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

**Date & time: 3 March 2020 2.00pm**

**Location: Sperrin View, Ballykelly and Video Conferencing from Dundonald House, Greenmount & Klondyke**

**In attendance:**

Denis McMahon Permanent Secretary (Chair)

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

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

Paul Donnelly Director, Rural Affairs

Colm Morgan NI Public Service Alliance (NIPSA)

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

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

David Small Deputy Secretary, Environment, Marine & Fisheries Group (EMFG), (via VC)

Tracey Teague Chief Executive of the Northern Ireland Environment Agency

Martin McKendry Director of CAFRE, (via VC)

Russell McCurry Head of Equality, Diversity and Public Appointments Branch (EDPAB – Acting)

**Apologies:**

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

Sean McGrade Director, Corporate Services Division

**Minutes:**

Siobhan Smyth Staff Officer, Equality, Diversity and Public Appointments Branch (EDPAB)

**Summary of Meeting:**

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| **Item** | **Description** | **Action Owner (where appropriate)** |
|  | **Welcome** |  |
|  | Denis McMahon welcomed all members and apologised on behalf of Brian and Sean.  |  |
| **1.0** | **Action Points from EDSG meeting held on 15 October 2019** |  |
|  | No outstanding actions carried forward from previous meeting, all actions completed.Russell McCurry outlined that representatives from the NI Human Rights Commission (NIHRC) were to attend this meeting but had to cancel due to other commitments. |  |
| **2.0** | **Diversity & Inclusion Action Plan**  |  |
|  | Paul Donnelly gave a brief overview of the draft Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan. He explained to the group that the action plan was based on the information and feedback from staff who attended the diversity workshops. Paul outlined the emerging themes:* Involve all employees in inclusion
* Build senior management commitment to inclusion
* Develop line manager capability
* Examine organisational culture climate and values
* Evaluate policies and practices

Paul stated there was no real surprises, as some of the information was known from the people survey and he also noted that there was duplication with other areas of work.Denis McMahon thanked Paul for the update and invited the group to discuss. A general discussion followed, it was agreed we need to determine what are the benefits we are trying to achieve and how do we measure it. It was suggested that DAERA adopt a set of principles to sit under the NICS core values (integrity, honesty, objectivity and impartiality). It was acknowledged that **Respect** is vitally important. The general consensus was that there was some duplication with other work areas (leadership & training) and it may be an idea to collaborate and merge or even redirect some of the work. Denis McMahon thanked everyone for their input and summarised that the draft D&I Action Plan had generated a good honest conversation.It was agreed the themes were useful, and a diagram could be produced to show how themes come together.It was suggested that the On-Board Apprenticeships should be considered as a way of increasing diversity on boards and committees.A statement is to be produced to incorporate our value and what we are about – Tracey TeagueWe need to look at the Department and see where it’s working well and not so well, Fiona McCandless to have a chat with Colm Morgan NIPSA regarding bullying and harassment.The Diversity & Inclusion Action Plan is to be reviewed and the recommendations and actions are to be split, leaving us with a shorter action plan.The next Staff Leadership & Engagement Forum (SELF) meeting is on 9th April and involves a stocktake of the Group’s role. Paul is invited to attend as there is clear overlap with the work underway by the EDWG. | **AP1 – T Teague & EDSG Colleagues****AP2 – F McCandless & C Morgan****AP3 – P Donnelly / S Smyth****AP4 – P Donnelly/ T Teague** |
| **3.0** | **Equality and Diversity Working Group Update**  |  |
|  | In Sean’s absence Russell informed the members that updates in relation to this group would be covered as part of his Equality report and Paul’s Diversity report.Russell updated the group in relation to a young person with a disability who had completed work experience in the carrier bag levy team, this YP has successfully passed the recruitment process for administrative assistant posts with Derry City and Strabane District Council and hopes to be in a full time post soon. |  |
| **4.0** | **Equality and Diversity Report/Update** |  |
|  | Russell McCurry made reference to the Equality and Diversity report he submitted as part of the papers.He updated the latest position in relation to the Disability Action Plan (DAP), with the intention that a submission will issue to the Minister, the DAERA Committee, and then will go to public consultation.He discussed the difficulty in trying to source the Branch or individual who could record the disability video. Robert suggested Clare McMonagle and assisted equine therapy.Denis McMahon noted that DAERA teams should consider carrying out more Equality Impact Assessments. Russell updated that it seems that the EQIAs to be completed within the Department were last done in 2014. It was agreed that EDPA Branch would escalate it up to SMT if they had any queries on screening documents. SMT are also to look at this. |  |
| **5.0** | **Champions Updates** |  |
|  | **Diversity & Inclusion and Racial Equality Champion:**Paul Donnelly updated the group that DAERA has devised a diversity calendar for 2020.* On 4th December an article was published on the DAERA Intranet – Today is **International Migrants day**.
* On 10th December an article was published on the DAERA Intranet – **International Human Rights Day**.
* On 24th January an article was published on the DAERA Intranet – **Chinese New Year**.
* On 3rd March an article was published on the DAERA intranet - **World Hearing Day.**

As off the 18th February– **78%** of DAERA staff currently have completed JAM card training **Diversity events** will be organised to raise awareness around diversity issues, in relation to Mental Health Awareness, Domestic Violence, Children and Young People, Suicide, Carers & Alzheimer’s.Fiona McCandless offered the support in relation to the organisation and co-ordination of any events.There was a discussion around interaction with Travellers, and John Joe updated the group that Travellers regularly use the Forest Parks. It was asked if there should be some engagement with them about equine welfare and Paul Donnelly is to check this out.It was noted that the Vets have an informal group of staff from various ethnic backgrounds and this constituted about 25% of all vets. This group is to be contacted to ask if one of their members would join future EDSG meetings as a member of the group.**Children’s Champion:**Martin McKendry informed the members that the Minister has invited the Children’s Commissioner Koulla Yiasouma, and the Chief Executive, Mairead McCafferty, Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People (NICCY) to the launch of the DAERA Tree Planting Initiative. This event will be held at the CAFRE’s Loughry campus on Monday 9 March. Martin to send Russell an update for the minutes.DAERA, through the Children’s Champion sub-group have inputted to the following strategies:1. Children and Young People’s Strategy (CYPS) 2019-2029 was launched December 2019 by DoE. Within this strategy DAERA will contribute to 6 out of the 8 objectives through 11 separate actions.
2. Family and Parenting Strategy (led by DoH) which DAERA inputted to during Feb 2020. We await the launch.
3. Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People (NICCY) Corporate Plan 2020-2023. DAERA inputted to the Corporate Plan back in October 2019 and awaits the launch.

Martin confirmed that a Children’s Sub Group is the mechanism by which this work is taken forward within DAERA. The Sub-Group have met twice this year as set out in the Terms of Reference. An Action Plan had been produced with 34 actions which will be reviewed at the next meeting of the sub group to be held on 20 April 2020. | **AP5 – P Donnelly****AP6 – EDSG Secretariat****AP7 – M McKendry** |
| **6.0** | **AOB** |  |
|  | Equality & Diversity Quarterly bulletinIt was agreed that this bulletin should be kept to about a page long. Russell to contact Sandra Witherspoon re info for quarterly bulletin.Safeguarding Policy and ProceduresAn internet article will be published on the intranet and this will be followed by a memo issued to all DAERA staff. This group all agreed to communicate and draw attention to the Safeguarding Policy and Procedures. | **AP8 Russell McCurry** |