

# BRIGHTON & HOVE CITY COUNCIL

## EQUALITIES AND SOCIAL JUSTICE CONSULTATION FORUM

Monday 12 January 2004

4.00 PM

Council Chamber, HOVE TOWN HALL

### MINUTES

**Present:** Councillors: Councillor Meadows (Chair), Framroze, Giebeler, Pidgeon (OS), Mrs Theobald, Tonks, Watkins, Wrighton, Young.

**Community Representatives:** Dr Davoodi (DAAG), Joan Moorhouse (Older People's Council), Barbara Wiseman (Brighton Pensioners Forum).

**Officers/ guests:** Steve Chapman (Social Justice Manager), Katie Ogden (Head of Human Resources Management), Alex Bailey (Director of Strategy & Governance), Claire Debenham (Joint Head of Community Cohesion), Manal Ahmed (Joint Head of Community Cohesion), Diana Barnett (Head of Communication), Liz Boswell (Human Resources Manager), Jim Mayor (Transport Programme Manager), Tim Nichols (Head of Environmental Health & Licensing), Steve Barton (Head of Corporate Strategy), Maggie Squire (Head of Performance) Kathryn Gorse (Committee Administrator), Keith Beadle (Communities of Interest Network), Kim Anderson (Human Resources Equalities Officer).

**Apologies had been received from:** Councillors McCaffery, Williams and Lisa Jones (Brighton Women's Centre).

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| 1. | <b>Welcome</b><br>The Chair welcomed members present. | <b>Action</b> |
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2. Procedural Business

2a **DECLARATION OF SUBSTITUTES**

Councillor Wrighton for Councillor Williams

2b. **2b DECLARATION OF INTERESTS**

None.

2c. **EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC**

2c.1 The Forum considered whether the press and public should be excluded from the meeting during consideration of any items contained in the Agenda, having regard to the nature of the business to be transacted and the nature of the proceedings and the likelihood as to whether, if members of the press and public were present, there would be disclosure to them of confidential or exempt information as defined in Section 100A(3) or 100I of the Local Government Act 1972.

2c.2 **RESOLVED** – a) That the press and public not be excluded from any items on the agenda.

3. **Apologies**

3.1 As per cover sheet

4. **Chair's Communications**

4.1 The Chair reported that Kathryn Gorse, Committee Administrator for the Forum, will be taking a break from work until June 2004.

Members will be informed of support for the Forum in Kathryn's absence shortly.

5a. **Minutes of the last meeting- 13 October 2003**

5a.1 Councillor Giebeler requested that an amendment be made as her presence at the meeting was not recorded in the minutes.

5a.2 Councillor Wrighton asked that paragraph 13.6 in the minutes be amended in the following way:

Councillor Williams acknowledged that this approach was one that could be used, but stated that he was anxious that the issue did not get lost in the broader agenda and that the voices of the communities of interest were heard.

5a.3 **RESOLVED:** That the minutes, as amended in paragraphs 5a.1 and 5a.2, of the meeting held on 13 October 2003 be approved.

5b. **Feedback issues from the last meeting- 13 October 2003**

## 5b.1 **Access Officer**

As Rob Fraser (Conservation & Regeneration Manager) was unable to attend the meeting, Kathryn Gorse gave an update on the appointment of an Access Officer in the Council. As yet, the budget to fund the post had not been confirmed, but it was hoped that the Conservation & Regeneration Manager be able to report back to the next Equalities Forum meeting following the appointment.

**Rob Fraser**

## 5b.2 **Access to services for deaf, blind and deafblind people**

See item 11.

## 5b.3 **Questions from the public at Equalities Forum meetings**

Councillor Pidgeon asked that the position be clarified on whether members of the public could ask questions during a meeting of the Equalities Forum.

**Alex Bailey**

The Forum discussed this and agreed that a pilot scheme of public questions should be launched at Forum meetings. Members of the public will be invited to contact the Chair of the Forum at least two days prior to the Forum meeting regarding the subject they wished to ask about. At the Chair's discretion, members of the public will be given three minutes (a maximum of five questions per meeting) to raise a question when the agenda item is raised.

## 6. **Community Representatives Issues and Questions**

### 6.1 **Dr Davoodi**

Dr Davoodi submitted an Open Letter to the Chair of the Forum (see Appendix A) regarding the barriers that exist in society and the insufficient support provided to disabled people hinder their full and equal enjoyment of human rights. Calling for Brighton & Hove City Council to play a major role in the promotion of the initiative for a UN Convention to protect and promote the rights of people with disabilities, Dr Davoodi thanked the Chief Executive, David Panter) and Chair of DAAG (Councillor Framroze) for their contribution to create awareness about disabilities issues among the general public. Dr Davoodi ended by stating:

"We need the participation of everyone including employers, private sector companies, local and national authorities, media, teachers, parents, youth and cultural organisations to make life a little easier for disabled people."

## 7. **Verbal Update on the Race Equalities Scheme**

- 7.1 Claire Debenham, Joint Head of Community Cohesion, gave a verbal update on the Race Equalities Scheme informing members that an event to launch the process of consultation will take place on 28 February 2004 at Hove Centre (10.00am- 4.00pm). the event is being organised jointly by the council, the Primary Care trust and South Downs Health.
- 7.2 All Black and Minority Ethnic communities will be invited to attend on 28 February. Members of the Forum may wish to get involved in the consultation at a later stage.
- 7.3 A steering Group is also being set up to comment on the Race Equalities Scheme strategy for the future.

**RESOLVED:** That the update on the RES be noted.

## **8. Inclusive Council Policy and Programme**

- 8.1 The Director of Strategy and Governance presented the Forum with a draft copy of the Inclusive Council Policy and Programme and asked for comments of the document. In line with the terms of reference of the Equalities Forum, members were asked to "assist in the development and monitoring of the Council's equalities policy".
- 8.2 The Director of Strategy and Governance outlined areas covered by the policy including the business case for creating an inclusive council. A set of fundamental principles that will be used to guide the approach taken over the medium term including:
- Community leadership
  - Service delivery
  - The council as a model employer
- 8.3 The policy will be monitored and reviewed using a "basket" of diversity performance indicators which will provide a barometer or progress made over the medium term.
- 8.4 It is anticipated that a final version of the policy will be presented to members of the Equalities Forum at the next meeting on Monday 8 March 2004.
- 8.5 Members asked about progress of the access audit of council buildings. The Director of Strategy and Governance informed them that a list was being compiled of places that need investment to bring them up to the standard that meets the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act.
- 8.6 Councillor Framroze queried whether the budget restraints were defeating the objective of obtaining a representative workforce. The Head of Human Resources Management informed members

that the Recruitment Sub-Group of the Forum was continuing to meet to ensure a representative workforce.

- 8.7 Councillor Tonks asked if any statistics available to indicate whether the council was hitting targets with regard to making the workforce representative. Members were referred to item 9: 'Diversity Barometer'.
- 8.8 Councillor Wrighton enquired as to whether the various communities of interest will have a chance to monitor what the council are doing with regard to the policy on inclusivity. The Director of Strategy and Governance explained that an annual review will take place and that he will look into extending this monitoring role to the communities of interest.

**RESOLVED:** That the draft "Inclusive Council" policy be noted.

## 9. 'Diversity Barometer' Quarter 2 2003/04

The Head of Performance, Maggie Squire, presented the Forum with a report that contributes to improving performance management across the council and to the delivery of the Inclusive Council policy.

The Programme of Actions 2003-2007 that forms part of the Inclusive Council policy includes the Equalities Forum receiving reports on performance indicators (P.Is). The P.Is monitored by the Forum are drawn from the set of corporate national P.Is and they will be known as the Diversity Barometer. Members were informed that the results of the Performance Indicators are presented using a 'traffic light' system: green indicates on or exceeding target, yellow indicates up to 15% below target and red indicates well below target (more than 15%).

The Head of Performance will be bringing the Equalities BVPIs to the Equalities Forum every quarter.

- 9.3 **RESOLVED:** That the PI results for quarter 2 be noted.

## 10. New Discrimination Legislation

- 10.1 The Human Resources Manager, Liz Boswell, reported on the New Discrimination Legislation which was implemented on 1 and 2 December 2003.

- 10.2 Dr Davoodi asked whether the council were taking advantage of the funding made available through the New Deal scheme trying to get disabled people into work. The Head of Human Resources Management stated that she would have to investigate this and

**Katie  
Ogden**

get back to Dr Davoodi directly. The Chair asked to be copied in to the written reply to Dr Davoodi's question.

10.3 **RESOLVED:** That the following action be endorsed:

- 1) the provisions of the new Regulations be publicised to all managers and staff
- 2) briefing sessions are to be held to help managers handle workplace issues
- 3) the requirements of the new legislation are to be incorporated into recruitment and selection and equalities training courses and the equalities "toolkit" which is being produced for managers
- 4) job applicant monitoring forms are to be amended to include religion and belief categories
- 5) workforce monitoring of disciplinary, capability and grievance matters, promotions, access to training and leavers should be extended to cover religion, belief and sexuality
- 6) a review of existing HR policies and procedures to check for potential discrimination
- 7) provision of a quiet room in Council establishments to be considered as an integral part of the current accommodation review.

## 11. **Services for deaf, blind and deafblind people**

11.1 Manal Ahmed, the Joint Head of Community Cohesion, updated members on the action that has been taken regarding the recommendations of the Action Group to review access to services for deaf, blind and deafblind people.

The Chair asked whether members could be informed of the telephone number that members of the public could use to ensure a public meeting is accessible regarding sign language interpreters and agendas available in different formats.

**Manal  
Ahmed**

Councillor Pidgeon asked whether any progress had been made on the 'Talking Bus Stops' project, whereby visually impaired people could access bus times in order to use the buses. The Joint Head of Community Cohesion will update the Forum on this scheme at the next meeting.

**Manal  
Ahmed**

## 12. **Taxi services for disabled people**

12.1 Tim Nichols, Head of Environmental Health & Licensing, presented a report updating members on the outcomes of reports to the Council's Licensing & Regulatory Functions Sub-Committee and Policy & Resources Committee following work of Forum's action group during 2002 and 2003.

12.2 The number of hackney carriages will be increased by 19 and 5 per year annually from May each year. The Policy & resources Committee confirmed the additional licenses would be for wheelchair accessible vehicles.

12.3 Members welcomed the fact that taxi drivers are to be offered disability awareness training. However, the Licensing & Regulatory Functions Sub-Committee decided not to support the Equalities Forum Action Group's suggestion to use pagers for wheelchair accessible vehicles. The Head of Environmental Health & Licensing stated that this scheme was still being investigated (via the Brighton & Hove Taxi Forum) to see if it could be successful.

12.4 Councillor Framroze suggested that disabled people be invited to let the Council know if the situation with taxi services has improved recently. The Head of Environmental Health & Licensing will organise a press release to publicise the council's hotline number.

**Tim Nichols**

Councillor Young suggested that to overcome the problem of taxi services for disabled people the council could consider have its own taxi fleet. The Head of Environmental Health & Licensing explained that this would be unworkable as the council is the licensing authority and therefore it would not be best practice to become an operator.

12.5 **RESOLVED:** That the report be noted.

### **13. Public Consultation Strategy**

13.1 Steve Barton, Head of Corporate Strategy, presented a report that informed members of the decision of the Policy & Resources Committee to adopt the Public Consultation Strategy. The reasons why a Public Consultation Strategy include:

- to ensure we have a reliable and balanced picture of local people's views on particular services and policies which are of importance to the council and its partners
- to provide robust information to inform the council's decision making as community leader and service provider
- to make most efficient use of council resources and target them on what matters most
- to provide a framework of principles and standards for consultation activity to ensure a consistent approach is taken across the council
- to promote discourse and dialogue as a part of the council's commitment to improving democratic engagement

and building community cohesion.

- 13.2 The Council will publish an annual Public Consultation Plan and develop a separate Children and Young Persons' Consultation Strategy as part of the project plan for the development of the new Children's Trust.

The Citizen's Panel will have it's size and scope extended and the Omnibus Survey has been terminated.

- 13.3 Councillor Wrighton asked if the council had the opportunity to vary the questions on the mandatory BVPI Survey. The Head of Corporate Strategy explained that more questions will be added regarding community cohesion, but Local Authorities had very little flexibility to vary the questions.

- 13.4 **RESOLVED:** That the report be noted.

14. **Shopmobility Churchill Square: History & Future**

- 14.1 The Transport Programme Manager, Jim Mayor, updated members on progress of the Shopmobility scheme at Churchill Square. Community Transport has been contracted to run the unit that will be opened in March 2004 (although the vertical lifts for the unit are going to be in place after that date). The scheme is a joint project with the council and Standard Life and Community Transport has been given funds (a pump priming grant of £49,000) for two years in order for them to attract sponsorship to make the scheme 'self-funded'. A project steering committee will oversee the performance of the scheme and the prime point of contact within the council will be the Principal Public Transport Officer (Paul Crowther tel. 292479).

- 14.2 **RESOLVED:** That the report be noted.

**Date of next meeting:**

Monday 8 March 2004

The meeting concluded at 5.50p.m.

Signed

Chair

Dated this

day of

2004

## **Appendix A**

### **Disabled Access Advisory Group (DAAG) Representative Statement to: The Equality & Social Justice Consultation Forum By Dr. H. & Mrs. Betty Davoodi**

**On Monday 12<sup>th</sup> January 2004, Hove Town Hall**

I very much welcome The Brighton & Hove City Council corporations in celebration of the European year of People with Disabilities. Disabilities constitute 10% of the general population, that is approximately 80 million people on the European continent, twice as many as the number in EU countries alone. Our objective must therefore be the full and equal enjoyment of human and social rights by people with disabilities in all our member states, particularly the rights to education, work, private and family life, health and social security, protection against poverty and social exclusion and the right to adequate housing. However, the barriers that still exist in society and the insufficient support provided to disabled people hinder their full and equal enjoyment of human rights. That is why disability must be seen as a human rights issue. Prejudice against disabled people, fear and low expectations are still present in many minds. But the most common cause of discrimination is the fact that disabled people are forgotten and overlooked. They are denied full and meaningful enjoyment of rights, which other people take for granted. The Brighton & Hove City Council should play a major role in the promotion of the initiative for a UN Convention to protect and promote the rights of people with disabilities.

As a representative of Disabled Access Advisory Group (DAAG) I am taking this opportunity to thank Mr. David Panter, the Chief Executive of Brighton & Hove City Council for participating in our General meeting in 2003 The European year of People with Disabilities and our Chairman, Councillor Framroze, the founder of Disabled Access Advisory Group. DAAG which despite being faced with many difficulties, has supported and worked extremely hard for people with disabilities during the past 14 years.

This support helps greatly in achieving our aim: to create awareness about disabilities issues among the general public and to create awareness of the rights of people with disabilities to equal opportunities and protection against discrimination. The success of Brighton & Hove City Council and our group initiatives depends on everyone playing their part. We need the participation of everyone including employers, private sector companies, local and national authorities, media, teachers, parents, youth and cultural organisations to make life a little easier for disabled people.

Thank you.