

## **EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL**

### **CORPORATE GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE – 29 MARCH 2007**

#### **TACKLING THE STIGMA OF MENTAL ILL-HEALTH: THE SEE ME ANTI STIGMA PLEDGE**

##### **Report by Depute Chief Executive/ Executive Director of Corporate Support**

### **1. PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 1.1 To recommend to the Corporate Governance Committee that the the Council to demonstrate its commitment to tackling the stigma experienced by people with mental health problems by signing the 'see me' Pledge.

### **2. BACKGROUND**

- 2.1 The 'see me' Pledge forms one part of the overall effort of the 'see me' campaign in Scotland which aims to challenge the stigma associated with mental ill-health and to eliminate the discrimination experienced by people with mental health problems. Signing the Pledge communicates the message that the organisation is willing to work corporately towards the aims of the campaign.

- 2.2 Signing the Pledge incurs no financial cost to the organisation and takes the form of a simple signing ceremony of a large Pledge Board undertaken jointly by an appropriate representative from the organisation and from the 'see me' team. The board reads as follows:

"We, the undersigned, are committed to work as part of the 'see me' campaign to challenge the stigma associated with mental ill-health and to eliminate the discrimination experienced by people with mental health problems."

- 2.3 A number of organisations in Scotland have already signed the 'see me' Pledge, including North and South Lanarkshire Councils and East Ayrshire Community Planning Partners, namely, Strathclyde Police and Strathclyde Fire and Rescue.

- 2.4 Signing the Pledge can either signal a starting point for organisations to tackle stigma and raise awareness of mental health issues in the workplace or can highlight and complement previous, planned or ongoing work such as the achievement of the Scotland's Health at Work awards or the requirements of the Disability Equality Scheme.

### **3. EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL'S POSITION**

- 3.1 East Ayrshire Council is already committed to supporting the well-being of its employees and service users by promoting good mental health and providing support to those experiencing mental health problems.

- 3.2 Examples of activity aimed at supporting staff mental health includes the development of a Managing Stress in the Workplace Policy, action to support which includes, training for managers and risk assessment; local campaigning and awareness raising led by the Scotland's Health at Work (SHAW) group as part of

attaining the Council's SHAW Gold Award; and the introduction of a free Employee Counselling service, with time off during office hours to attend if necessary.

#### **4. CORPORATE MANAGEMENT TEAM**

4.1 The Corporate Management Team have approved the proposals contained in this report.

#### **5. LINKS TO COMMUNITY PLANNING**

5.1 Improving mental health and well-being is a key priority in the Improving Health Action Plan of the Community Plan. In addition commitment to the 'see me' Pledge will directly deliver on the priorities of the East Ayrshire Mental Health Strategy.

5.2 There is an opportunity for Community Planning Partners, who have not already done so, to also consider signing the Pledge, therefore demonstrating a Community Planning Partnership collective commitment to the anti-stigma agenda. A paper outlining the Council's intention will be presented to the Community Planning Core Partner's Group in the near future.

#### **6. RECOMMENDATIONS**

6.1 The Corporate Governance Committee is recommended to:

- i) agree to signing the 'see me' Pledge ;
- ii) to remit to the Depute Chief Executive/Executive Director of Corporate Support to take the necessary action; and
- iii) otherwise, note the content of the report.

**Elizabeth Morton**  
**Depute Chief Executive/  
Executive Director of Corporate Support**  
**6 March 2007**

**Background papers**

**Nil**