

Meeting	Equality Advisory Group
Date	20 February 2012
Present	Councillors Crisp (Chair), Jeffries, Ayre (Substitute for Councillor Aspden), Steward (Substitute for Councillor Richardson) and Watson (substitute for Councillor Barnes) Community Representatives: David Brown – York Access Group John Burgess – York Mental Health Forum Sue Lister – York Older People’s Assembly David McCormick - Staff Equalities Reference Group Irene Mace – York Carers Forum Diane Roworth – York Independent Living Network Rita Sanderson – York Racial Equality Network Katie Smith – York Carers Forum Carolyn Suckling – Access Group Paul Wordsworth – Churches Together in York George Wright - Humanist
Apologies	Cllr Aspden – City of York Council Cllr Barnes – City of York Council Cllr Richardson – City of York Council Marije Davidson – York Independent Living Network Daryoush Mazloum – YREN Claire Newhouse – Higher York Sarah Nicholson – Youth Council

22. 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. David McCormick declared a personal interest in items on the agenda as an employee of City of York Council and Chair of the Staff Equalities Reference Group.

23. Public Participation

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

Carolyn Suckling expressed concerns regarding the taxi card scheme. She stated that the scheme in York was much less generous than in other areas and that provision in York was inadequate. She suggested that the Council may be failing in its statutory requirement to provide both a bus pass and a taxi card.

The Chair stated that she would look into the issues raised and provide a response to Mrs Suckling. She would also report back to the Group at the next meeting.

24. Minutes

Resolved: That the minutes of the meeting held on 24 November 2011 be approved and signed as a correct record.

25. Update on actions agreed at last meeting

Information was tabled that provided an update on the action that had been taken to address issues raised at the previous meeting:

(i) Council Management Team meeting with EAG

The meeting with the City of York Council management team had taken place on 19 December 2011. The group requested that the notes from the meeting be circulated to them.

(ii) Older People's Champion

Members of the group commented that information had been circulated in the community that named Councillor

Simpson-Laing as the Older People's Champion. Clarification was sought as to whether this was an official appointment by the Council. The Chair explained that the Council had not appointed an Older People's Champion but, as Councillor Simpson-Laing was the Cabinet Member for Health, Housing and Adult Social Services, she was likely to be the most appropriate contact for many of the issues that had been previously referred to the Older People's Champion.

(iii) Training for Taxi Drivers

The group reiterated their concerns that the disability awareness training for taxi drivers was too basic. It was agreed that this would be an item for a future meeting.

(iv) Resources for YREN

Clarification was sought as to whether the comments made by YREN in respect of their need for additional resources to increase capacity and meet the growing demand for their services had been taken into account by Cabinet. The Chair confirmed that Cabinet had taken this issue into account.

(v) Choice Based Lettings

Officers confirmed that they had forwarded the group's concerns to the relevant Assistant Director. An item would be included on the agenda for a future EAG meeting to consider the issues raised in more detail.

26. Presentations on Council Budget

The Group heard presentations about the council's budget, including the main growth and savings proposals.

The Cabinet Member for Leisure, Culture and Social Inclusion and the Cabinet Member for Corporate Services would ensure that the Group's comments on the proposals would be taken into account when the budget decisions were implemented. It was noted that the Council would set the budget at a meeting on 23 February 2012.

The presentations focussed on the following issues:

(i) The Current Budget

An update was given on the current budget. There were some significant financial issues including:

- Increased cost of pensions
- Increased cost of waste
- Demands on adult social care
- Demands on children's social care

These pressures were being faced within the context of a Government reduction in formula grant funding and specific grant reductions.

(ii) Budget for 2012/2013

- There would be a £5m cut in the formula grant.
- Pressures remained in respect of social care and the costs of waste.
- It was intended to set a 2-year budget framework.
- The two priorities were to protect vulnerable people and to promote growth in the economy.
- £20m savings were required over the 2-year period. There would be £11m in savings next year.
- There would be a 5-year planning framework.
- Details were given of some of the implications of the Localism Bill, including changes around benefit support. From 1 April 2013, Authorities would set their own criteria for council tax benefits. There would be a 10% reduction in funding for this. The existing level of support for pensioners and vulnerable people had to be retained.
- The Council would be able to retain any growth in business rates.
- It was proposed that there would be an increase in council tax. Although the Government had stated that it would give a 2 ½ % grant if the Council did not increase council tax, this would only be guaranteed for one year and hence Cabinet was not recommending this option.

Officers responded to questions that the Group raised regarding the proposed budget.

(iii) Consultation

Details were given of the consultation that had taken place on the budget and the feedback that had been received including:

- Two meetings with the voluntary sector
- A meeting with business leaders
- A meeting with the Youth Council
- On-line budget tool
- CMT meeting with EAG
- The work of the Fairness Commission

(iv) The Budget EIA Process

The Group was informed of the consideration that had been given to the impact of the budget proposals. The aim had been to protect the most vulnerable people and the protected characteristics and also those with limited financial means. The aim had been to protect their health, safety and general well-being.

An equality impact assessment (EIA) had been completed on the overall impact of the budget proposals. This had taken into account the information gathered at consultative and engagement events with equality groups.

The Group was informed that each proposal also had its own EIA.

27. Group Work on the Impacts

It was noted that the Cabinet agenda papers for the meeting of 14 February 2012 had included a detailed list of proposed savings and areas of growth. Several of these proposals had been identified as being likely to have a significant impact for some people. The group was asked to

- Consider the impact as assessed by council officers
- Identify any issues that council officers may have missed
- Work together to consider how to lessen any negative effects

The feedback from the Group would be taken into account when decisions were implemented.

Workshops were held around the following proposals:

- Communities and Neighbourhoods proposed savings
- Fair Access to Care Services
- Future of sheltered employment

The feedback from the workshops is attached as an annex to the minutes.

The Chair stated that there would be ongoing communication with voluntary groups to seek to address the issues that had been raised.

28. Urgent Business - Fairness Commission

Rita Sanderson stated that YREN had welcomed the opportunity to meet with the Fairness Commission and to contribute to consultation events on behalf of its members and associates, but had been concerned that some of the issues that they had put forward had not been reflected in the Fairness Commission's Interim Report. This was of particular concern as the report was to be used as an evidence base for the City of York Council when considering the budget. Whilst it was appreciated that YREN had been reassured that there would be further opportunities to contribute in the second round of consultation, it was felt that an opportunity may have been missed.

Councillor Crisp, Chair

[The meeting started at 6.00 pm and finished at 9.10 pm].