

Meeting	Equality Advisory Group
Date	24 November 2011
Present	Councillors Crisp (Chair), Richardson (Vice-Chair), Barnes and Jeffries Community Representatives: Marije Davidson – York Independent Living Network Sue Lister – York Older People’s Assembly Tony Martin – York Older People’s Assembly Claire Newhouse – Higher York Sarah Nicholson – Youth Council Ella – Youth Council Member Rita Sanderson – York Racial Equality Network Dan Sidley – LGBT Forum Paul Wordsworth – Churches Together In York
Apologies	Councillor Aspden – City of York Council David Brown – York Access Group John Burgess – York Mental Health Forum Daryoush Mazloun – York Racial Equality Network Diane Roworth – York Independent Living Network Fiona Walker – Valuing People Partnership

12. Declarations Of Interest

Members were invited to declare at this point in the meeting any personal or prejudicial interests they might have in the business on the agenda. Councillor Jeffries declared a personal interest in items on the agenda as Co-Chair of York Independent Living Network.

13. Public Participation

There was one registration to speak under the council's Public Participation Scheme.

Colin Hall raised issues in respect of the renewal of York Compact. He stated that the revision of the Compact provided an opportunity to make clear to organisations that were in receipt of public funding of their responsibilities in terms of ensuring that the provision they offered was fully accessible.

14. Minutes

Resolved: That the minutes of the meeting held on 18 July 2011 be approved as a correct record.

15. Update on Actions Agreed at the Last Meeting

The group was updated on the action that had been taken to address issues raised at the previous meeting:

(i) Implementation of the taxi card scheme

Officers gave an update on the implementation of the taxi card scheme. They apologised for the delays that had occurred at the start of the roll-out and explained that 1500 cards had been issued. Some issues had arisen in respect of driver training and it was proposed that refresher training sessions would be held.

The group suggested that there were wider issues to be addressed in respect of training for taxi drivers and they requested that further consideration be given to this issue at a future meeting¹.

(ii) Poverty Awareness Project

Claire Newhouse asked for the group's views regarding proposals for the poverty awareness project. The proposal was for a Community Co-ordinator from St John's University to lead a team of student volunteers in arranging two or three events for older people who were feeling isolated in areas of the city including Heworth,

Clifton and Guildhall. Costings were currently being drawn-up. The Group welcomed the proposal that had been put forward and agreed that final approval of the arrangements should be delegated to the Chair.

(iii) Disabled parking arrangements in Library Square

The group was informed that parking spaces had now been marked out in Blake Street. The Footstreets Review would include consideration as to how accessible parking arrangements were operating in the area.

(iv) Representation on Equality Advisory Group from the York Carers Forum

The York Carers Forum had been asked if they would like to be involved in the work of the Equality Advisory Group. They had welcomed this approach but, because of their caring commitments, had explained that they would find it difficult to attend evening meetings.

The group suggested that the Carers Centre should also be approached to ascertain if they wished to be represented on the Equality Advisory Group².

Discussion took place regarding the membership of EAG. Members agreed that it was important that the protected characteristics continued to be represented but were mindful of the need to ensure that the group did not become so large that it was unable to operate effectively. The Chair informed the group that it was intended that there would be a total refresh of EAG during the year and that further consideration could be given to these issues as part of the process.

(v) Footstreets Review

A report on the Footstreets Review was due to be considered by the Cabinet Member for City Strategy at a Decision Session on 1 December 2011. The report was available to view on-line. Subject to approval by the Cabinet Member, more detailed consultation would take place on this issue. One of the recommendations was that there would be zero tolerance in respect of A-boards within the city centre.

(vi) Osballdwick right of way issue

The Chair informed the group that she had carried out a piece of casework in respect of the Osballdwick right of way following issues George Wright had raised at the previous meeting. The information would be forwarded to him.

(vii) North Yorkshire Police Diversity Unit

In response to questions raised at the previous meeting, representatives from North Yorkshire Police had been invited to attend the meeting to talk about the review of equalities that had taken place and the reasons why there would no longer be a discrete equalities unit. Details were given of the new arrangements that were being put in place. It was intended that these would enable equalities issues to be embedded throughout the organisation and not be seen as an “add-on”. A review of the new arrangements would be carried out.

Action Required

1. Include as an agenda item for future meeting CC
2. Contact Carers Centre to ascertain if they wish to be involved. CC

16. Equalities Framework for Local Government

The group was given a verbal update on the Equalities Framework for Local Government final report and the next steps. Supporting information had been included with the agenda papers.

Officers went through the key findings with the group, as detailed in the report that had been included with the agenda papers. They explained that the council had been accredited as “achieving” in the equalities assessment. A work programme had now been put in place to enable the council to work towards achieving excellence.

The Chair informed the group that it was very important that the equalities agenda was embedded throughout the Authority. Although progress was being made, there was still much work

to be done if the council was to achieve excellence within the next two years.

Resolved: That the update on the Equalities Framework for Local Government be noted.

Reason: To ensure that EAG is informed of the council's progress.

17. Procurement Strategy

The group received a verbal report on the council's Procurement Strategy Refresh from the Cabinet Member for Corporate Services and a procurement manager.

The group was informed that the council was the largest employer in the area and was a major purchaser of goods and services. Details were given of how the council was seeking to improve the ways it procured goods and services, including the putting in place of a new procurement strategy. The group was encouraged to participate by attending a workshop that had been arranged for 13 December 2011.

The Cabinet Member explained some of the key issues that were being taken into account when developing procurement processes including:

- Value for money (ensuring that the goods and services purchased were also of good quality)
- Supporting the local economy
- Protecting the local environment
- Protecting vulnerable people
- Being collaborative
- Focusing on the council's key priorities
- Building strong relationships with the voluntary sector.
- Looking at who large suppliers could sub-contract within the city.
- Apprenticeship schemes.
- The use of EIAs.

Resolved: That the information on the Procurement Strategy, including the consultation event, be noted.

Reason: To ensure that the EAG has an opportunity to contribute to the Procurement Strategy refresh.

18. Council Management Team Meeting with the Equality Advisory Group

Details were given about the proposal for the Council's Management Team (CMT) to meet with EAG on 19 December 2011. The event would take place at the Priory Street Centre from 9:30am to 2:00pm.

The group was asked for their views on the content, style and organisation of the event. The following suggestions were put forward:

- There should be a short introduction from the Directors so that the group was clear about the council's structure.
- There should be discussion about the council's budget – including initial feedback from the Fairness Commission.
- It was important that directors used the meeting as an opportunity to find out more about the protected characteristics. This was an opportunity to learn about how things could be done better. Equalities issues were sometimes seen as problems but they should be seen as opportunities.
- An update on the move to the new council offices would be helpful – for example who would be based there?
- Learning points should be identified by the Directors so that action taken could be reported back.
- Whilst it was agreed that it would be useful for Directors to meet with representatives from EAG around the table, differing views were expressed as to how this was best organised.

Rita Sanderson offered to help with the planning. Other members who also wished to be involved in the planning were asked to contact Charlie Croft.

Resolved: That the information on the CMT meeting with EAG be noted.

Reason: To enable EAG members to have input in the planning of the event.

19. **Mystery Shoppers**

Details were given about the “mystery shopper” initiative. The group was asked to consider whether they, or members of the organisations they represented, would wish to be involved. It was noted that currently this involved the mystery shoppers telephoning departments of the council with a range of scenarios. In the longer term it was hoped to extend this to include face to face visits and use of the council’s website.

One of the mystery shoppers informed the group about his experiences. He stated that he welcomed this initiative by the council. His experiences regarding the service that he had received had been generally very good.

Officers confirmed that some staff had been trained to use BT Typetalk.

Members of the group were encouraged to consider putting themselves forward to become mystery shoppers.

Resolved: That the information on mystery shoppers be noted.

Reason: To ensure EAG members, and the organisations they represent, have an opportunity to be involved in this initiative.

20. **Options for Relocation of Services Following the Closure of Acomb Office**

The group’s views were sought regarding options for the relocation of services following the closure of Acomb Housing Office in January/February 2012.

Officers explained how they were looking at options to provide housing services out in the community. Details were given of the venues that were being considered.

Details were also given of options in respect of the delivery of benefits services, including the use of libraries or a mobile unit.

The group was invited to attend the consultation events that had been planned regarding the options.

Resolved: That the information on options for relocation of services, including the opportunities for consultation, be noted.

Reason: To provide an opportunity for the EAG to comment on the options.

21. **Community Say/Exchange**

Community representatives were invited to raise equality and inclusion matters about council policy and services which were of importance to the groups they represented. The following issues were raised:

(i) York Older Peoples Assembly

- York Older Peoples Assembly requested that they be kept informed about the Footstreets Review.
- Concerns had been expressed regarding the need for training to be in place for people who used mobility scooters. It was noted that the results of government consultation on this issue were awaited.
- Concerns had been expressed that the Choice Based Lettings scheme disadvantaged some older people and other members of the community who may not be computer literate or have access to a computer. The group requested that a report on this issue be brought to the next meeting¹.
- Concerns had been expressed that the council no longer appointed member champions. Of particular concern to YOPA, was that there was no longer a nominated Older People's Champion. YOPA had found it useful to have a known contact with whom they could raise issues. The Chair explained that no firm decision had been taken as to whether member champions would be appointed in the future. It had been envisaged that issues would be raised with the Cabinet Member whose portfolio covered the relevant area. Members agreed that it was important that organisations and individuals knew who to contact with specific issues. The Chair stated that she would make other Members aware that this issue had been raised.
- The group's attention was drawn to the distress caused to residents who had noisy neighbours. The Authority

was urged to ensure that, when procuring housing, there was adequate soundproofing in place.

(ii) LGBT Forum

- The group's attention was drawn to the under-reporting of hate crime. It was encouraging to note that a police LGBT liaison officer was in place but more needed to be done to encourage victims to report incidents.
- The group was informed that the LGBT Forum would welcome the flying of the rainbow flag on the Mansion House during LGBT Pride Week. This would demonstrate the council's commitment to LGBT issues.

(iii) YREN

YREN reported that four key events had taken place since the last EAG meeting:

- York BME Citizens and Groups Open Forum event on 28 July 2011. YREN thanked the Chair of EAG for her attendance and opening address at this meeting.
- Community Conversations Hate Crime Workshop on 15 September 2011. This was a partnership event with City of York Council.
- York International Shared Meal event on 29 October 2011, in celebration of One World Week. This was a collaborative event by York Racial Equality Network, York Baha'i community and York Interfaith.
- York BME Citizens and Group Open Forum event on 12 November 2011.

YREN reported that the following issues were highlighted at the BME Citizens and Groups Open Forum events:

- The need for additional site provision to be made available for travellers.
- The need for additional resources to increase the capacity for YREN to meet the growing demand on its core services. The increased demand is due in part to the current economic climate and the need to respond to the changing

demographics within the city – York is the second fastest growing city in the UK. Additionally, there are increasing demands on YREN's services from organisations needing to demonstrate that they are working in a more inclusive way.

- The need for a safe place for the Hindu and Sikh communities to worship.
- The need for access to free legal advice for refugees and asylum seekers.
- Additionally, YREN had identified the need for some race-equality and human rights awareness training within the city, particularly myth-busting exercises, in response to some adverse comments made in the media in response to the City of Sanctuary initiative. It was imperative that racism was challenged in everyday lives.

Action Required

1. Include as agenda item for next meeting.

CC

Councillor Crisp, Chair

[The meeting started at 6.00 pm and finished at 8.45 pm].