

Meeting	Equality Advisory Group
Date	30 July 2012
Present	Councillor Crisp (Chair) Councillor Richardson (Vice-Chair) Councillor Aspden Councillor Jeffries Councillor Hodgson (substitute for Councillor Funnell)  Community Representatives: David Brown – York Access Group John Burgess – York Mental Health Forum Chris Edmondson – York Independent Living Network Sue Lister – York Older People’s Assembly Irene Mace – York Carers Forum Diane Roworth – York Independent Living Network Rita Sanderson – York Racial Equality Network Dan Sidley – LGBT Forum Katie Smith – York Carers Forum Carolyn Suckling – York Access Group Paul Wordsworth – Churches Together in York George Wright – Humanist
Apologies	Councillor Funnell Marije Davidson David McCormick Daryoush Mazloum Fiona Walker

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## 1. **Declarations of Interest**

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

Councillor Hodgson declared a personal non-prejudicial interest in agenda item 6 – “York City Centre Access and Mobility Audit”, as a council representative on Shopmobility York.

## 2. Minutes

Resolved: That the minutes of the meeting of 20 February 2012 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

An update was given on the following issues that had been raised at the previous meeting:

### (i) Taxi Card Scheme

Officers confirmed that the taxi care scheme in York was provided as an alternative to the national concessionary bus pass scheme. The taxi card provision was discretionary and the council was under no obligation to provide both. Officers were asked to find out more information about the grounds on which the council could refuse to provide a pass and to look at schemes that were in place in councils such as Camden, as they did not preclude taxi card holders from also being issued with a bus pass<sup>1</sup>.

### (ii) Funding for YREN

Referring to the minutes of the previous meeting, clarification was sought as to when Cabinet had considered the resource implications for YREN arising from the growing demand for their service. The Chair stated that Cabinet had considered this matter when it had reviewed the funding for all organisations. YREN had also been made aware of the opportunities available through the Voluntary Sector Support funding.

#### Action Required

1. Provide further clarification re bus pass/taxi card eligibility CC

## 3. Public Participation

It was reported that there were two registrations to speak at the meeting under the council’s Public Participation Scheme.

(i) Accessibility

Colin Hall reminded the group that he had spoken at an EAG meeting a year ago about issues in respect of accessibility. Unfortunately many of the problems that he had raised remained unresolved including:

- A-Boards continued to cause obstructions despite officers stating that the council would take a zero tolerance approach to this matter. There were a significant number of A-boards in place and they caused particular problems for the disabled and the elderly.
- Although the problems in respect of the accessibility of ward committee meetings had been addressed, the council continued to hold other events in venues that were not accessible. It was important that senior managers provided a lead on this matter and ensured that events arranged by the council were in accessible venues.

Mr Hall stated that it was important that practical steps were taken to ensure that equalities policies were implemented.

(ii) Consultation on Fair Access to Care

Carolyn Suckling raised concerns about the questionnaire that had been drawn up as part of the consultation on Fair Access to Care. She stated that the questions were loaded and did not enable consultees to easily put forward their views. She had provided additional comments when completing the on-line questionnaire but had not had a response to the points made. The Chair stated that she would look into this matter.

**4. Training for Taxi Drivers**

As requested at the previous meeting, the Taxi Licensing Officer was in attendance, to hear the group's views about the disability awareness training that was provided for taxi drivers.

The group was informed that the training currently took the form of on-line disability awareness, based on a model provided by Children AND Inclusion (CANDI). Drivers of wheelchair

accessible vehicles were also required to undertake the Driving Standards Agency practical assessment for taxi and private hire vehicles. It was noted that some companies provided more in-depth training for their drivers.

Members of the group expressed concern that it was not possible to fail the on-line disability awareness training and that there also needed to be more emphasis on the level of customer care. Members suggested that training may be more effective if it was delivered on a face to face basis rather than on-line.

It was noted that drivers could not be required to undertake disability awareness training and so this could only be offered on a voluntary basis. Officers explained that an accreditation scheme for taxi drivers was also being developed.

It was agreed that Councillor Jeffries would meet with officers to discuss in more detail issues in respect of training for taxi drivers.

It was suggested that training in raising awareness of disability issues should not be limited to taxi drivers but should be recommended to all those involved in tourism in the city. Consideration should be given to putting into place an accredited scheme. Officers stated that work was currently taking place to develop a new tourism strategy, including work force development, and this suggestion could be taken on board.

The group also requested that contractors involved in providing home to school transport should be required to ensure that their drivers had undertaken disability awareness training<sup>1</sup>.

Resolved: That the group's comments on disability awareness training for taxi drivers be forwarded to the relevant officers.

Reason: To improve the level of service provided by taxi drivers.

Action Required

1. Notify officers responsible for home to school transport arrangements

JC

## 5. Choice Based Lettings

As requested at the previous meeting, an officer was in attendance to provide an update on the Choice Based Lettings scheme.

Officers explained that the system had been in place for twelve months and was due to be reviewed. The new arrangements were more transparent than the previous scheme and, other than in exceptional circumstances, all properties were advertised. The feedback received indicated that most people preferred the Choice Based Lettings scheme.

In response to concerns expressed regarding people being disadvantaged if they did not have access to the on-line system, officers confirmed that a newsletter was available in council offices and libraries. In exceptional circumstances copies could be sent to individuals. Details were given of ways in which people could apply without doing so on-line, for example by text, at a council office or by authorising someone to bid on-line on their behalf. An automated bidding service was also in place, although this system did have some limitations.

Details were given of the number of allocations and the banding system that was in place. Clarification was sought as to whether sheltered care was included in the scheme. Officers stated that they would find out more about this and report back to the committee. At the request of the group, equalities data would also be circulated following the meeting<sup>1</sup>. *[Following the meeting it was confirmed that it was only sheltered with extra care which was outside of the Choice Based Lettings Scheme, and that sheltered care remained in the system and worked well – with people generally preferring being able to see what properties were available]*

Concerns were expressed that when tenants moved out of properties, adaptations that had been made to the buildings were removed. The group suggested that this was not a good use of resources, particularly if the incoming tenant had similar needs. The group was informed that the relevant officers would be made aware of the concerns that had been raised regarding this matter.

Officers stated that, by January 2013 the council was required to have a new allocations policy in place. The work on

compiling this policy would start in the near future. It was agreed that it would be useful for EAG to be involved in this process and hence it would be considered at a future Help us to Get it Right Day.

- Resolved: (i) That the information on Choice Based Lettings be noted.
- (ii) That the new allocations policy be considered at a future Help us to Get it Right Day<sup>2</sup>.

Action Required

1. Circulate statistics and provide clarification BW
2. Include in programme for future Help us to Get it Right Day CC

## 6. **York City Centre Access and Mobility Audit**

The Group were given details of the York City Centre Access and Mobility Audit. As part of the Reinvigorate York initiative, the council was in the process of implementing a variety of strategies to improve the look and feel of public streets and spaces as well as developing a more accessible city centre. To inform the decision-making, the Centre for Accessible Environments had successfully tendered to carry out work to look at a series of key issues in respect of the city centre including:

- Movement within the city centre
- Maximising opportunities to appreciate the special characteristics of the city
- Access to facilities such as seating, shelters and toilets

The audit would look at:

- The experience of communities of interest who travelled by coach and rail, including coach drop-off points
- Provision of seating and other rest facilities
- Congestion in the city centre
- Shopmobility provision
- Blue badge access and parking
- Evening and night time experience
- Access to heritage and cultural attractions
- Health, safety and security

The information gathering would take the form of a street audit as well as consultation with groups. It was expected that the

resulting report and recommendations would be completed within six weeks.

The group expressed their support for the carrying out of the audit but suggested that the timescale was unrealistic. They suggested that this be extended to enable more in depth consultation with focus groups. This would also enable them to seek the views of members of the groups they represented. Officers stated that they would feed back this request.

Resolved: That the arrangements for the York City Centre Access and Mobility Audit, including the opportunities to participate in the audit be noted.

Reason: To ensure that EAG members are able to contribute to the audit.

## **7. Refreshing the Council's Single Equality Scheme**

The group considered a report that set out key issues for the Council's equalities agenda going forward. The report proposed specific priorities and sought the group's comments.

The council had adopted the Equality Framework for Local Government (EFLG) as its pathway to excellence in equality and, having been assessed as being at the "Achieving" level under the framework, action was being taken with the aim of the council being assessed as "Excellent". It was intended that the next assessment would take place early in 2014.

The group made the following comments:

- Paragraph 5 of the report had omitted "age" as a Community of Identity. The phrase "or non-belief" should also be included.
- Paragraph 10 – point four should read "most affected".
- Remove the term "people with disabilities" in paragraph 15.
- Some concerns were expressed regarding the change in terminology to "Communities of Identity".
- It was noted that although the report stated that the Single Equality Scheme would be based on Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Timely (SMART) objectives, the report at this stage presented only intended outcomes. At the next stage, following consultation on the outcomes, detailed targeted actions would be drawn up.

- Difficulties may arise in achieving targets that were not in line with Government policies.
- More consideration needed to be given to issues such as the proposed changes in the frequency of EAG meetings.
- The council's vision for care homes should be such that it made moving to a care home an attractive option which people looked forward to. The care homes should be recreated as households in which everyone was consulted on decisions that were made about their home.
- The maintenance of good health and well-being and the prevention of illness should be included as a priority. There was a need to promote preventative work in the city, including mental health.

It was agreed that it would be useful for EAG members to have the opportunity to consult with the groups they represented regarding the specific priorities set out in the report.

Resolved: That the report be considered in more detail at the next "Help us to Get it Right Day<sup>1</sup>".

Reason: To enable more detailed consideration prior to it being presented to Cabinet.

Action Required

1. Include on programme for next "Help us Get it Right Day" CC

## 8. **Championing Equalities in York**

Consideration was given to a report that made proposals as to how best to champion equalities in the city, including the role that EAG should play.

Discussion took place regarding the need to ensure that the agendas and work load of EAG could be managed effectively. It was also important that information was provided in a timely manner so that members had the opportunity to consult with the groups they represented. Details were given of the role that EAG might play in advising the council's Cabinet on key strategic Community of Identity Plans. It was proposed that a work plan would be developed for the group and that there would be changes in the way in which the group carried out its role. Some concerns were raised, including the implications of



having fewer formal meetings and alternative mechanisms for consultation.

The group requested that more information be provided on Community Contracts. It was agreed that this could be an item at the next “Help us to Get it Right Day”<sup>1</sup>.

It was noted that a Customer Impact Assessment (CIA) Toolkit had been developed and was in place for council officers to use. At the request of EAG members, it was agreed that the electronic link to this document would be circulated following the meeting<sup>2</sup>.

- Resolved: (i) That, at the next “Help us to Get it Right Day”, further consideration be given to the championing of equalities in York<sup>1</sup>.
- (ii) That, prior to the “Help us to Get it Right Day”, information on the proposals be circulated to EAG representatives to enable them to consult with the groups they represent.

Reason: To enable EAG to give full consideration as to how it wants to carry out its function in the future as the council’s key advisory group on equalities.

Action Required

1. Include Community Contracts and Championing Equalities in next Help us Get it Right Day. Circulate info on Championing Equalities to reps prior to the event. CC
2. Circulate link to CIA Toolkit CC

**9. Hate Crime Strategy**

Copies of “Embracing Diversity – A Multi-agency Hate Crime Strategy for the City of York 2012-2015” had been circulated for consideration. EAG members were invited to give feedback on the strategy.

It was noted that the following objectives had been included:

1. Raise awareness of hate crimes to aid prevention
2. Make it easier for people to report hate crime
3. Improve the support available to victims of hate crime

4. Improve data capture and develop a more accurate reflection of the extent and breakdown of hate crimes and incidents

The following comments were made:

- Corrections were required to the information listing the legislation.
- A zero tolerance approach needed to be taken to bullying in schools. It was noted that Ofsted had recently published a report that looked at what schools could do to create a positive school culture and to prevent and tackle bullying.
- The importance of diversity training for care home staff.
- There was a need for the document to incorporate the Government's response to the Equality and Human Rights Commission report on disability related harassment.
- As this was a city-wide plan and not limited to the role played by the council and the police, there was a need to consider how best to include the contribution that would be made by the PCT and other services.
- Appropriate timeframes had to be in place, including allowing time for YREN to contribute to the strategy.
- The resource implications of implementing the plan, including the pressures on the name lead officers and the need to ensure that there was a sharing of responsibilities.

It was agreed that it was important that EAG representatives had the opportunity to seek the views of the groups they represented regarding the Hate Crime Strategy.

Resolved: That information on the strategy be circulated to EAG members following the meeting to enable them to seek feedback from the groups they represented.

Reason: To ensure that there is wider consultation on the strategy.

## 10. **Community Forum**

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) Swimming Facilities

In response to questions raised by George Wright, the group was informed that Yearsley Pool would continue to be part of the Council's leisure portfolio. In respect of the sports centre at the University of York that would be open to the public, the council's contract with the university under which the funding of £3m had been granted had stated that the provision must comply with equalities legislation and the Public Sector Duty.

Chris Edmondson expressed concern at recent cancellations of the hydrotherapy sessions at Energise because changes in staffing arrangements meant that no one was available who had been trained to use the hoist. Officers stated that they would look into this matter.

*[Following the meeting it was ascertained that previously the sessions had relied on casual staff to act as lifeguards for the sessions but that this had not proved to be a satisfactory arrangement. It was now intended to recruit lifeguard staff on the basis of sessions run in longer blocks which would be better for customers].*

(ii) YREN

- Details were given of events celebrating the 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of YREN.
- The group was informed that the International Shared Meal would be held on 27 October 2012.
- YREN was pleased that it had been able to provide office accommodation for the City of Sanctuary Co-ordinator.
- To mark the start of Refugee Week, YREN and the York City of Sanctuary had held an Open House event, this had included a myth-busting quiz.
- There were ongoing concerns regarding funding for YREN and the increasing demands for its services.

(iii) York Independent Living Network

Details were given of an event organised by York Independent Living Network at which representatives from the Vale of York Clinical Commissioning Group would provide information about what the new arrangements may mean to the community.

(iv) Bus Pass Renewals

Concerns were expressed that although some visually impaired people received reminders when their bus passes needed to be renewed some did not. Concerns were also expressed that proof of registration as blind or partially sighted had to be provided each time the pass was renewed. This was not the case when people reapplied for a Disabled Persons Railcard. It was agreed that these concerns would be forwarded to the officers concerned<sup>1</sup>.

(v) York Older People's Assembly

Details were given of forthcoming events that were being organised by YOPA, including the 8<sup>th</sup> Annual 50+ Festival that would take place from 29 September to 7 October.

(vi) Mental Health Forum

An update was given on the work of the York Dementia Working Group. Its report on the implementation in York of the National Dementia Strategy was due to be completed in September. A separate Joseph Rowntree Foundation funded dementia research project 'Dementia Without Walls' was looking at how to make York a more dementia-friendly city. This was expected to report in late September/early October.

Action Required

1. Forward EAG's comments to relevant officer

JC

Councillor Crisp, Chair

[The meeting started at 6.00 pm and finished at 9.20 pm].