

BRIGHTON & HOVE CITY COUNCIL

EQUALITIES FORUM

MONDAY, 30 JANUARY 2006

HOVE TOWN HALL

MINUTES

Present

Councillor Elgood (Chair), Councillors Barnett, Burgess, Framroze, McCaffery, Meadows, Pidgeon (OS), Mrs Theobald, Wrighton and Young.

Community Representatives & Representatives of other organisations: Dr and Mrs Davoodi (Disabled Access Advisory Group), Joan Moorhouse (Older People's Council), Althea Wolfe (BMECP), Judy L Richards (Communities of Interest Network), Sylvia Alexander Vine (Domestic Violence Forum), PJ Aldred (Pride)

Brighton & Hove City Council: Alex Bailey (Director Strategy & Governance), Maggie Squire (Head of Performance and Equalities), Furrakh Mirza (Equalities Manager), Roy Pickard (Environmental Health), Angela Dymott (Assistant Director Property & Design), Lucy Bryson and Nina Chohda (Policy & Development Co-ordinators for Asylum Seekers and Refugees), Sue Drummond (Head of Leisure and Events), John Irvine (LGBT Community Safety Officer).

Apologies were received from: Imam Sajid, Katie Ogden, Martin Campbell and Arthur Law.

PART ONE

ACTION

34A Declarations of Substitutes

34.1 There were none.

34B Declarations of Interest

34.2 There were none.

34C Exclusion of Press and Public

34.3 The Committee considered whether the press and public should be excluded from the meeting during the 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 100 1 of the Local Government Act 1972.

34.4 **RESOLVED** - That the press and public not be excluded from the meeting during consideration of any items on the agenda.

35. CHAIR'S COMMUNICATIONS

35.1 The Chair stated that he hoped that the new Leader of the Council would attend the next meeting to do a question and answer session with members of the Forum.

35.2 The Chair stated that Arthur Law had asked for an agenda item on the Equality Bill but was unable to be present. It was agreed to defer Item 40 until the next meeting.

35.3 Arthur Law had written to the Chair to say that the Civil Partnerships Information Fair held on 26 January had been very successful, and he wished to thank all those who had helped Spectrum with the event.

35.4 The Director of Strategy & Governance reported on the activities that had taken place to remember Holocaust Day.

35.5 The Chair had received an invitation for all Forum members to attend a Chinese New Year celebration at 12.30 on 5 February.

35.6 LGBT History Month would commence on 4 February with a 'History Ball'.

35.7 The Chair reported that Brighton & Hove had scored well on Stonewall's Workplace Equalities Index.

36a MINUTES

36.1 **RESOLVED** - That the minutes of the meeting held on 5 December 2005 be approved and signed by the Chair.

36b BEACH ACCESS

36.2 Joan Moorhouse had raised this issue previously. She stated that people with mobility problems could not bathe in the sea, as they

could not cross the shingle. The Head of Leisure and Events reported that the tides cause the shingle to move twice each day, which creates steep banking. During May, the council would trial a system of matting on a flat part of the beach but unfortunately this would not help cross the steep slopes. There were no plans to ask for a ramp under a Planning agreement for the King Alfred redevelopment, as there was a substantial drop in levels at low tide at this point on the beach.

36.3 The Forum agreed the council should do a press release or an article in City News to encourage as many people as possible to attend the trial. It was also agreed the Head of Leisure and Events should contact DAAG and the Older Peoples Council about attending the trial. She also said she would bring a progress report back to the Forum in the future.

Sue
Drummond

36c FEEDBACK ISSUES FROM LAST MEETING

36.4 The Forum noted the list of feedback issues from the previous meeting.

36.5 The Chair confirmed that the Policy & Resources Committee had agreed to support International Day of Disabled Persons each 3 December as an annual event and present an annual accessibility award to a local organisation at the event. The Committee had also agreed to forward the Civil Partnership Act 2004 report to full Council.

36.6 Councillor McCaffery referred to paragraph 27.2 of the minutes. She stated that the Sussex Travellers Action Group had undertaken its own survey and found 50-70 van dwellers in the area. The Chair confirmed that travellers would be involved at future stages of the Accommodation Needs Assessment. There will be a report back in the near future.

Maggie Squire

36.7 The Chair stated that the consultation meeting for Forum members on the Community Strategy had been productive and the Policy Development Officer was currently working on the issues raised there.

36.8 The Travellers Sub-Group met on 19 December. Councillor Barnett recommended that members of the public be invited to attend its meetings. Councillor McCaffery disagreed because the group had been set up to look at welfare issues and there are other meetings relating to travellers that the public can attend. The next Travellers Sub-Group meeting would be held on 2 February and it was too late to advertise this as a public meeting. The Chair stated that one of the agenda items would be the council's draft Race Equality Scheme 2005-08 as part of the consultation on the scheme. The

Pat Foster

vacant place on the Group and the matter of inviting the public could also be discussed.

36.9 The Chair and Head of Performance and Equalities had visited MOSAIC, a black and mixed parentage family community support group. It was agreed that they should be co-opted on to the Forum and their representative should make a presentation at a future meeting. It was not yet known who the representative would be.

36.10 **RESOLVED** – That MOSAIC be invited to appoint a representative as a co-opted member of the Forum. Maggie Squire

36.11 The Equalities Policy Review Group was continuing to meet regularly and had held a session open to the public in January.

36.12 The Chair advised that there had been little interest in visiting The Chattri in early February, but the Committee Administrator would contact members to see whether a date in the Spring would be more attractive. The Chair confirmed that a Hindu member of the Pensioners Forum would be welcome to attend the visit. Estelle Woodcock

37. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

37.1 There were no questions from members of the public.

38. COMMUNITY REPRESENTATIVES ISSUES AND QUESTIONS

38.1 Dr Davoodi drew attention to the implications of the Disability Discrimination Act 2005 for public sector employers. He recommended that a representative of the Forum should attend the Disability Rights Commission seminar in London on 27 February. The Head of Performance and Equality undertook to look into this. She stated that the new Equalities Manager had already attended two days' training on implementing the DDA. It was agreed that there should be a report to the next meeting. Maggie Squire

38.2 It was suggested that articles in City News were not always fair to disabled people. The Director of Strategy & Governance stated that City News had an editorial board, which endeavoured to treat all sections of the local population fairly by providing in-depth articles over the course of a year. It was agreed that the Chair should speak to the editor and send a written response to Dr Davoodi. Paul Elgood

38.3 It was suggested that the Forum should be advised when officers were due to attend conferences and seminars in case members had questions or ideas to be raised. The Forum should then receive reports back. The Head of Performance and Equalities will be attending a consultation event (2 March) on new Gender Equality

legislation and undertook to do a verbal report back on this to the Forum on 6 March.

38.4 Judy Richards stated that the Communities of Interest Network are now able to attend Forum meetings again after a short break, and they were advised to send the contact name and address to the Head of Performance and Equalities (or the Committee Administrator).

39. ENVIRONMENT DIRECTORATE EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT 2005

39.1 The Head of Equalities (Environment) made a presentation on his department's Equality Impact Assessments. A summary of progress had been circulated with the previous agenda.

39.2 Judy Richards pointed out that it is not good practice to say "black and Asian" or to refer to "ethnic businesses". [Chair to advise Director of Environment.]

Paul Elgood

39.3 She also expressed concern about the council placing job advertisements with an outside agency, saying that black and minority ethnic magazines would be better. Althea Wolfe undertook to provide details of a black and minority ethnic newsletter, which could be used to advertise jobs. Sylvia Alexander Vine added that there are various community newsletters which take advertising. The Chair undertook to raise the issue of advertising job vacancies with the Director of Strategy & Governance and report back.

Paul Elgood
Alex Bailey

39.4 Councillor Pidgeon pointed out that producing credit card sized information was not good equalities practice. He was also concerned that some sections of the council paid for translators, while others did not; for example, ward councillors might need to speak to constituents whose first language was not English, but there was no budget for this.

39.5 Mrs Davoodi enquired about the presentations on not opening the door to strangers. Joan Moorhouse advised that these had been light-hearted dramatic presentations to groups of elderly people produced by Trading Standards.

39.6 Councillor Wrighton asked about Planning trends and whether there was a higher rate of refusals for planning applications where English was not the applicant's first language. The Chair agreed that it was desirable for the Forum to have this information.

Paul Elgood

40. THE EQUALITY BILL

40.1 This item was deferred until the next meeting, as Arthur Law, who had requested it, was not able to be present.

41 DISABILITY DISCRIMINATION ACT – UPDATE ON PROGRAMME OF

WORKS TO COUNCIL OWNED BUILDINGS

41.1 The Forum considered a report of the Director of Strategy & Governance concerning the corporate programme of rolling access works being carried out under the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 requirements (see minute book).

41.2 The Assistant Director Property & Design introduced the report and noted members' comments. She confirmed that all meeting rooms at Brighton and Hove Town Halls were fitted with induction loops which were regularly maintained.

41.3 Councillor Burgess informed members that the council had allocated a budget of £650,000 for access works in the council year 2006/07, which was more than previous years.

41.4 It was noted that the council had some way to go. Deaf interpretation was not provided at council and committee meetings; planners do not insist on disabled access for all applications, just for new developments; only city centre pavements are maintained to a high standard; all pavement obstructions should be removed.

41.5 Dr Davoodi reminded members to draw DAAG's attention to areas of concern, so that the group could add its influence to any campaign for improvement.

41.6 **RESOLVED** – That the access works being undertaken corporately to council owned properties, helping the council to meet the requirements under the Disability Discrimination Act, be noted.

42. REFUGEE WEEK

42.1 The Policy & Development Co-ordinator for Asylum Seekers and Refugees made a presentation on Refugee Week in Brighton & Hove. The report on the 2005 week of events was circulated (see minute book).

[NOTE: The overhead projector was not working for this item and it was agreed that the slides be circulated. See Appendix if you are reading a paper copy of these minutes. If you are looking at these minutes on the Internet, see Agenda Item 42]

42.2 The Policy & Development Co-ordinator explained that she worked in the Community Safety Team. Refugees are very vulnerable and one of the aims of Refugee Week is to reduce the myths society holds about them. This year citywide events will be held from 19-25 June. It was noted that negative language was frequently used in respect of refugees, even though some had been resident and made positive contributions to life in the city for ten years.

42.3 The Forum fully supported the proposals. Judy Richards suggested that the partners listed on page 8 should be involved in seeking funding as this would give them experience for making future bids. She also offered some advice about feedback forms.

42.4 Councillor Meadows requested that the council should endeavour to attract far more press coverage for the 2006 event. It was agreed that the Chair would meet the Policy & Development Co-ordinator to discuss this.

Paul Elgood
Nina
Chohda

The meeting concluded at 6.05 pm.

Signed

Chair

Dated this

day of

2006