties

The Act brings together the existing public sector equalities duties covering disability, gender and race under a new single duty which includes age, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, religion and belief, and sexual orientation.

The Board when carrying out its functions will endeavour to:

- Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct prohibited by the Act.
- Advance equality of opportunity between persons sharing a protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.
- Foster good relations between persons who share a protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.
- Consider the needs of all individuals in their day to day work, in developing policy, in delivering services, and in relation to their own employees.

6.0. Specific Equality Duties

The Act does not detail the specific duties but the Scottish Ministers will be able to impose specific duties on relevant Scottish bodies. These, in certain areas, may only apply to public bodies with over 20 employees.

7.0. Monitoring

Reports will be prepared and published on the Board's website to present statistics on the following:

- Staff profile by race/disability/gender.
- Employees by age.
- Recruitment by race/disability/gender.
- Leavers, resignations, retirements, and redundancies by race/disability/gender.
- Staff salaries (numbers and percentages) by race/disability/gender.

8.0. Customer Consultation

The Board issues, on a regular basis, Customer Consultation questionnaires which are statistically analysed to allow an annual report on stakeholder opinions on the service provided. This customer consultation examines the returns from all persons with, and without, protected characteristics.

The Board also operates a Customer Complaints Policy with a suggestion, comments and complaints forms available online.

9.0. Access to the Board's premises and Information

The Disability Equality Scheme published in December 2009 highlighted the fact that the Board's premises now comply with the Discrimination Act 1995 (as amended). However, we now have an issue with disabled access to our Shetland Offices due to moving to smaller premises. There is now insufficient space to have a private interview room suitable for wheelchair access. An arrangement whereby any persons requiring privacy will be taken to Shetland Island Council's Main HQ which is approximately 100 yards away. Suitable interview rooms are available in this building at short notice. The staff in the Shetland Office have been briefed to offer a private interview room to any disabled person as a first call. The disabled access to the Board's Orkney office has similar problems with an automated disabled entrance and ground floor accommodation accessible to disabled persons. A disabled or infirm person would still have to press a bell for assistance before being ushered into a utility room on the ground floor. The Board are aware of the need to find accommodation in Orkney for the long term that would allow fuller unimpeded access for disabled persons.

The Board is in the process of considering using BrowseAloud which is software that speech enables web sites for people with dyslexia and related learning disorders. Orkney Islands Council's web site has this facility but Shetland Islands Council's site does not. Other initiatives such as translation into other languages have also been considered however it is felt that most people use the Google Translate facility which is free and can translate both web pages and to some extent downloadable PDF forms into 65 different languages. The Board considers that Google Translator will be sufficient for the majority of incidences.

Those publications made on paper will also be made available, on request, in different languages, in Braille, audio tapes and other similar mediums. Most forms issued will in future provide details of how to obtain these alternative formats.

10.0. Training

The Board has identified and put in place arrangements for training its staff in relation to its duties to promote equality. The Board is committed to ensuring that the Assessor's staff receives adequate training in these areas.

The Board considers it important that its own members receive training in its obligations with regard to disability equality, and will ensure that current and future members participate in training programmes provided by its constituent authorities.

A statement of commitment to Equality is included in staff Induction packs. All new staff, through the induction procedures, are made aware of all relevant Equality issues and retraining of all staff takes place when required.

11.0. Action Plan

This section outlines our strategy to ensure compliance with both the general and specific duties required by the equality legislation.

The Board is committed to making equality a central part of the way it works and to achieve this it will, for each of the three functions below:

- Meet the requirements of the Equality Act 2010.
- Ensure implementation of this Scheme.
- Identify managers' responsibilities in relation to the Act.
- Continue to provide training to update all staff the new duties and responsibilities as required by the Equality Act 2010.
- Continue to monitor all staffing issues.
- Continue to review Board policies to enhance equality of opportunity.
- Improve accessibility, availability and appropriateness of our service to stakeholders.
- Evaluate the needs/ views of all persons with protected characteristics and introduce consultation procedures as required.
- Maintain monitoring within the customer consultation procedures.
- Continue to publish the results of consultations, monitoring and assessments annually.
- Maintain a positive ethos towards those persons who have a protected characteristic.
- Review this Policy three yearly or as required.
- Review the Action Plan annually.

It should be noted that meeting these duties forms part of the Board's equality strategy which aims to mainstream equal opportunities into the framework of service planning, monitoring and delivery. It is also our intention that all our services including employment will not simply conform to equal opportunities legal requirements but will be proactive in promoting equality.

1. **Electoral Registration** – This service is responsible for the compilation and maintenance of the Electoral Register. The Electoral Register is used at all elections and only persons who appear on the Register can vote. Electoral Registration forms are issued every year to all properties that are residences. This Service therefore reaches every member of the community who is aged 14 years or over. Currently there is no mention on

any of the forms relating to Electoral Registration, postal or proxy voting to say that a translation of the document would be available on request. If a member of the public requested a form in another language, the Electoral Registration Officer would consult his colleagues to see if a form would be available from another office. All forms available electronically can be translated into 65 languages using [Google Translate](#) which is freely available on the web. It is unknown how accurate such a translation would be, however, if it is available on the web, it is likely to be sufficient for translating web pages and forms to allow someone to understand what the electoral process is about.

2. Valuation – This service is responsible for the compilation and maintenance of the Valuation Roll. The Valuation Roll is used by the Directors of Finance of the Board's constituent Councils to bill occupiers/owners for non-domestic rates. Statements to the effect that forms and documents relating to the Valuation Roll are available on request in other languages or in larger fonts may be considered for future years.

3. Council Tax – This service is responsible for the compilation and maintenance of the Council Tax List. The List is used by the Directors of Finance of the Board's constituent Councils to bill occupiers/owners for Council Tax payments. Council Tax Banding Notices are issued to new dwellings, and certain altered dwellings. This Service reaches all Council Taxpayers in Orkney & Shetland. Statements to the effect that forms and documents relating to the Valuation Roll are available on request in other languages or in larger fonts may be considered for future years.

Board's Web Site – As discussed above, BrowseAloud is being considered as an enhancement to benefit those with learning difficulties such as dyslexia. As an example the following link translates the whole Orkney and Shetland Web Site into French. www.orkney-shetland-vjb.co.uk. There is a drop-down menu that allows you to select a different language.

Dennis M Stevenson,
Assessor and Electoral Registration Officer,
April 2021.



Orkney and Shetland Valuation Joint Board



Equalities Mainstreaming and Equalities Outcomes

April 2021

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1. Introduction

1.1. The Orkney and Shetland Valuation Joint Board and the Assessor for Orkney and Shetland are committed to adopting the principles and the ethos of the Equality Act 2010 and the Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties) (Scotland) Regulations 2012.

1.2. As part of their commitment towards equalities, the Board will provide those who are associated with them such as ratepayers, council tax payers, electors, all staff members of the Board and members of the public who resort to the offices of the Board a service, a culture and a working environment commensurate with the three aspects of the general equality duty when carrying out its functions, specifically to pay due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate any unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct that is prohibited by the Equality Act 2010.
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not.

1.3. The general equality duty expanded the range of those protected under equality legislation to include age, disability, gender, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief and sexual orientation. The duty to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination also covers marriage and civil partnerships with regard to eliminating unlawful discrimination in employment.

1.4. The Regulations impose a duty on certain authorities to:

- Publish a report on progress they have made to make the equality duty integral to the exercise of its functions (the 'mainstreaming equality report').
- Assess the impact of proposed new or revised policies and practice against the needs of the general equality duty.
- Publish a set of equality outcomes which it considers will enable it to improve its equality duty. Such outcomes will be published by the Board every 4 years.
- Publish a report on the composition, recruitment, development and retention of employees with respect to the number and characteristics of employees.
- Publish gender pay gap information, a statement on equal pay and occupational segregation between men and women - (The Orkney and Shetland Valuation Joint Board has only 12 members of staff in two separate offices and is therefore exempt from these duties).
- Consider award criteria in relation to public procurement.
- Publish its equality reports in a manner that is accessible to the public.
- Report annually on the progress made to achieve equality outcomes.

2. Mainstreaming Equality

2.1. Mainstreaming simply means integrating equality into the day to day work of the Board – taking equality into account in everything that is done as an employer and when planning and providing services. By doing so equality becomes part of structures, behaviours and cultures. The Assessor and Depute Assessor must provide clear and consistent messages

with the equality duties embedded within all strategies. Co-workers should be able to recognise the relevance of the equality duties to their own role and should consider it in carrying out their work. Equality therefore becomes fully integrated within structures, behaviours and culture rather than an adjunct to these aspects of the service.

2.2. Gathering information is an important aspect of mainstreaming and includes monitoring service users and service activity as regards all of the protected characteristics and then analysing outcomes.

2.3. Mainstreaming the equality duty has a number of benefits including:

- Equality becomes part of the structures, behaviours and culture of a Board.
- The Board knows and can demonstrate how, in carrying out its functions, it is promoting equality.
- Mainstreaming equality contributes to continuous improvement and better performance.

3. Mainstreaming The Equalities Duty

3.1. The Board will continue to work towards achievement of the following aims:

- To ensure that all employees are trained in how to implement this scheme as is relevant and appropriate to their jobs.
- Continuing to monitor any complaints to ensure that any equalities issues line up with equalities legislation.
- To establish a system for assessing and consulting on the likely impact of the Board's policies on the promotion of equality.
- To monitor the Board's existing and proposed policies for any adverse impact on the promotion of equality.
- To ensure public access to information and services.

4. Priorities and Functions

4.1. The Board currently fulfils its responsibility to monitor the required areas and the results are published annually by the Assessor. These are contained within the "Annual Equalities Progress & Monitoring Report" published on the Board's website each year www.orkney-shetland-vjb.co.uk.

4.2. The Clerk and Treasurer to the Orkney and Shetland Valuation Joint Board and those that are seconded to Valuation Joint Board duties are employees of the lead authority which is currently Shetland Islands Council and will be subject to its monitoring processes.

4.3. The Board has in place arrangements to monitor equalities by reference to race, gender, disability, and age and the numbers of staff in post and the number of applicants for employment and training. Due to its size few employment opportunities arise so reporting on employment is infrequent. Statistics are prepared and published on the Board's Website under the following headings:

- Staff profile by race/disability/gender.
- Employees by age.
- Applicants by race/disability/gender.

- Recruitment by race/disability/gender.
- Promoted staff by race/disability/gender.
- Leavers, resignations, retirements, and redundancies by race/disability/gender.
- Training by race/disability/gender.
- Staff salaries (numbers and percentages) by race/disability/gender.

5. Board Functions

5.1. The core functions of the Board are:

- Publication and maintenance of the Valuation Roll.
- Publication and maintenance of the Council Tax Valuation List.
- Publication and maintenance of the Register of Electors.

5.2. The Valuation Roll and Council Tax Valuation List have outcomes which relate to the inspection and valuation of property however there is a need to ensure that technicians who visit the subjects are familiar with the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equality and foster good relations across the range of protected characteristics.

5.3. As Electoral Registration Officer for Orkney and Shetland the Assessor reports annually to the Electoral Commission against the performance standards the Commission has set. These standards include: making door to door enquiries, Public Awareness Strategy, working with partners, and accessibility and communication of information. The Electoral Commission has confirmed that the Assessor as Electoral Registration Officer has met the criteria for these standards since the performance standards were introduced in 2008. However, the ERO recognises that these are areas where equalities issues must be addressed and that proper training is given to staff who deal with issues through public visitations to the offices of the Board and on door-to-door visits.

6. Complaints

6.1. In its scrutiny role, the Board is required to keep itself informed as to the manner in which the Assessor deals with operational matters. The Assessor is required to report any incidence of complaints to the Board at its bi-annual meetings. All complaints are logged on its "Comments and Complaints database" and reported to the next available Board meeting if there are any such incidents.

7. Employment

7.1. A Recruitment and Selection procedure mirrors Shetland Island Council's "Recruitment and Selection Policy and Procedures". Members of staff who are involved in recruitment and selection have received training through a Train Shetland which provides wide ranging training in Shetland to meet the local workforce needs. The availability of courses are listed here [Train Shetland](#). The Assessor and ERO intends to expand its staff training in areas but particularly in areas of equality by requesting funding through the Board's training budget. The Orkney and Shetland Valuation Joint Board seeks to employ the most suitable applicant for each vacancy that arises, regardless of any physical or mental impairment. Applicants with disabilities will be treated fairly and considered on ability only.

8. The Board's Policies

8.1. Shetland Islands Council's policies and procedures have largely been adopted by the Orkney and Shetland Valuation Joint Board as the lead authority to the Board. Where the Board considers that there is a need to compile separate policies and procedures the Assessor publishes separate documents which are scrutinised for equalities issues. All policies continue to be screened for any adverse impact and a full Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA) will be completed where necessary.

9. Equalities Monitoring

9.1. The Orkney and Shetland Valuation Joint Board will continue to monitor its staff and applicants for posts in relation to selection and recruitment, promotion, grievances, disciplinary action, ceasing employment, and training in respect of ethnic origin, gender, disability and age. The Orkney and Shetland Valuation Joint Board will continue to work towards improving the level of responses by existing and new staff by engaging with staff representatives and communities of interest to identify any barriers or perceived barriers and make recommendations for action. This Report will be published and circulated to all members, officers and employees of the Board. The Scheme and this Mainstreaming Equalities Report will be placed on the Board's web-site at www.orkney-shetland-vjb.co.uk. Translations will be made available on request. Versions may also be available in different formats, large font, Braille and audio tape on request.

10. Training

10.1. The Board has identified a need to put in place arrangements for training its employees in all areas of equality in the workplace and to this end it has made the Guidance available staff online at the Equality and Human Rights Website at <http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/advice-and-guidance/>. Structured training is not always possible in a small office with job share posts and the Assessor believes that providing time to study equality issues, Freedom of Information and Data Protection Awareness should be dealt with during individual study periods in the form of an "E-Learning Programme". The Assessor intends to improve this through further use of the "Train Shetland Courses" described above under "Employment" although this will depend on there being sufficient funds in the Training Budget.

10.2. In developing its Mainstreaming Report, the Board acknowledges its small size which makes any consultation exercises difficult. It therefore believes that it is important to learn from the processes and outcomes of its two constituent local authorities and from other Valuation Joint Boards where it believes that they fit the local scene.

11. Publicity

11.1. The Board is required to identify the arrangements it will make to publish the results of any assessments, consultations and monitoring carried out to establish whether its policies have any impact on equality. It is bound by and complies with the requirements of the Local Government etc. Scotland Act 1994 in respect of access to information. Any equality issues arising out of policy documents will become subject to an Equalities Impact Assessment which will be published on the Board's website.

11.2. The Board is also required to identify the arrangements it will make for ensuring public access to the information and services it provides. The Board draws on its website resource as a means of ensuring public access, however it recognises that further work is required in order to meet this requirement and intends to draw on the resources of its two Councils to seek ways to develop public awareness. This report will be made available to members, officers and employees of the Board and will be available on the website.

12. Duration and Review

12.1. This report is intended to cover the period from April 2021 to March 2024. The Board may, if necessary, review the Report and Equality Outcomes or any part of them at an earlier date in response to comments from stakeholders, organisations or as a result of comments through Board Meetings which are normally held twice a year. Such reviews will be covered in the Annual Equalities Progress & Monitoring Reports published on the website.

13. Employee Equality Monitoring

13.1. The Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties) (Scotland) Regulations 2012, which was enacted after the Board's Single Equality Scheme was published, requires all listed public authorities to take steps to gather information on the composition of the authorities workforce and information on recruitment, development and retention of employees relating to the relevant protected characteristics.

13.2. The public sector equality duty covers the following characteristics: age, disability, gender, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief and sexual orientation.

13.3. The purpose of the legislation is to ensure that public authorities:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct that is prohibited by the Equality Act 2010.
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not.
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

13.4. The Appendices to this report detail the employee information collected in respect of job applicants in post up to 1st April 2021. One job was advertised during the period, however recruitment has been unsuccessful and the post remains vacant. Data will be collected for 2021 and subsequent years should any posts be advertised.

14. Equality Outcomes

14.1. The process of preparing equality outcomes requires an understanding of the most significant equality issues arising in the organisation and sector. Efforts and resources require to be targeted as effectively as possible to meet these equality issues. Setting outcomes will help the Board focus on the areas where the organisation can have the most impact taking a strategic overview of the Board as a whole and its functions.

14.2. In advance of considering equalities outcomes, the Assessor and Electoral Registration Officer has drawn on the resources of the GIS Census information and on his own electoral registration statistical data to help determine the ethnic make-up of Orkney and Shetland.

14.3. The figures show similar patterns in each of the two areas with higher numbers of Eastern Europeans than any other minority group. The Assessor and Electoral Registration Officer has taken these demographic indicators into account in how he currently deals with equality issues in all areas of the services the Board provides and in the way he conducts all the Board's office processes.

15. The Services

15.1. Electoral Registration

15.1.1. Electoral Registration has gone through a process of change from household registration, to individual registration brought about by the Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013 and latterly to Canvass Reform in 2020. The changeover to Individual Electoral Registration has had a substantial impact on the service and citizens. In addition to this Electoral Registration Officers had to deal with one-off changes to the system for the Scottish Independence Referendum which took place on 18th September 2014. This saw the franchise extended to incorporate 16 and 17 year olds. The Reduction in Voting Age Bill 2015 introduced the voting franchise to 16 and 17 year olds for the Scottish Government election in May 2016, Local Government Elections in May 2017 and the Scottish Parliament Election in May 2021. Further Legislation has been laid to extend the voting franchise to all foreign nationals residing in Scotland and under certain criteria, prisoners. On publication on 1st December 2020 there were 17532 registered Electors in Orkney and 17969 in Shetland.

15.1.2. Electoral registration is a priority area for equalities, particularly in view of the fundamental shift in focus from household to individual, and the drive to ensure all eligible 16 and 17 year olds can participate in the 2021 elections. The Electoral Registration process is regulated and overseen by the Electoral Commission who are an independent body established by Parliament. One of the Commission's objectives is to increase public participation in the democratic process and in this regard, it has carried out research on access and attitudes across group characteristics including gender, ethnicity and age. The extensive research which spans the last ten years, provides a number of consistent themes:

- Voter registration is lower for Black and Minority Ethnic groups (BME).
- The level of voter registration is inversely related to age.
- Men are more engaged in the democratic processes than women.
- Whilst UK Commonwealth, non-UK Commonwealth, Irish and EU citizens are entitled to be registered, EU nationals are least likely to be registered to vote.
- People in rented property tend to be less likely to participate in politics.
- Deprivation has an association with non-participation in the electoral process.
- Mobile populations tend to be under-registered. This is believed to include travellers.

15.1.3. There are clear parallels that dictate that active consideration of these themes must be embedded in registration practice and procedure, essentially mainstreaming equalities considerations in the day-to-day operations of the service.

15.2. Non-Domestic Rating

15.2.1. The rating revaluation of non-domestic properties was completed by April 2017. This resulted in all non-domestic properties undergoing a revaluation. In Orkney and Shetland, the Assessor is responsible for assessing the values of some 5,000 non-domestic properties that currently have a total rateable value of £90M. Equalities issues may arise through the day-to-day dealing with individuals either:

- In person at the property;
- In person at the Board's offices; or
- Through e-mail or other forms of correspondence.

15.3. Council Tax Banding

15.3.1. The Council Tax regime is currently a stable function, with a valuation list of some 23,200 dwellings allocated to council tax bands and around 300 new dwellings being added each year. The Scottish Government has amended the top four council tax bands with a supplement payable on these council tax bands with effect from 1st April 2017. Equalities issues may arise in the same way as described under Non-Domestic Rating above.

15.4. Staffing

15.4.1. The Assessor & ERO service establishment comprises 6.5 full time equivalent posts in Orkney and 5.5 in Shetland. There are currently 13 full and part-time employees and one vacant post that represent 13 full time equivalent posts. Staff turnover is historically extremely low which means that there are very few opportunities to address any perceived imbalance in the staffing profile and the acute restraint in public expenditure dictates that recruitment will be minimal. The potential to effect change through workforce recruitment is therefore limited.

15.4.2. Against this background of a stable Council Tax and Non-Domestic Rating system where citizen interaction is relatively limited, the Assessor and ERO believes that focus should be mainly on achieving the following aims:

- Improving the education of members of staff through in-house training and seeking opportunities to utilise any structured training if available locally through external training establishments such as Train Shetland and Orkney College.
- To maximise the opportunity for young citizens to register to vote and enable them to engage more fully in the voting process.
- To maximise any opportunities to broaden the Board's workforce from its current base of "Scottish/Shetland/Orkney" to reflect ethnic minorities.
- To increase the proportion of staff who feel they are treated fairly in terms of equalities issues.
- Participate in external training through the Scottish Graduate Apprentice Scheme where Board Apprentices attend mainland Scotland University courses.

16. Outcomes

16.1. Outcome 1 – Improving the education of staff on equality issues in the workplace

This will require the following measures in order to track this outcome:

- Notification of Single Equalities Scheme and Equalities and Human Rights Guidance to all employees of the Board.
- Ensuring that team leaders have the knowledge to deal with equalities issues at their level. Assessor engages with team leaders to discuss issues where equalities issues may arise.
- Engagement with team leaders to ensure that areas of equalities are understood by staff in areas affecting their posts. Having particular regard to the advice and practices contained in the “Good Equality Practice for Employers” covering equality policies, equality training and monitoring.
- Assessor seeks ways of improving training in equalities issues by reviewing local sources of training through Train Shetland and Orkney College.

16.2. Outcome 2 – Maximising opportunities for young citizens to register to vote

The registration of young voters (under 18) for the Scottish elections will mirror the demographic profile of Orkney and Shetland. Registration statistics will demonstrate progress against census outputs and other sources of young person data. In turn, the early engagement with young citizens should prove beneficial in assisting to establish a culture of engagement in mid-late teens that may be maintained into adulthood.

Activities

- Consult with partner authorities and education providers – whilst it is anticipated that virtually complete lists of young people will be provided by the education authorities covering those who attend school, the ERO believes that it will be necessary to use many other methods to compile as comprehensive a list as possible.
- Create and maintain public awareness, canvass and publicity plans.
- Integration of the equalities element with the Electoral Commission performance standards regime.
- Engagement with individual equalities groups to ensure removal of barriers to registration.
- Encourage schools to sign up to holding young person’s voter registration events.

Measurement

- Registration rates compared to census outputs where available.
- Number of registration corrections and complaints.

16.3. Outcome 3 – Promote equality and fair treatment of staff within the offices of the Board

- Introduce a staff survey.
- Monitor and manage flexi-time working in both offices of the board to help employees maintain a balance between work and personal life and encourage mothers back to the workplace.
- Increase general training in both offices where there is an identified need. This should be carried out mainly by in-house training using workbooks associated with the main software utilised by the Board's offices.
- Review recruitment channels.
- Gather more comprehensive data on staff data to include perceived imperfections in the workplaces.

16.4. Outcome 4 – The gender segregation in our staff Professional/ Technical roles is improved.

Basis

The analysis of our current workforce shows that we have 6 members of staff employed in professional and technical roles, 4 male and 2 female. (See Appendix 2 for Staff Monitoring).

The professional and technical staff represents 50% of the Board's employees and the gender imbalance within this group is evident when compared with the 46% female and 54% male division across the whole workforce. Professional Staff are members of the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors where there is a gender imbalance of 85% Male to 15% female amongst members. This creates a problem in recruitment at the professional end of the scale in helping to address this imbalance leaving limited opportunities to address this.

Action Plan

The aim is to encourage more applications from female applicants for professional and technical roles and identify any barriers preventing females from applying for posts within this area of employment.

- Work with staff to remove stereotypical views of gender suitability for these roles.
- Consult with constituent Islands Councils personnel departments to explore ways of attracting more women to these roles.

Aim

The aim is to employ more women in professional and technical roles. In measuring progress to achieving this aim it must be recognised that the Orkney and Shetland Valuation Joint Board is a very small organisation with a workforce amounting to only 14 staff posts over the two island areas. Turnover of staff is limited and therefore there will be few opportunities to significantly alter the staff profile in the foreseeable future.

Dennis M Stevenson,
Assessor and ERO,
April 2021.

Appendix 1

Orkney and Shetland Valuation Joint Board

Equal Pay Statement 2021-2025

1. The Orkney and Shetland Valuation Joint Board is committed to the principle of equal pay for all our employees and aims to address any gender pay gap in their pay systems and to reduce occupational segregation.

2. The Board understands that the equal pay between men and women is a legal right under the Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties) (Scotland) Regulations 2012. It is important that employees have confidence in the Board's process of eliminating the gender pay gap and occupational segregation. As good practice The Board is committed to working in partnership with trade unions to ensure that we work towards providing equal pay.

3. The Board believes that in addressing the gender pay gap in their pay system and reducing occupational segregation they are sending a positive message to their employees and customers. It makes good sense to have a fair, transparent reward system and it helps to control costs. The Board recognises that avoiding unfair discrimination will improve morale and enhance efficiency and shows that the Board is a good employer.

4. The Board's Equal Pay Objectives are to:

- Identify any unfair, unjust or unlawful practices that impact on the gender pay gap, and take appropriate remedial action.
- Increase the number of female employees in the top 5% of earners.
- Reduce the gender pay gap for part-time and full-time employees.
- Reduce occupational segregation.
- Increase the number of female employees who successfully apply for promotion.
- Ensure recruitment and employment practices promote equality of opportunity and eliminate discrimination.

5. To achieve our Equal Pay Objectives, the Board will:

- Apply a pay structure for employees covered by the Scottish Joint Council for Local Government Employees conditions of service that ensures equal pay for work of equal value.
- Apply the agreed job sizing arrangements for the grades and pay of employees.
- Use the Pay Reviewer Software in order to carry out an Equal Pay Review.
- Provide training and guidance for those employees involved in carrying out Equal Pay Review.
- Carry out an Equal Pay Review every two years.
- Plan and implement actions identified from the Equal Pay Review through consultation with employees and with trade unions.
- Identify occupational segregation and if necessary take positive action to address it.

- Provide training and guidance for those employees involved in carrying out Job Evaluation and Job Sizing.
- Inform employees of how Job Evaluation and Job Sizing practices work and how their own pay is determined.
- Monitor complaints and grievances on equal pay, recruitment and harassment for identifying equality issues.
- Carry out Equality Impact Assessments on all employment policies.
- In conjunction with trade unions monitor pay statistics annually through Statutory Performance Indicators.
- Review progress every two years through the Mainstreaming Report.
- Provide training and guidance to all managers involved in the design of new jobs.

6. Shetland Islands Council is the Orkney and Shetland Valuation Joint Board's lead authority and the Board adopts the Council's policies on pay and terms and conditions. So far as the equal pay statement is concerned, the terms are the same as those which have been approved by Shetland Islands Council. The Board intends to review its Equal Pay Statement in line with the Council's every four years.

8 Broad Street,
Kirkwall,
KW15 1NX.

April 2021.

Appendix 2

Orkney and Shetland Valuation Joint Board

Equalities Monitoring – as at 1 April 2021

(Based on data up to 31 March 2021).

Employees by Gender

Male	Female
7	6

Employee Age Distribution

Age	Male	%	Female	%	Total	%
0-19	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
20-29	2	28.6%	1	16.7%	3	23.1%
30-39	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
40-49	1	14.2%	2	33.3%	3	23.1%
50-59	2	28.6%	3	50.0%	5	38.4%
60-69	2	28.6%	0	0.0%	2	15.4%
70+	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
All	7	100%	6	100%	13	100%

Disability

	Male	Female
Disabled	0	0
Not Disabled	7	6

Ethnic Group

Current Staffing Profile		Number of Staff	%
Race	White British	12	92.3%
	Mixed	0	
	Asian	0	
	Black	0	
	Other Ethnic Background	1	7.7%

Current Staffing Profile		Number of Staff	%
Disability	Disabled	0	
	Able	13	100%
Gender	Female	6	46.2%
	Male	7	53.8%

Recruitment – two persons were employed up to 1 April 2021

Recruitment		Number of Staff
Race	White British	2
	Mixed	0
	Asian	0
	Black	0
	Other Ethnic Background	0
Disability	Disabled	0
	Able	2
Gender	Female	0
	Male	2

There were no terminations, no retireals and one redundancy during this period

Redundancy		Number of Staff
Race	White British	1
	Mixed	0
	Asian	0
	Black	0
	Other Ethnic Background	0
Disability	Disabled	0
	Able	1
Gender	Female	1
	Male	0

Current Staffing Salaries (as at 31 March 2021)

Salaries		Grade F	Grade G	Grade H	Grade I	Grade J	Grade K	Grade L	Grade M	Grade N	Chief Officer	Total
Race	White British	2	5	0	1	2	1	0	0	0	1	12
	Mixed											
	Asian											
	Black											
	Other	1										1
Disability	Disabled											
	Able Bodied	3	5	0	1	2	1	0	0	0	1	13
Gender	Female	3	1	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	6
	Male	0	4	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	1	7

Salaries in percentages		Grade F	Grade G	Grade H	Grade I	Grade J	Grade K	Grade L	Grade M	Grade N	Chief Officer	Total
Race	White British	15.4%	38.4%	0.0%	7.7%	15.4%	7.7%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	7.7%	92.3%
	Mixed											
	Asian											
	Black											
	Other	7.7%										7.7%
Disability	Disabled											
	Able Bodied	23.1%	38.4%	0.0%	7.7%	15.4%	7.7%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	7.7%	100%

Salaries in percentages		Grade F	Grade G	Grade H	Grade I	Grade J	Grade K	Grade L	Grade M	Grade N	Chief Officer	Total
Gender	Female	23.1%	7.7%	0.0%	7.7%	7.7%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	46.1%
	Male	0.0%	30.8%	0.0%	0.0%	7.7%	7.7%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	7.7%	53.9%