

BRIGHTON & HOVE CITY COUNCIL

EQUALITIES FORUM

4.00 PM, MONDAY, 19 JUNE 2006

HOVE TOWN HALL

MINUTES

Present

Councillor Elgood (Chair), Councillors Burgess, Framroze, McCaffery, Mears, A Norman, Oxley, Pidgeon (OS), Williams.

Community Representatives & Representatives of other organisations: Dr and Mrs Davoodi (Disabled Access Advisory Group), PJ Aldred (Pride), Anne-Marie Hines (Mosaic), Imam Sajid (Interfaith Contact Group), Arthur Law (Spectrum), Joan Moorhouse (Older People's Council), Neil Ansell (Friends, Families & Travellers), Althea Wolfe (BME Community Partnership), Shirley West (Women's Centre), Judy Richards (COIN)

Brighton & Hove City Council: Alex Bailey (Director Strategy & Governance), Maggie Squire (Head of Performance and Equalities), Furrakh Mirza (Equalities Manager), Estelle Woodcock (Committee Administrator), Carmel Millar (Head of Human Resources), Adam Bates (Head of Tourism), Suzanne Mantell (Visitor Services Manager), Chris Fossey (Head of Life Events), Dean Spears (Principal Transport Planner)

Apologies were received from: Sylvia Alexander Vine, Martin Campbell, Elaine Lai

PART ONE

ACTION

1A Declarations of Substitutes

Sarah Dyde attended to represent the Primary Care Trust instead of Martin Campbell.

1B Declarations of Interest

1.2 There were none.

1C Exclusion of Press and Public

1.3 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.

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

2. CHAIR'S COMMUNICATIONS

2.1 The Chair welcomed the new councillors on the Forum and expressed his thanks to all those who served last year. He asked members to re-affirm last year's community representatives and to accept three new community representatives. He advised that Bert Williams, who represented Brighton & Hove Black History, had had to resign on the grounds of ill health and it was agreed that the Administrator should write to him on behalf of the Forum.

Estelle
Woodcock

2.2 Forum members and community representatives had been invited to a networking event with the Mayor and Leader of the Council in May.

2.3 The Chair stated that the Forum had set up two working groups to look at specific issues in the year 2005-6 and that a report would come to the next meeting recommending new working groups for the current year. Councillor McCaffery and Neil Ansell both expressed concern that the Travellers Working Group had wound up with no report to the Forum on how to improve work with travellers in future. [Link to the report setting up the Travellers Group: [http://peace.brighton-hove.gov.uk/Intranet/CommitteeMgt.nsf/0/A5F681D6337C48548025708C005692EA/\\$File/Item+22+Forum+group+on+travellers+issues.doc](http://peace.brighton-hove.gov.uk/Intranet/CommitteeMgt.nsf/0/A5F681D6337C48548025708C005692EA/$File/Item+22+Forum+group+on+travellers+issues.doc)] The Chair agreed to meet Friends, Families and Travellers to discuss their concerns.

Paul Elgood

2.4 Councillor Pidgeon was dissatisfied with information he had received from the Sustainable Transport Manager regarding the provision of handrails. He stated that there were many disabled and elderly people who would benefit from handrails on the very steep slopes in his ward. Dean Spears, Principal Transport Planner, advised that it was a government requirement for officers to work in accordance with the local Transport Plan. He stated that accessibility

is one of the objectives in the 2006/07 to 2010/11 plan. [Link <http://www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/index.cfm?request=c1146323>.] The Forum agreed to set up an informal meeting to consider the issue of handrails and report back.

Dean Spears

2.5 A leaflet about Refugee Week 2006 was copied with the agenda. Nina Chohda had sent her apologies: Refugee Week was currently taking place and she was attending events connected with it. The Equalities Manager reported on events and recommended members of the Forum to attend.

3a MINUTES

3.1 **RESOLVED** - That the minutes of the meeting held on 3 March 2006 be approved and signed by the Chair.

3b FEEDBACK ISSUES FROM LAST MEETING

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

3.3 The Chair stated that the trial of beach matting was due to start shortly. DAAG and the Older People's Council wish to be involved in this. Councillors asked to be informed of the trial's location on the seafront. An update is requested to the next meeting.

Sue
Drummond

3.4 The Chair reported that he had received letters from two local MPs confirming that they were making representations to ensure that transgender people were included in Gender Impact Assessments under new Gender Equality legislation. The MPs' letters will be sent to Forum members.

Furrakh Mirza

4. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

4.1 Arthur Law had submitted a question. This was asked under item 6 below.

5. COMMUNITY REPRESENTATIVES ISSUES AND QUESTIONS

5.1 Joan Moorhouse requested that the council consider repairing pavements, where paving slabs are cracked, with tarmac. When cars are parked on slabs they become displaced, causing many older people to suffer falls. She added that visually impaired people prefer the new style of pedestrian crossings and asked whether the old style could gradually be replaced. It was agreed to ask the Assistant Director Highways to the next meeting.

Carolyn
Dwyer

5.2 Neil Ansell stated that the section on Gypsies and Travellers in the Race Equality Scheme offered no solutions to resolving issues. The

Estelle

Chair requested that there be a reminder on the feedback list until this is settled. Woodcock

5.3 Judy Richards regretted that the Race Equality Scheme document had been tabled for information and was not an agenda item. She considered that the consultation on the Impact Assessments (page 28 of the document) seemed insufficient. The Equalities Manager confirmed that this was currently being reviewed.

5.4 Dr Sajid requested that consultation should always involve faith communities. Culture is as important as colour to many people. It was agreed that the Equalities Manager should respond to Dr Sajid on this point after the meeting. Furrakh Mirza

5.5 Dr Davoodi enquired about access to doctors' surgeries for disabled people. Sarah Dyde confirmed that the PCT had set up a Disabled Steering Group to inform their Action Plan, in consultation with the Federation of Disabled People.

6. EQUALITIES POLICY REVIEW GROUP: DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 The Forum considered a report of the Director of Strategy & Governance setting out the draft recommendations of the Equalities Review Group (see minute book).

6.2 The Chair was of the opinion that this report should be considered at the meeting as a matter of urgency due to the importance of implementing the recommendations throughout the council and the diverse communities within the city as soon as possible. The special circumstances for non-compliance with Section 100B(4) of the 1972 Local Government Act and Procedural Rule 19.1 of the Constitution (items not to be considered unless the agenda is open to inspection at least five clear days in advance of the meeting) are that the Equalities Policy Review Group held its final meeting on 6 June 2006 and it was necessary to compile the report and clear it with the members of the Review Group after that date.

6.3 The Chair stated that the review had been undertaken by four cross-party elected members. There was still scope to revise the report before the July Policy & Resources Committee if necessary. He stated that the report set out a number of recommendations to reflect the concerns of the people who gave evidence to the Review Group.

6.4 Arthur Law requested that the Equalities Policy Review panel members should attend a meeting at Spectrum on 9 August to present an analysis of the evidence submitted during the Review and a rationale for the findings and recommendations. He hoped for an open discussion with members of the LGBT community as to what

action needed to be taken. The Chair stated that this would be difficult because some people had given evidence on the basis that it would remain confidential. Also he was not available on the date suggested. Judy Richards supported Arthur Law's request, stating that in a similar national initiative the recommendations had deviated from the evidence received. Dr Sajid suggested that confidential reports be summarised and reworded to protect identities.

6.5 Councillor Williams stated that he had given evidence, which he would gladly allow to be published. He thought the process had been valuable. He considered that some of the recommendations of the Review Team seemed lightweight and without targets or time scales. The Chair stated that it was up to the Policy & Resources Committee to agree a timetable for implementing the findings. Councillor Oxley hoped the recommendations would stimulate debate at the Policy & Resources Committee. He felt that it was absolutely essential to have local performance indicators and he particularly supported the recommendation that all the council's services must be open, safe and accessible.

6.6 The Chair noted Dr Sajid's concern that Faith was not mentioned and undertook to consult the members of the panel with a view to adding Faith to the recommendations.

Paul Elgood

6.7 Councillor Burgess apologised if the panel had given any wrong impressions. He stressed that the aim had been to listen to everyone who gave evidence and to get the recommendations right. He considered it essential for Policy & Resources to consider the report in July, so that the council could implement improvements. The Chair agreed saying that the final report should come to the Forum in September.

6.8 **RESOLVED** – (1) That the draft recommendations be agreed and referred to Policy & Resources Committee in July.

(2) That the Equalities Forum agrees to communicate the recommendations throughout the organisation and to our diverse communities within the city.

7. PRIDE

7.1 PJ Aldred updated the Forum on PRIDE 2006. There would be a week of events with the main event on Saturday 5 August in Preston Park, and also a winter Pride event. She thanked the council for its support with funding and stated that the bigger the event became, the greater the cost of meeting Health and Safety requirements. She regretted that there would be no event in St James's Street because of the cost of licensing the whole street under new legislation. Members commented that they appreciated black and ethnic dishes

rather than fast food at PRIDE. The Chair invited PJ Aldred to report back.

8 TOURISM & DISABILITY

8.1 Adam Bates, Head of Tourism, and Suzanne Mantell, Visitor Services Manager, made a presentation on making the council's Tourism service accessible to disabled visitors. The service liaises with disabled organisations to ensure that information, whether face to face, by email, website and telephone is provided in a user-friendly way. Visitor information officers receive special training. Accommodation providers in the city are encouraged to gain national accreditation. The officers advised that local attractions are required to give descriptive information on access and not just to use icons in their publicity.

8.2 Mrs Davoodi mentioned an occasion when the Visitor Information Centre had given wrong information about a hotel's facilities. Adam Bates apologised that he had limited resources to check the information given by hotels. Suzanne Mantell added that a checklist of hotel room requirements for disabled people had recently been drawn up for future use. To a question from Councillor Oxley, Adam advised that the website contained information on access within the city from the main points of entry to the city and car parks.

8.3 Concern was expressed about the 50p a minute information line. Suzanne Mantell advised that this had been installed to enable the council to meet demand. A Minicom service was available to disabled people at normal phone rates.

8.4 Members wished to know whether all of the information is available on audio, how to help disabled car users now that there are no parking attendants, and why planners require disabled access into restaurants but not disabled toilets.

8.5 The Chair requested a further report to the November meeting.

Adam Bates

9. DISABILITY EQUALITY SCHEME

9.1 The Forum considered a report of the Director of Strategy & Governance concerning the Disability Equality Scheme (DES) (see minute book).

9.2 Dr Davoodi stated that wheelchair users had as much right to book a taxi as anyone else, yet they had great difficulty in organising one at the time required. The Chair suggested that the Forum should consider Taxis as a future agenda item. Councillor Burgess considered that the new staircase access to Brighton station was very unfair on

Carolyn
Dwyer

disabled people due to the long detour for them.

9.3 Councillor Williams was concerned that the council employs a low number of disabled employees and that managers seem not to appreciate disabled staff. Arthur Law stated that the report did not refer to mental illness as a disability. He pointed out that mental health organisations are not represented on the Forum.

9.4 The Equalities Manager advised that consultation will start in July and the draft scheme will be ready in September. Members requested that the DAAG, the Communities of Interest Network and women's organisations be involved.

Furrakh Mirza

9.5 **RESOLVED** – (1) That the Disability Equality Scheme skeletal framework and action plan be noted as well as the process for an outline audit and assessment of services for relevance.

(2) That the council's approach to implementing our Disability Equality Scheme for the Disability Discrimination Act as part of our broader equality work be noted and that future plans for work to complete production of the DES be approved.

10 COUNT ME IN TOO

10.1 Key details of "Count Me In Too" had been circulated with the agenda (see minute book). Kath Browne of the University of Brighton reported on this research into the views of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people. A questionnaire would run until September and it was hoped for 1,000 replies. After that Focus Groups would take place. The findings would feed in to the new 5-year LGBT Community Strategy.

10.2 The Director of Strategy & Governance agreed that the questionnaire should be put on The Wave, so that council staff could respond. Members suggested that postcards about the research be distributed at PRIDE.

10.3 Kath Browne asked the council to act on the findings and to develop future strategies around them.

11 VOTER REGISTRATION

11.1 The Forum considered a report of the Director of Housing and City Support setting out the rules, regulations and procedures for persons to register as electors (see Minute Book). Members noted that the information contained in the report was subject to forthcoming legislation.

11.2 The special circumstances for non-compliance with Council

Procedure Rule 19, Access to Information Rule 5 and Section 100B(4) of the 1972 Local Government Act as amended (items not to be considered unless the agenda is open to inspection at least five days in advance of the meeting) are that the information required from the consultation on the report was not completed in time for the print run and did not therefore meet the normal Access to Information deadlines.

11.3 Chris Fossey, Head of Life Events, introduced the report and responded to members' questions. Councillor Burgess was concerned about accessibility of polling stations. Judy Richards about the languages available in translation; she stated that two Chinese languages and Urdu were commonly used in the city. Chris Fossey advised that the new legislation should address the matter of postal votes in houses in multiple occupation and that there had been very few complaints last year. He also agreed to a publicity campaign to get as many people on the Electoral Register as possible. It was agreed that a members seminar be arranged in January 2007 on voting arrangements for blind people.

Chris Fossey

11.4 **RESOLVED** – That the information contained in the report be noted.

12 DIVERSITY AND RECRUITMENT

12.1 A late report of the Director of Strategy & Governance concerning recent work undertaken to improve the diversity of the council's workforce and the strategy for maintaining momentum over the next year had been circulated. However, the meeting was running late and the Chair requested it be deferred.

12.2 Carmel Millar, Head of Human Resources, stated that the report was urgent because of the Council's desire to secure feedback for its proposed Diversity Recruitment Campaign scheduled for this Autumn. The Chair requested her to arrange a members seminar, where members can express their views.

Carmel
Millar

OTHER ISSUES

12.3 Arthur Law recommended that the community representatives should be given advice on their role as representatives on the Forum. There should be clarity as to how the different communities are chosen to be on the Forum and they should have Terms of Reference and a Code of Conduct. The Chair requested officers to report back.

Maggie
Squire

12.4 It was noted that the date of the next meeting clashed with the Labour Party Conference, so the Administrator was asked to find an acceptable alternative date.

Estelle
Woodcock

The meeting concluded at 7.10 pm.

Signed

Chair

Dated this

day of

2006