

Board 8 December 2009

YHN Strategic Independent Advisory Group (SIAG)

Report by Chair of SIAG

For Decision

1. Background information

- 1.1 This is the first report from YHN's Strategic Independent Advisory Group (SIAG). The report gives an update on the development of the SIAG and asks Board to approve the proposed work plan for the group.
- 1.2 The SIAG has a key role to play in the following context:
 - To provide a 'critical friend' for YHN in appraising our approach to equalities and diversity, especially at strategic level on all new or significantly changed policies, procedures, housing services and functions.
- 1.3 Membership of the SIAG is based on individual's experience and knowledge of a wide range of diversity issues and not necessarily on the basis of being a formal representative of a particular community, faith or religious group.
- 1.4 15 people expressed an interest in the posts and 8 people were selected from these interviews and invited to become members of the SIAG.
- 1.5 The first meeting of the SIAG was held 4 June 2007 and members were welcomed to the group by the then Chair and the Chief Executive of YHN. At the meeting they were asked to consider:
 - The terms of reference for the group
 - The Code of Conduct for the group; and agreed
 - John Lee to Chair the next two. Maximum of three meetings
 - The SIAG would meet 4 times per year
 - Reports to the SIAG to be accompanied by a brief presentation highlighting the key points for consideration, the questions asked of the group and what feedback they would get.

2. Progress to date

- 2.1 At its annual review (June 2008) the SIAG key focus was to assist members to identify ways of working together to achieve maximum outcomes for the work of the SIAG and to agree the way forward for the group. A key aspect to this was how the SIAG could build a more fulfilling relationship with YHN especially its Board.
- 2.2 September 2008 the SIAG appointed Peter Bower as its Chair.
- 2.3 Up to March 2009 the SIAG had met 8 times, and during this time much work has been considered and debated (appendix 1 gives the details). However, the SIAG has felt that although good work had been undertaken there was no consistency to the workload received, the time SIAG would have to do it in and the feedback given after the work was done. This was partly due to the dependency of Service Managers requiring the expertise of the SIAG at a defined time and the lack of a related work plan.
- 2.4 In March 2009, Board agreed a new committee structure which concluded that SIAG would report to Board twice a year on the work of the Group. The first report of this type is to be presented in December 2009.
- 2.5 Five new members were recruited into the SIAG in March and to initiate quickly them into the workings of the group and YHN all members have attended the YHN Corporate Induction Programme.
- 2.6 In order to prepare for this new way of working several members of the SIAG met with the Chair of the Board to gain a better understanding of how this work could be taken forward. The SIAG was advised to concentrate on E & D issues to assist YHN with its programme of work, however, member and group specific interests should be considered and, if supported by the SIAG, form part of its work programme. The Chair also advised that the members should not spread themselves too thinly and should concentrate on an agreed number of realistic and achievable areas of work.
- 2.7 To help the Group formulate its work plan all members were issued with key YHN documents to identify areas that could be taken forward by the Group. This included YHN's:
 - Business Strategy
 - Policy Tree and review dates
 - Areas of work that had previously been considered by the Group
- 2.8 As the SIAG only meet four times a year, and given the proposed new way of working, the Group has agreed to meet every six weeks with meetings falling midway between YHN Board meetings. This should result in an improved information flow in harmony with the advise from the Group and the work of the Board.
- 2.9 To date SIAG has met 11 times and considered a further 5 service areas *and/or* strategies:

- Skills to work strategy
- Equality Framework for Local Government
- Adaptations Review
- E & D Service Standards
- CCAS Review

3 The Proposal

3.1 From the documents listed in section 2.7 of this report, the Group has prepared for Board's approval the attached action plan. (Appendix 2 gives full details).

Key aspects of the work plan are:

- SIAG members will undergo Equality Impact and Needs Assessment (EINA) training
- SIAG will concentrate on contributing to the Service Reviews and EINA's throughout this year. (A timetable of which services are to be impact assessed has been drawn up so that the Group knows what topics to expect)
- SIAG will contribute to policy/strategy reviews and also new strategic documents that are to be introduced.

3.2 The action plan will allow for a more focused approach to the work to be undertaken. The plan is consistent with the SMART process. Therefore SIAG members will know when their advice is required and likewise YHN officers will be aware when the Group will be able to assist with any particular piece of work.

4 The Business Implications

4.1 Mission and Strategic Objectives:

The work undertaken by SIAG will help YHN achieve its strategic objectives:

- Support and care to communities
- Three star excellent services
- A quality workforce
- Refurbishing and building homes

4.2 Value for money and other efficiencies: The scrutiny of policies and working practices by SIAG should help to ensure that value for money and efficiencies, in the context of equality and diversity, are identified, at an early stage, before investments are made.

4.3 Resources (financial, property, technological or human): Currently there are no direct financial implications of this report. Further consideration may be required as and when policies and practices are considered by the SIAG. As the workload may need specific funding and /or officer time as part of its implementation.

4.4 Impact on services/performance: We put a great deal of effort into ensuring that as many people as possible can access our services in the way they want to. We recognise that our services can always improve and develop to reflect the

different needs that different communities have.

SIAG due to its independence, will bring a different perspective to the work of YHN. In addition, through its members individual experience and knowledge advice that will enrich the decision making and consultation processes with diverse communities on all new or significantly changed policies and services within YHN.

- 4.5 Outcomes for tenants/leaseholders: SIAG acting as a 'critical friend' will have a direct impact on improving the relevance and accessibility of the services we provide to our customers.
- 4.6 Risk (reputation, relationship): Reduced credibility and risk to YHN's reputation if appropriate advice and recommendations from SIAG are not acted upon.
- 4.7 Equality and Diversity: It is YHN's intention to provide a fair and equitable delivery of services to all. As part of our role in assessing the impact of our policies and procedures the SIAG will make sure we do not discriminate against or disadvantage anyone. The availability of the SIAG helps us place equality and the recognition of diversity higher than it has ever been before on our agenda.
- 4.8 Stakeholder Involvement/consultation: YHN is already involved in a wide range of consultation processes that informs and formulates YHN strategies. However it was felt that a SIAG, due to its independence and make up, would bring advice from perspectives not currently available within YHN's staff. This will enrich the decision making and consultation processes with diverse communities on all new or significantly changed policies and services with YHN.

6. Recommendations

- 6.1 Board are asked to receive the report and approve the action plan for the SIAG. It is further recommended that the Board receives a 6 monthly progress report against the plan and a full annual review in December 2010.

7. Implementation

- 7.1 On approval the challenges contained in the action plan will be addressed on the adoption of the plan. Key emphasis will be placed on prioritising strategies, policies and service assessments to be undertaken. SIAG members will self select which strategies, policies they will work on according to their experience, skills and knowledge.

Background Papers:

Board Report Board Report -28th July 2009 Update Committee Structure.

Contact Officer:

If you have any questions about this report that you would like clarifying before the meeting, you can contact Simone Doyle by telephone on 0191 2784390 or email simone.doyle@yhn.org.uk

Appendix 1

Workload considered/undertaken by the Strategic Independent Advisory Group June 2007 – March 2009

4 June 2007

- Inaugural meeting

11 September 2007

- Housing finance presentation
- Modern Homes presentation
- Equalities and Diversity and the 3* Programme presentation
- Employment and the representative workforce presentation

5 December 2007

- Rent Management presentation
- Anti Social Behaviour presentation
- Ways we communicate with customers

5 March 2008

- Resident Involvement/Using stakeholder feedback
- Repairs and Maintenance
- YHN's operation of Councils lettings policy

25 June 2008

- YHN SIAG Review

24 October 2008

- Recruitment of SIAG Board Members
- A Business Strategy for the Future Presentation

9 December 2008

- E&D Briefing
- Review of Diversity Guide

3 March 2009

- Stonewall Workplace Equality Index

16 June 2009

- Skills to work strategy
- Equality Framework for Local Government

7 September 2009

- Adaptations Review
- E & D Service Standards

16 November 2009

- CCAS Review

Strategic Independent Advisory Group Action Plan 2010

Appendix 2

Challenge	Action	Target date for completion	Outcome
Understand the Equality Impact and Needs Assessment process	Undergo training on Equality Impact and Needs Assessments	31 January 2009	Members will fully understand EINA process which will allow them to apply their skills and knowledge effectively.
Work with the Diversity Team on the new SIAG page on the internet.	Produce a interests/experience statement to accompany member photographs Identify any items that should be included on the webpage.	31 March 2010	A better understanding of SIAG, the members and the work that they conduct by staff, customers and stakeholders
Work with YHN staff on the Equality Impact and Needs Assessment process for YHN services.	Contribute to at least 2 service assessments within the first 6 months Contribute to at least 4 service assessments within 12 months	30 June 2010 31 December 2010	Any direct or indirect discrimination or disadvantage will be identified within services and steps taken to remove barriers.

Work with YHN staff on the review or introduction of any corporate documents	Contribute to at least three corporate document consultations within 12 months	31 December 2010	Any direct or indirect discrimination or disadvantage will be identified within Corporate Documents and steps taken to remove barriers
Carry out a 6 month review of the work SIAG has been involved in.	As a group review the last six months of work conducted by SIAG, identifying any areas of good practice and any areas for improvement Produce a report to be presented to YHN Board	31 July 2010	Ensure that targets are being met and that any areas for improvement are addressed
Work with the Diversity Team to produce an Annual Report	Review work conducted by group over last 12 months and report back to YHN Board identifying areas of success, areas for improvement and status of targets from last 12 months	31 December 2010	SIAG have shown their added value to YHN as an organisation and that the targets set have been achieved by the additional perspectives that they bring