

## **EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL**

### **EAST AYRSHIRE WOMEN'S FORUM**

#### **MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 3 NOVEMBER 1998 AT 1400 HOURS IN THE MEETING ROOM, COUNCIL HEADQUARTERS, LONDON ROAD, KILMARNOCK**

**PRESENT:** Councillors Jane Darnbrough (Chair), Irene Reeves and Eric Jackson.

**ATTENDING:** Fiona Lees, Depute Chief Executive; John F Crawford, Head of Protective Services; Marlene Campbell, Area Manager, Housing Department; Bernadette Docherty, Depute Director of Social Work; Annie Reid, Ayrshire and Arran Community Team (Addiction Services); Susan Fulton, Development Services Department; Kirsty Ramage, Bellsbank Women's Project; Dot Grieve, Community Education Service; Marion Kelso, Personnel Services; June Peter, Finance Department; Inspector Bob Pollock, Police Liaison Officer; Sergeant Hugh Mitchell, Police Liaison Officer; Claire Livingston, Kilmarnock Town Centre Management Initiative; Hazel Bingham, Kilmarnock Women's Aid; and Anne Fairbairn, Administrative Officer.

**APOLOGIES:** Councillor James O'Neill.

**CHAIR:** Councillor Jane Darnbrough, Chair.

#### **WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION**

1. The Chair welcomed representatives to the Women's Forum meeting and advised that the present composition of the Women's Forum had been suggested by a Working Group of Officers drawn from every Department of the Council. The Officers recognised, however, that the success of the Women's Forum would depend largely on the representatives of the community organisations being able to identify issues which the Forum should address.

The Chair indicated that it was possible that in compiling a list of community organisations, some might have been omitted and this should not be seen as an indication that the Council did not want these organisations involved in the Forum.

It was also seen from the Agenda that the Council wished to act as a facilitator at this point rather than as being seen to lead the Forum. This approach had been proposed by the Officer's Working Group who felt that in women's issues, it was better that the Council was seen to be listening to women, allowing them to bring forward issues for discussion rather than the case where the Council would set the Agenda.

Most of the Officers in the Working Group were present as part of the Forum and were keen to ensure that it achieved its objectives.

#### **COMPOSITION OF WOMEN'S FORUM**

2. There was submitted a report dated 19 October 1998 (circulated) by the Chair of the Officer's Working Group inviting the Women's Forum to review its composition for the first twelve months of its life.

There then followed discussion when additional organisations were identified and those included Afton Lone Parents, the WRVS and Women's Rural, together, with the WRI and Church Groups.

It was agreed:-

- (i) that the Director of Community Services write to the Group's already identified above inviting them to participate in the Women's Forum;
- (ii) that the composition of the Women's Forum be added to as Groups and organisations are identified or express an interest in participating; and
- (iii) that this remain a standing item on the Agenda.

### **REVIEW OF THE AREA'S OF INTEREST FOR THE WOMEN'S FORUM**

3. There was submitted a report dated 22 October 1998 (circulated) by the Chair of the Officer's Working Group inviting the Women's Forum to review areas of interest.

There then followed discussion regarding the content of the report and Fiona Lees suggested that areas of interest for the Women's Forum could also include child care, caring for the elderly and leisure together with women's health issues.

Having acknowledged the importance of making a distinction between different groups of women, it was agreed:-

- (i) to consider the issues already identified by the Officer's Working Group; and
- (ii) to amend and review the list on an ongoing basis.

### **PRESENTATION OF WOMEN'S SAFETY**

4. Inspector Pollock, Police Liaison Officer, gave a presentation on women's safety and domestic violence, making reference to each H.M.C.I.'s Report "Hitting Home", the Edinburgh Women's Safety Survey and the current Strathclyde Police Spotlight on domestic violence.

He highlighted that while surveys consistently showed that women felt safe within their home, in reality domestic violence accounted for 25% of all recorded crimes of serious violence.

Examples were given of points of good practice which had emerged during the Spotlight on domestic violence, such as more accurate recording of incidents, informing victims when assailants were released from Court, and the provision of mobile telephones and personal attack alarms to high risk victims.

Reference was made to the various personal safety courses and materials available through Strathclyde Police, and that these could be accessed through the Liaison Officer or the Community Involvement Branch.

Inspector Pollock concluded by reminding those present that domestic violence impacted on all Council services and that solutions did not lie with the Police alone. Domestic violence could realistically be tackled through a corporate approach involving all the statutory and voluntary agencies.

On behalf of Strathclyde Police, Inspector Pollock welcomed the development of the Forum.

### **ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION AT FUTURE MEETINGS OF THE FORUM**

5. The following items were identified for inclusion on the Agenda of future meetings of the Forum.
- (i) A presentation by Victim Support;
  - (ii) Details of figures of crimes against women which lead to arrest and conviction; and
  - (iii) Mental health issues.

It was agreed to hear a presentation on Safety in the Workplace at the next meeting.

### **SOCIAL INCLUSION PARTNERSHIP PROGRAMME**

6. The Head of Protective Services then made a presentation regarding the Social Inclusion Partnership Programme which indicated that the Secretary of State for Scotland had announced on 8 May 1998 that the twelve priority partnership areas designated in November 1996 would evolve into Social Inclusion Partnerships (SIP's) and new Social Inclusion Partnerships would be set up.

As a result of this, The Scottish Office on 28 July 1998, invited Councils and other Agencies to submit expressions of interest in the new Social Inclusion Partnership Programme by 30 September 1998 which would encompass the Government's approach to social exclusion, namely co-ordination, prevention and innovation with the key characteristics of SIP's being that these focus on the most needy member of society; co-ordinate and fill gaps between existing programmes; promote social inclusions; and seek to prevent people becoming socially excluded. It was intended that the new SIP's should begin operation in April 1999.

To ensure that issues of social exclusion are addressed and social inclusion promoted, it was crucial that the public, private and voluntary sectors work together and it was proposed that a new Social Inclusion Partnership be established in East Ayrshire to ensure the commitment and participation of all relevant local partners; the development of a long-term strategy which was challenging but achievable; and the involvement of the local community at the heart of the process.

The presentation highlighted the fact that The Scottish Office had indicated that the selection process for the new SIP's would be open and transparent and take place in two stages, stage one being the submission of expressions of interest and stage two being the submission of a Social Inclusion Partnership proposal.

The presentation was concluded by reference to the groups and organisations which would be consulted with a view to them submitting issues of particular interest to themselves while attempting to ensure their involvement in the process.

It was agreed to note that the result of East Ayrshire Council's submission would be known before the end of November.

### **ANY OTHER COMPETENT BUSINESS**

7. There was no other competent business.

### **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

8. The next meeting will take place in the first week in March 1999 and subsequently in September 1999, at a date to be arranged.

It was agreed that the venue rotate throughout the East Ayrshire Council area to enable participation of all groups and organisations who may wish to be involved but are prohibited due to the travelling distance.

The meeting terminated at 1513 hours.

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