

**MANAGEMENT BOARD****HOUSE EQUALITY SCHEME****Note by the Director General of Resources****Purpose**

1. This note introduces the draft House Equality Scheme prior to public consultation and presentation to the Commission.

**Action**

2. The Board is asked to support the equality scheme visibly and actively going forward and to endorse the key areas that are considered a priority. [s.36(2)(b) and s.36(2)(c)].

**Background**

3. The House Equality Scheme was asked for by the Speaker and the Commission. It is based on a review of our existing equality and diversity strategy and a consultation exercise with over 100 people (diverse representation of staff across the House, Members and Members' staff). It brings the House Service broadly into line with other organisations in the public sector, including government departments.

**The case for a single equality scheme**

4. The equality scheme provides a framework for actions that complements work already in hand. Some of these represent 'business as usual' across the House while others are initiatives on which work has just begun such as more comprehensive equality monitoring, consideration of numerical goals and career development for under-represented groups. It is also an effective way of putting into action the emerging "respect" agenda [s.36(2)(b) and s.36(2)(c)] and emphasised in some of the results of this year's staff survey. The scheme is also a vehicle for mitigating diversity risks.
5. Crucially, the scheme provides us with a focal point to monitor and report on progress, which we can then communicate internally and externally. It also gives us scope for timetabling appropriately in line with the business of the House as a whole.
6. All members of the Management Board were interviewed during the development of the scheme, and all provided comments, advice and guidance on the content. The draft scheme is in its final editing stages.

**Priority areas**

7. After the Diversity Managers' paper at the July meeting, the Board asked for guidance on determining what the priorities should be. From this list, the following key areas are proposed:
  - a) *Leadership* in equality and diversity areas: staff have commented positively when the Management Board has shown leadership on this. There is scope to be clear and consistent of our commitment (through actions), on how we talk about equality and diversity, how we model it in our behaviour, and in observing and encouraging

managers in this with their staff. Possible actions for the Management Board and other top managers might be endorsing and attending Diversity and Disability training, actively supporting our work towards achieving the Disability Standard and ensuring that all documentation is accessible to the largest number of people.

- b) *Under-representation*: this issue, particularly at the more senior levels, challenges the House as an organisation. We are exclusively white at the most senior levels and predominantly male. The proposed work on talent management, career development including internal moves and at all levels, and target setting is a priority. It could be given greater focus by setting goals for improvement in representation as proposed in the paper for last month's Board.
- c) *Working practices and equality impact assessments*: what we do and the way we do it is key to how valued, motivated and empowered people feel at work. While we have a raft of working policies and practices in place, we may not always be aware of the impact on under-represented or vulnerable groups. By implementing impact assessments, we would provide an opportunity for the House to embed equality – both our stated commitment to it and its actual effects – into day-to-day work. This goes beyond issues of recruitment and career development, and into a wide range of activities across the House and PICT such as additional support and training.

### Next steps

8. Board members are asked to:
- move into a positive and visible phase of leadership on this, to inspire managers and staff to work with the scheme creatively within our areas of responsibility and for the organisation as a whole;
  - review the draft scheme and suggest any improvements;
  - approve the scheme for onward transmission to the Commission.
9. The final phase is to consult the public. This will be done by publishing the draft scheme on the House internet and contacting relevant external organisations (e.g. Employers' Forum on Disability, Cabinet Office) over a two-week consultation period.
10. While this consultation is going on, we will work with the Resource Management Group to ensure that responsibilities and actions described in the scheme are captured at the beginning of the business planning cycle.

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**Director General of Resources**

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