**DAERA Minutes/Notes of Equality & Diversity Steering Group (EDSG)**

**Date & time: 6 October 2021 3.00pm**

**Location: WebEx**

**In attendance:**

Brian Doherty Deputy Secretary, Central Services & Contingency Planning (CSCPG)

Norman Fulton Deputy Secretary, Food & Farming Group (FFG)

Tracey Teague EMFG Deputy Secretary

John Joe O’Boyle Chief Executive Forest Service (FS)

Brian McGeehan NI Public Service Alliance (NIPSA)

Sharon McFlynn Director of Corporate Services (CSCPG)

Pauline Keegan Director of Staff Engagement, Equality & Diversity Division (SEED)

Colin Campbell Head of Staff Engagement, Equality & Diversity Branch (SEED)

Russell McCurry Staff Engagement, Equality & Diversity Branch (SEED)

Alan Galbraith Head of College Support Service (CAFRE)

Jim Blee Deputy Director Animal Health and Welfare Policy (VSAHG)

**Apologies:**

Anthony Harbinson Permanent Secretary, DAERA

Martin McKendry Director of CAFRE

Robert Huey Chief Veterinary Officer, Veterinary Service & Animal Health Group (VSAHG)

Fiona McCandless Deputy Secretary, Rural Affairs, Forest Service & Estates Management Group (RAFSETG)

Colm Morgan NI Public Service Alliance (NIPSA)

**Minutes:**

Siobhan Smyth Staff Engagement, Equality & Diversity Branch (SEED)

& Cindy Fowler

**Summary of Meeting:**

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| **Item** | **Description** | **Action Owner (where appropriate)** |
| **1.0** | **Welcome** |  |
|  | Brian Doherty welcomed all members, noted the apologies from Anthony Harbinson and Paul Donnelly; and welcomed John-Joe O’Boyle, Jim Blee and Alan Galbraith who were representing Fiona McCandless, Robert Huey and Martin McKendry respectively. |  |
| **2.0** | **Review of previous minutes** |  |
|  | He confirmed that the members had agreed the minutes from the previous meeting on 21 February 2021. |  |
| **3.0** | **Action Points from EDSG meeting held on 21 February 2021** |  |
|  | All actions completed.  For clarity, as AP2 and AP4 were linked and the General Wellness survey was completed it was agreed the action could be closed. Pauline Keegan confirmed that she and Fiona McCandless agreed to take the commitment to prepare for a News and Views event forward. |  |
| **4.0** | **Equality and Diversity Report/Update** |  |
|  | Colin Campbell shared this report with the group. He specifically drew attention to the feedback recently received from Equality Commission for Northern Ireland (ECNI) regarding the completion of the Annual Progress Report and more specifically, to reiterate how impressed they were at the number of screenings the Department had completed, their standard and the Department’s commitment to its equality duties.  Colin explained to the group that a video was being produced (Access all Areas- DAERA Equality Scheme in Action) and as Minister has now expressed an interest in being involved, a date has been set up to film his contribution.  Colin told the group that as the Social Inclusion Champion for Disability, he had attended a Disability Strategy engagement meeting that day which had also given him the opportunity to mention the video.  Brian thanked Colin for the update and asked the group if there would be merit in sharing this report wider. A discussion followed and it was agreed this was a good idea.  Brian McGeehan asked for an explanation of the screening process, which Brian provided.  Norman Fulton suggested it would be advantageous if Gd3s could be provided with a checklist to assist in the signing off process for EQIA’s and screening documents. Tracey Teague agreed this would be useful. Brian suggested that ECNI be contacted in regards to provide specialised SMT training. | **AP1. SEED to consider how best to share this report.**  **AP2. SEED to provide internet link to screening documents.**  **AP3. SEED to arrange training for SMT with ECNI.** |
| **5.0** | **Champions Updates** |  |
|  | * **Diversity & Inclusion Champion**   Pauline provided an overview of the Diversity Champions’ Network chaired by Peter May. It is made up of Diversity Champions from across each Department and the thematic leads are: Ronnie Armour – Disability; LGBTQ – Gareth Johnston; Gender – Fiona McCandless.  At the last meeting, there was a presentation from Employers for Disability NI, who can provide training. Pauline confirmed her team would be progressing this.  Pauline explained the “Access all Areas: DAERA’s Equality Scheme in Action” video is near completion and the Minister will record his input on 25th October.  Pauline updated the group in relation to Stonewall, Racial Equality, LGBTQ and the Women’s Network.   * **Children’s Champion**   Alan Galbraith explained the Children’s sub group meet twice a year. They have an Action Plan with approx. 34 actions. All work is ongoing and no issues to report.  One key Area is – Student Support – CAFRE doing the best they can to meet the demands of both students and parents.  Green growth strategy – it is important to engage YP in policy development, as they are the farmers of the future and their voices and views need to be heard. |  |
| **6.0** | Reports from: |  |
|  | * Social Inclusion Strategies Position paper   Pauline updated the group on the Social Inclusion Strategies instigated by Minister Hargey for 4 areas: Gender, Sexual Orientation, Anti-Poverty and Disability. Tracey Meharg wrote to permanent secretaries earlier on in the year asking for senior representation, for all of these strategies.  Pauline looks after Gender, Sexual Orientation, she and David Reid combine on anti-poverty, and Colin Campbell looks after disability.  There are expert and co-design groups from the customer base who are holding Departments to account on this, and asking for examples of actions taken.  Each Department was asked to produce a position paper. Pauline gave an overview of the position paper in relation to each of the strategies and stated that; overall, the DAERA story was positive.  There will be a series of engagement meetings with these groups, and there should be a ministerial meeting before December.  Brian thanked Pauline for the update and asked that the Social Inclusion Strategies Position paper be shared with the group.  Some discussion took place and it was recognised that councils and other departments also have responsibilities regarding access to services in rural areas.   * Audit of Inequalities- key points   Russell McCurry explained that the AOI is a thorough analysis of inequalities which exist for DAERA service users and those affected by our policies.  This audit helps inform our work in relation to the Section 75 equality and good relation duties as well as assessing the Departments progress on the implementation of its equality duties.  Russell clarified that the review was in fact over a ten-year period, which would bring it up to date to 2021, but assured the Group that the measures remained relevant and were being completed by the Department.  He advised that all Business Areas (BA’s) have had the opportunity to input, that a Background Statistical and Research paper was provided and section 75 consultees have been contacted and asked to provide statistical and research information to help shape the Audit. Only three groups sent information, such as links to research papers, and these were from NICCY, RNID, and WRDA (Women’s Resource & Development Agency). The DAERA Section 75 consultee list were also offered and opportunity to meet with the Equality Unit to discuss the AOI but no group nor individual took this offer up.  Norman Fulton raised a potential issue regarding the RDP actions and the level of service that DAERA could provide. Norman questioned if some actions were extending further than expected. For example, the rural obligations belonging to DAERA only reach so far and all departments need to play their part in funding and actioning rural community’s needs. Russell assured Norman that the AOI’s actions were in fact carried forward and Business Areas who had reviewed them raised no concerns. However, Russell was happy to have wording amended as BA’s see fit and it was agreed that Colin and Russell would meet with Gareth Evans to discuss the RDP items in the Action Plan.  Brian suggested that this did not need to go back to BA’s but rather to ensure our schemes are promoted correctly and groups are aware they exist. Brian further advised that the consultation should raise any concerns that under-represented groups may have.  Brian suggested Russell speak to David Reid/Gareth Evans re-funding and to confirm these actions are correctly captured. | **AP4. SEED to share Social Inclusion Strategies Position paper.**  **AP.5 Colin and Russell to meet Gareth Evans to clarify these queries.** |
| **7.0** | **AOB** |  |
|  | No further business was raised. Brian thanked everyone for their attendance. |  |
| **8.0** | **Date of next meeting** |  |
|  | 3 March 2022 2pm-4pm |  |