

BRIGHTON & HOVE CITY COUNCIL

EQUALITIES FORUM

4.00 PM, THURSDAY, 12 OCTOBER 2006

HOVE TOWN HALL

MINUTES

Present

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

Community Representatives & Representatives of other organisations: Dr and Mrs Davoodi (Disabled Access Advisory Group), Arnold Lewis (Interfaith Contact Group), Arthur Law (Spectrum), Joan Moorhouse (Older People's Council), Althea Wolfe (BME Community Partnership), Judy Richards (COIN)

Brighton & Hove City Council: Alex Bailey (Director Strategy & Governance), Maggie Squire (Head of Performance and Equalities), Fergus Crow (Equalities & Anti-bullying Consultant), Furrakh Mirza (Equalities Manager), Estelle Woodcock (Committee Administrator), Carmel Millar (Head of Human Resources), Katie Ogden (Head of Human Resources Strategy), Liz Boswell (HR Policy Manager), Sue Drummond (Head of Leisure and Events), Vicky Miller (Head Seafront Officer), Andrew Westwood (Transport Systems & Lighting Manager)

Apologies were received from: Dr Sajid, Julie O'Hara, PJ Aldred, Anne-Marie Hines, Neil Ansell, Martin Campbell, Sylvia Alexander Vine

PART ONE

ACTION

13A Declarations of Substitutes

13.1	<u>Councillor</u>	<u>For Councillor</u>
	Pennington	Meadows

13B Declarations of Interest

13.2 There were none.

13C Exclusion of Press and Public

13.3 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.

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

14a MINUTES

14.1 **RESOLVED** - That the minutes of the meeting held on 19 June 2006 be approved and signed by the Chair.

14b FEEDBACK ISSUES FROM LAST MEETING

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

14.3 Letters from the three local Members of Parliament concerning the Equalities Act were noted. The Forum was concerned that there were still outstanding issues, relating to the inclusion of transgender people and whether faith schools could be exempt from the legislation, and the Chair was asked to write to the MPs asking for an update on the legislation and their own position relating to the outstanding issues.

Paul Elgood

14.4 A letter from the Equalities Manager to the Chair about consultation on the Race Equality Scheme had been despatched with the agenda (see minute book).

15 CHAIR'S COMMUNICATIONS

15.1 The Chair drew attention to a report by Dr Davoodi "Improving the Services Dentists provide to Disabled People", which had been circulated to Forum members. No-one from the Primary Care Trust was present to comment on the points raised, but the Head of Performance and Equalities offered to put Dr Davoodi in touch with an officer at the PCT if he wished to discuss these points.

15.2 Bert Williams had written to invite members to visit the Chattri on 21 October as part of Black History Month at a nominal charge of £2 for adults.

15.3 Councillor Pidgeon referred to a report in the Evening Argus, 12 October 2006, stating that the Disability Rights Commission criticised the council for closing public toilets including disabled ones at 4.30 pm. He asked for a report back to the Forum.

Jenny
Rowlands

16 PUBLIC QUESTIONS/COUNCILLORS' LETTERS

16.1 Brighton & Hove Black Women's Group had submitted a letter concerning Black History Month. The letter stated that currently the celebrations consisted of arts events and did not focus on history. It also raised questions about which groups the council should work with to produce the annual event. However, the authors were not present to put the questions. They were raised during item 22.

17 COMMUNITY REPRESENTATIVES ISSUES AND QUESTIONS

17.1 The Equalities Manager read out a letter from Dr Davoodi concerning the United Nations Treaty to protect the Human Rights of Disabled People.

17.2 The Forum was concerned to learn that Dr Davoodi had not been able to read a statement to the AGM of the South Downs NHS Trust expressing concern about the lack of provision for disabled people at the new Education Centre in Neville Avenue. The Chair undertook to raise this with the NHS Trust and also with the Children's Trust.

Paul Elgood

17.3 Arthur Law requested that there should be a representative from a local Mental Health organisation on the Equalities Forum. This proposal was welcomed by the Forum and Councillor Williams suggested that Mind should be approached.

Maggie
Squire

17.4 Dr Davoodi considered that there should also be a representative of the United Nations on the Forum. It was noted that the Interfaith Contact Group was due to host an anniversary celebration for the United Nations on 22 October 2006.

18 ACCESS TO THE SEAFRONT

18.1 The Head Seafront Officer, informed the Forum that a trial of beach matting had taken place during the summer months. The laying of the matting across the shingle near the West Street subway had proved very popular and would take place each summer. Members of the Forum agreed that it was desirable to use the matting in additional locations and hoped that a budget would be available for this, but they noted that laying the matting and putting it away was very labour-intensive.

18.2 Joan Moorhouse expressed concern that the Older People's Council had not been informed about the location of the matting. The Seafront Officer undertook to liaise with the Older People's Council and also to advertise the matting more widely in future.

Viki Miller

19 CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE'S TRUST

19.1 The Forum received a presentation on Equalities Issues in Schools (for slides, see minute book) by the council's Equalities and Anti-Bullying Consultant. Fergus Crow advised that the Children & Young People's Trust was committed to inclusion, equality and diversity. The provision of services was subject to legislation and Ofsted made regular inspections on some key areas relating to equality.

19.2 Arthur Law was concerned that the system was not inclusive of transgender issues. The Chair advised that councillors participating in the Equalities Policy Review had stressed that there should be local performance indicators to make up for the shortfall of national indicators. It was agreed that the council should ensure that head teachers pass on the Equalities guidelines they receive to all staff.

Fergus Crow

19.3 Althea Wolfe expressed concern that families in some communities did not feel safe reporting incidents of bullying. Fergus Crow stated that work was in hand to improve this situation. Judy Richards requested that the Healthy Schools initiative should take black diets into account. She recommended that the council should ask communities how they understood problems and what they considered should be done. Fergus Crow offered to make a presentation to the Racial Harassment Forum, but Ms Richards said that not all groups were included by that forum.

19.4 Mrs Davoodi suggested that schools be involved in the International Day for Disabled Persons.

20 DIVERSITY AND RECRUITMENT

20.1 The Forum considered a report of the Director of Strategy & Governance concerning recent work undertaken to improve the diversity of the council's workforce (see minute book).

20.2 The Head of Human Resources reported that the council's biggest omission was in employing minority groups at senior management level. The Forum considered that retention of staff was also an important issue.

20.3 Liz Boswell, Human Resources Manager, reported on the work being undertaken to implement the Age Discrimination regulations. The council already employed approximately 100 staff over the age

of 65 and was in the process of raising staff awareness.

20.4 Members discussed the pilot real-time tracking scheme described in paragraph 5.6 of the report. Judy Richards advised the Forum that working for the council at any grade was not a popular choice for Bme people.

20.5 **RESOLVED** – That the Forum support the outline strategy and participate in communicating this strategy throughout our communities within and beyond the city.

21 GENDER EQUALITY DUTY

21.1 The Forum considered a report of the Director of Strategy & Governance seeking agreement to a proposed work programme to deliver the Gender Equality Scheme (GES) by the stipulated deadline of 7 April 2007 (see minute book).

21.2 **RESOLVED** – (1) That the Forum note and agree the Gender Equality Scheme (GES) skeletal framework and action plan as well as the process for an outline audit and assessment of services for relevance as set out in Appendix 1 to the report.

(2) That the Forum note the council's approach to implementing its GES as part of its broader equality work and approve future plans for work to complete production of the GES.

22 BLACK HISTORY MONTH

22.1 Althea Wolfe updated the Forum on Black History Month, stating that the theme this year was Sankofa Journeys. She circulated copies of the programme of over 30 events.

22.2 Judy Richards stated that a public question had been submitted (see item 16) and that she would appreciate an answer. She advised that 2007 would be the Bicentenary of the Abolition of Slavery and that it was essential to address the criticisms that had been made about Black History Month before starting planning for this event.

22.3 Councillor McCaffery regretted that she had not received information about Black History Month earlier. Ms Wolfe stated that the intention had been for all councillors to receive the programme in advance and that she would review the publicity procedures.

22.4 Councillor Pidgeon enquired whether information was available in Braille or audio. Ms Wolfe was asked to let Councillor Pidgeon know.

23 QUESTION & ANSWER SESSION ON SUSTAINABLE TRANSPORT

23.1 Carolyn Dwyer, Assistant Director Sustainable Transport, sent

apologies that she was unable to attend. However, Andrew Westwood, the Transport Systems & Lighting Manager responded to questions.

23.2 Joan Moorhouse referred to cracked and uneven pavements. She also requested more Puffin crossings. Andrew Westwood replied that his team monitored recurring incidents of broken slabs and replaced these areas with tarmac. He added that all new crossings were fitted with tactile and audible facilities and old crossings were being replaced as quickly as possible.

23.3 The Forum noted a letter from Councillor Pidgeon stating that the Royal National Institute of the Blind had withdrawn from the Hearing Bus Stop project and asking which options the council could now pursue. Mr Westwood replied that the RNIB seemed to wish to delay, rather than stop, the project and would be meeting the council to make their intentions clear. Councillor Pidgeon asked to be informed of the outcome.

Andrew
Westwood

24 LGBT HOUSING NEEDS

24.1 This item was deferred until the next meeting.

Estelle
Woodcock

25 THE EQUALITIES FORUM: A GUIDE FOR MEMBERS

25.1 This item was deferred until the next meeting.

Estelle
Woodcock

25.2 Any comments on the handbook in the meantime should be sent to the Head of Performance and Equalities.

The meeting concluded at 6.45 pm.

Signed

Chair

Dated this

day of

2006