Meeting	Equality Advisory Group
Date	15 February 2011
Present	Councillors Ayre (Chair), Aspden, Brooks, Crisp (Vice-Chair) and Gunnell Community Representatives: David Brown – York Access Group Marije Davidson – York Independent Living Network Sue Lister – York Older People's Assembly Daryoush Mazloum – York Racial Equality Network Claire Newhouse – Higher York Simon Rodgers – LGBT Forum Diane Roworth – York Independent Living Network Maureen Ryan – Valuing People Partnership Carolyn Suckling – Access Group Fiona Walker – Valuing People Partnership Paul Wordsworth – Churches Together in York
Apologies	John Burgess – York Mental Health Forum Becca Cooper – York People First Lynn Jeffries – York Independent Living Network Rita Sanderson – York Racial Equality Network

Welcome and Introductions

The Chair welcomed Marije Davidson from York Independent Living Network to the meeting. Introductions were carried out.

16. 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. None were declared.

17. Minutes

Resolved: That the minutes of the meeting of the group held on 11 November 2010 be approved as a correct record.

A member of the group had expressed concerns about the accessibility of the papers provided for EAG meetings. The Chair sought the group's views on this issue. Members of the group stated that they found the easy read minutes to be very useful and that generally the papers were accessible. Some members stated that they found it difficult when information was presented in table form. Officers stated that if members of the group had difficulties with the information provided, they were welcome to meet with them.

18. Public Participation

It was reported that there had been no registrations to speak under the council's Public Participation Scheme.

19. Responses to Community Issues

Officers responded to the following issues raised by community groups at the last meeting:

(i) Equalities Profiling Form

Copies of the Equalities Profiling Form that had previously been agreed by the Group were tabled. Simon Rodgers reported that the LGBT Forum had discussed the matter further at their last meeting. The LGBT Forum recommended that the following wording be used on the Monitoring Form:

"Which of the following best describes how you think of yourself?

- Bisexual []
- Gay Man []
- Gay woman/lesbian []
- Heterosexual/straight []
- Other _____
- Prefer not to say []"

The Group agreed that the council should be asked to use the wording suggested by the LGBT Forum.

Referring to the section on the form about learning disabilities, Fiona Walker informed the Group that the Partnership Board had agreed wording in respect of dyslexia and learning disabilities. She would forward this

to the Equalities and Inclusion Manager for inclusion on the Equalities Monitoring Form. It was noted that, with effect from April 2011, the form would also need to ask if the person was a carer.

It was suggested that the council needed to consider how the Monitoring Form could be made more accessible so that people could complete the form in confidence without asking for help. It was requested that the font size be increased and that it be made available in different formats on request in order to meet individual needs. It was also important that the form was used across all council services to ensure consistency.

Members of the group stated that more needed to be done to make all council documentation more accessible. It was noted that the council was working towards ensuring that information was provided in size 14 sans serif font. Details were given of the work that the Valuing People Partnership Making Information Accessible cross-sector taskforce was carrying out to encourage the council and other organisations in York to commit to a charter of minimum standards for accessible information.

(ii) Accessible Toilets

Following issues raised at the last meeting regarding the fact that the alarms in the toilets were not linked to a source of help, the Head of Neighbourhood Pride Services was in attendance to discuss the Group's concerns. He informed the Group that other local authorities had been approached to find out what systems they had in place but none had alarms that were linked to a call out system. The ambulance service had stated that they were unwilling for the alarm to be linked into their system because of the possibility of false alarms. Service providers had been approached about possible solutions but a way forward had not been found. Consideration had also been given to linking the alarms to the Eco Depot but this would not resolve the problems, as there could be no guarantee that the person on duty would not have been called out to attend to other issues.

Members of the Group suggested that the alarm be linked to the Warden Call Service who would then be able to contact the emergency services.

The Group reiterated their concerns that the alarms gave a false sense of security. When the alarms were activated a light flashed but members of the public would be unaware that action needed to be taken to obtain assistance. If it was not possible to link the alarm to the Warden Call Service, signs should be placed outside the toilets to advise members of the public of the need to take action to obtain help.

(iii) Green Badge Scheme

The City Centre Manager was in attendance to discuss with the Group, the concerns that had been raised at the last meeting about the Green Badge Scheme. Details were given about the footstreets scheme and leaflets were circulated. The officer explained the application process and the criteria that was used when allocating green badges.

Clarification was sought as to whether there was a threshold regarding the number of green badges that were issued. Officers explained that there were approximately 2000 green badges currently issued and there were around thirty vehicle spaces in the area. Concerns had been expressed that green badge holders had not been able to find a place to park and a decision had therefore been taken to cease to issue green badges. This decision had subsequently been reversed.

Members of the Group stated that they found the green badges to be very useful. Concerns were, however, expressed at the misuse of the blue badge scheme. Officers explained the difficulties faced in enforcement and gave details of the powers of enforcement of the police and the council.

The Group was informed that a review of the footstreets scheme was taking place and the Group's views would be taken on board.

(iv) Consultation

Members of the Group expressed concern that when consultation took place on issues such as footstreets, the council did not consult with all the relevant organisations. They suggested that the council should compile a comprehensive list of relevant consultees and that all council consultations should be available for organisations and members of the public to complete on the council's website. The Group stated that they would welcome the opportunity to have an input when a list of consultees was being compiled.

(v) Access Issues in the Design of Council Buildings

As requested at the previous meeting, officers were in attendance to provide further information as to the arrangements that were in place to ensure that the new council building would be fully accessible.

The Group was informed that the contractors had to comply with a detailed brief that ensured that the building was fully accessible throughout and that it would comply with legislation. The building itself was very complex as it was based on the refurbishment and extension of existing buildings. Floor levels varied so there would have to be some ramps and potentially longer routes for wheelchair users in some areas. There would be three lifts in key locations, accessible toilets and a Changing Places facility.

Members of the group asked if employees with disabilities would only be able to work in certain parts of the building. Officers stated that this was not the case. The council's workforce strategy aimed to encourage more diversity in the workforce.

Officers were asked about the consultation that was taking place with access groups regarding the design of the building. They explained that the developer had been asked to consult with a wide range of groups across the spectrum. The developer also had an access consultant as part of the team. The Group stated that it was important that they were involved as soon as possible. Councillor Gunnell informed the group that the contractors

had attended a ward committee meeting and had stated that members of the public were welcome to visit their offices to discuss any issues they may have. It was noted that the contractors had been due to attend the EIA Fair that had been cancelled. It was agreed that they should be invited to attend the EIA Fair in March[1]. In the meantime information would be obtained regarding the timescales for the project to enable more urgent action to be taken if necessary[2]. The group requested that the parts of the design brief for the project that related to accessibility were circulated to them[3].

Members of the group made the following points:

- Accessibility was about more than mobility, it was also important that the building was accessible for people with visual or hearing impairments or other disabilities.
- It was important that appropriate signage was in place, including signs in Braille.
- Staff training was essential. Staff needed to be aware of how to use evacuation chairs etc in the case of an emergency.
- As well as access within the building, consideration should also be given as to how accessible the building was for people to get to.

The Group recommended that, in addition to the consultant employed by the contractors, an independent person should also be invited to advise on access issues

[as amended at meeting of 18 July 2011]

Resolved: (i) That it be recommended to the Executive that the Equalities Monitoring Form (attached as a minute annex) be adopted for use by all council departments[4].

(ii) That it be recommended to the Executive that consideration be given to linking the alarms in the accessible toilets to the Warden Call Service or, if this was not possible, to ensure that signs were placed outside of the toilets to alert members of the public as to the

action that they needed to take if the alarm was activated[5].

(iii) That it be recommended to the Executive that the council compile a comprehensive list of organisations that should be consulted when consultation exercises took place and that all council consultations be made available for organisations and members of the public to complete on the council's website[6].

(iv) That the contractors for the new council building be invited to attend the next EIA Fair.

Reasons: (i) To ensure that the council is a fair and inclusive service provider and that the information collected is consistent across all council services.

(ii) To ensure that arrangements are in place to provide assistance for users of accessible toilets in the case of an emergency.

(iii) To ensure that arrangements are in place to enable effective consultation with voluntary organisations and members of the public.

(iv) To ensure that the group's expertise is taken on board when ensuring that the new building is accessible.

Action Required

1.	Include on programme for next EIA Fair	EC
2.	Timescales for project to be circulated	IA
3.	Circulate relevant extracts of design brief	IA
4.	Refer to Executive for consideration	JC
5.	Refer to Executive for consideration	JC
6.	Refer to Executive for consideration	JC

20. Community Issues

Community representatives were invited to raise further equality and inclusion matters about council policy and services as they affected the groups they represented. The following issues were discussed:

(i) Family Carers and People with Learning Disabilities

Maureen Ryan gave details of forthcoming events including a workshop on Hate Crime that was to be held on 18 February 2011. Although the focus of the workshop would be on disability hate crime, other strands would also be brought in to the discussions.

Marije Davidson informed the group that the Royal Association for Disability Rights (RADAR) was looking at issues as to why disabled people were reluctant to report hate crime.

(ii) Representation on Equality Advisory Group

Sue Lister, referring to the discussions that had taken place at the previous meeting, stated that she had concerns at the decision that community groups would no longer be required to nominate one male representative and one female representative. She stated that it was important that a good gender balance was maintained on the group. Members of the group agreed that it would not be appropriate to implement a quota and that the arrangements that were in place should allow there to be some flexibility when appointments were made. It was agreed that if it became apparent that there was a gender imbalance on the group, the situation would be reviewed.

It was noted that the group's working arrangements were due to be reviewed after May. It was suggested that, at that time, consideration should also be given to ensuring that the group had representation from all the strands, including enabling the views of carers to be heard. It was suggested that the Carers' Centre should receive copies of the group's agendas and minutes and be offered the opportunity to bring issues to the group's attention. This arrangement should also be extended to young carers[1].

(iii) International Women's Week

Information was circulated on events that were planned to take place during the International Women's Week Centenary celebrations from 5 to 12 March 2011. The events included a theatre production entitled "Encounters".

(iv) York Older People's Assembly

Details were given of an auction of *37* promises that was to be held during a fundraising banquet arranged by York Older People's Assembly.

[as amended at meeting of 18 July 2011]

(v) City of Sanctuary

Paul Wordsworth circulated information about the movement for York to become a City of Sanctuary. He explained that the vision was for York to be nationally recognised as a place of physical safety and security, in which people were free to live without fear of hostility, persecution, hatred, oppression or exclusion. The movement was grass roots driven and it was hoped that organisations would support the move. A public meeting would be held in May to provide more information about this initiative. The group would be kept updated on developments. The group expressed their support for this initiative.

Action Required

1. Contact Carers' Centre to ascertain if they wish to be included on EAG circulation list — EC

21. EAG Poverty Awareness Raising Project

Discussion took place regarding the poverty project ~~that was being co-ordinated by the LBGT Forum.~~ *[as amended at meeting of 18 July 2011]*

Claire Newhouse informed the group that the Students' Forum was willing to be involved in the project but it was important to establish the proposed context and audience for the DVD. She outlined some of the suggestions that the students had put forward. Members of the group suggested that consideration could also be given to a project focussed on young carers,

student housing or drugs/alcohol. It was noted that it would be possible to carry the funding forward into the next financial year which would enable more time to consider how best to use the funding.

Resolved: (i) That a working party be established to move the project forward.

(ii) That the membership of the working party include Claire Newhouse, Fiona Walker and Maureen Ryan (and any other member of the group who wished to contribute).

Reason: To ensure that progress is made in utilising the funding allocated for the poverty awareness-raising project.

22. Library Square Proposals

The group was informed about proposed changes to disabled parking facilities at Library Square. Officers explained that a scheme had been included in this year's capital transport programme to improve the setting and access to the Explore Centre. The Explore Centre was a key facility and was currently used by around half a million people a year. This figure was set to rise to around a million. Unfortunately the environment around the building was very poor and there were concerns regarding safety and access.

Plans of the proposed development were circulated. Officers went through the proposals with the group. They explained that the scheme would include:

- Removal of the ramp and pavements to provide a level access.
- Removal of the disabled parking bays, which were currently substandard, and replacing them with one disabled parking bay with a time limit of one hour.
- Replacing the restricted parking provision in Blake Street and Lendall Street with disabled parking provision. This provision would comply with national standards.
- Improving the crossing points.
- Provision would remain for vehicles to enter the area outside the Explore Centre to drop off or collect passengers.

Officers informed the group that there would be a significant enhancement in overall disabled parking in the vicinity. The Group stated that they welcomed the fact that there would be more disabled parking in the area and that the area around the Explore Centre would be enhanced but they wished the following points to be taken into consideration:

- They were very concerned that there would be only one bay in the immediate vicinity of the Explore Centre. It would be difficult for people with walking disabilities to get from the disabled bays in the surrounding streets to the Explore Centre. They urged that consideration be given to including more than one bay close to the centre.
- The one-hour limit is not sufficient and is against the ethos of the Explore Centre.
- Some people prefer steps to ramps.
- Vast areas of pavement can be difficult for people who are visually impaired.
- The alternative parking provision in Blake Street and Lendall Street should be in place before the work commences at Library Square.
- Many disabilities are not visible and staff need to be more disability aware.
- There also needed to be more parking provision for the Visitor Information Centre.

Members of the Group asked if consideration could be given to changing traffic orders in Duncombe Place. Officers stated that there were no plans to do this under the current scheme.

Clarification was sought as to the arrangements that would be put in place if a member of staff at the Explore Centre required disabled parking provision. Officers stated that arrangements could be made for them to park at the rear of the building.

The officers thanked the Group for their feedback and stated that they would welcome the group's involvement in the work that would be taking place to look at how access in the city centre could be improved.

The Group requested that when presentations were made to them, they were fully accessible, including the use of large font size on plans and documentation.

Resolved: That the views of the group be considered when decisions were taken in respect of the library square proposals.

Reason: As part of the consultation process.

Action Required

1. Ensure the group's views are considered as part of consultation arrangements GT

23. Pedestrian safety in shared areas

Following concerns raised at the previous meeting, officers gave details about pedestrian safety in respect of Cycling City and the Footstreets Review.

Officers explained that there were currently two areas of shared use – Crichton Avenue and Beckfield Lane. Shared use was only implemented as a last resort. In the case of Beckfield Lane the scheme had been introduced primarily to ensure that children and inexperienced cyclists did not have to cycle on a busy route. The width of the road meant that there was insufficient space to put in place two cycle lanes and hence shared space had been used to provide a safe route for children cycling to Manor School. An equality impact assessment had been carried out.

In the case of Crichton Avenue, the scheme was currently undergoing a six-month pilot which had commenced in mid-February. After mid-July, a decision would be taken by the Executive Member as to whether or not the shared use arrangement should continue on a permanent basis. Representation could also be made at that stage should members of the group so wish. Representation on the shared area pilot can be sent to cycling.city@york.gov.uk

Details were given of the measures that were put in place to improve safety in shared areas, including the use of "hoof prints". The group requested that they receive a copy of the design standards that were in place.[1]

Members of the group expressed concern that the use of shared space was not policed effectively and that such arrangements also encouraged cyclists to use footpaths in areas that were not

designated as shared space. Officers explained the role of the Safer Neighbourhoods Team in enforcement. The group expressed concerns that shared areas made some pedestrians feel very vulnerable. It was important that pedestrians were the priority.

Officers stated that a review of footstreets was in its early stages and that this would include consideration of issues including:

- The time periods in which footstreets operated and whether they need to be standardised.
- The green badge scheme.
- Cycling in the city centre.
- Access restrictions.
- Whether footstreets should be extended.

The Group agreed that they would wish to be involved in the consultation that would take place as part of the review of footstreets. They expressed concern that, because of time constraints, it had not been possible to give this item the consideration that they would wish.

Resolved: (i) That a workshop on the review of footstreets be held as part of the EIA Fair that was to be held in March[2].

(ii) That, as part of the consultation on footstreets, a questionnaire be prepared to enable EAG representatives to consult with members of the groups they represent[3].

Reason: To ensure that the views and expertise of the EAG were taken into account as part of the review of footstreets.

Action Required

1. Circulate design standards/guidance GT
2. Include in programme for EIA Fair EC
3. Questionnaire to be produced GT

24. Equality Advisory Group meeting with City of York Council Corporate Management Team

The group had received a report that summarised the points that had been raised at the meeting between the Equality Advisory Group and the corporate management team that had taken place on 10 December 2010.

Due to time constraints this item was not discussed at the meeting.

25. Council Budget 2011-12 - Equality Impact Assessment and report from meeting on 19 January 2011

The group had received a report that summarised the discussion that had taken place at the recent meeting of the Equality Advisory Group, during which the Group examined growth and savings proposals in the draft council revenue budget for 2011-12.

Due to time constraints this item was not discussed at the meeting.

Chair
[The meeting started at 6.00 pm and finished at 9.50 pm].