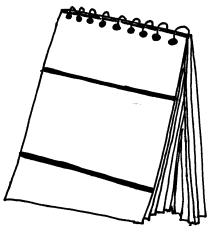


## Social Inclusion Working Group

*(Social inclusion means including everyone in society. The Social Inclusion Working Group has been set up to look at how all different communities in York can be given the same chances to take part in life and be included)*



## MINUTES



**Date of meeting: 24 September 2009**

## Members of the Council who were at the meeting



**Nigel Ayre**  
(Chair)

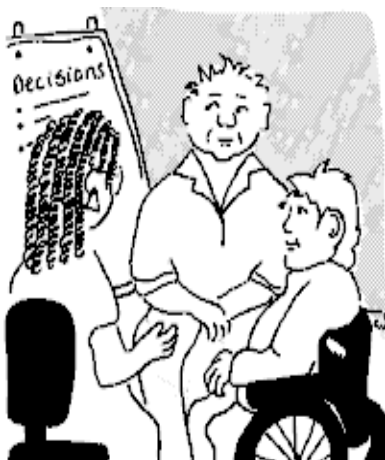
**Sonja Crisp**  
(Vice-Chair)

**Keith Aspden**

**Jenny Brooks**

**Julie Gunnell**

## People who were at the meeting representing community groups:



David Brown (York Access Group)

Becca Cooper (York People First)

Sarah Fennell (LGBT)

Sandra Gillpin (York People First)

Corry Hewitt (York Interfaith)

Sue Lister (York Older People's Assembly)

Daryoush Mazloun (York Racial Equality Network)

Andy Pollin (Valuing People Partnership)

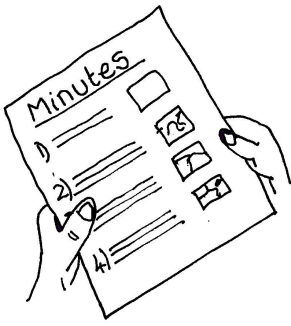
Maureen Ryan (Valuing People Partnership)

Fiona Walker (Valuing People Partnership)

Paul Wordsworth (Churches Together in York)

George Wright (Humanist)

## 1. Minutes



It was agreed that the minutes of the meeting of 2 July 2009 were a correct record of what had happened.

Details were given of the actions taken following the last meeting.

## 2. Chair's Report



There was a vacancy on SIWG to represent the age strand. It was agreed that it would be a good idea if Higher York were invited to become a co-opted member of the group.

## 3. New Council Headquarters and York Customer Centre Project



The Group heard a presentation about the new Council Headquarters and York Customer Centre Project.

The buildings that were used at the moment were out of date, not accessible and did not meet modern standards.

Two options were being considered:

- Yorkshire House on Rougier Street
- West Offices on Station Rise



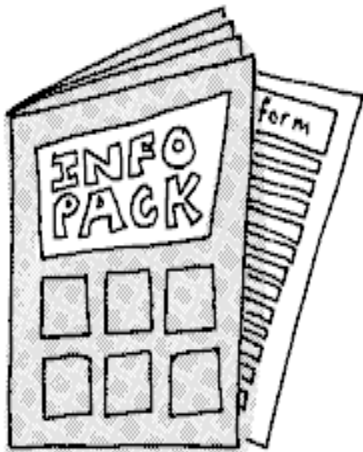
The final proposals were expected in the next few weeks. The Executive of the Council would make their decision at the end of the year.

Work had already started on the Equalities Impact Assessments (EIAs). Members of the Group formed workshops to put forward their ideas. They asked the project leaders to take the following into account:

### **Staff and Communication**



- There should be "Meet and Greet" staff in the customer centre
- The frontline contacts should make sure that customers get access to the correct department
- Interpreters should be available for deaf and hard of hearing and for people for whom English was not their first language
- There should be all types of signage (including Makaton, BSL and board widgets)
- Information provided should be accessible (easy to understand). York People First can advise on this.
- Staff should receive Disability Equality Training.
- City of York Council should become a lead employer. It should make sure that there were equal opportunities for staff as well as customers





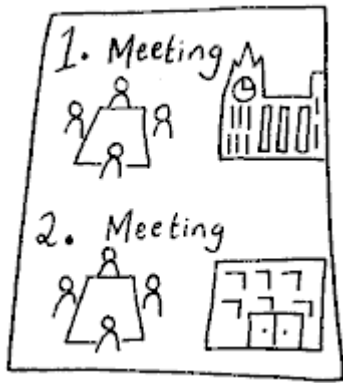
## Design and Facilities

- Make sure people don't feel threatened by the mix of people in the customer centre (for example some older people may feel intimidated if there were young offenders present). The centre should be welcoming for all ages and everyone should feel safe.

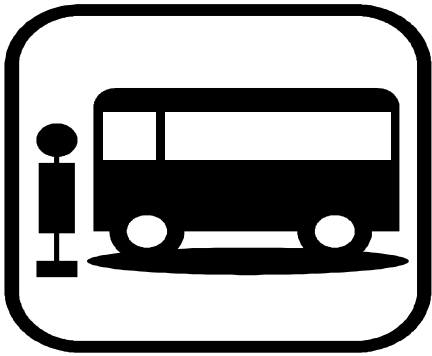


- The building must be energy efficient
- Try to avoid having screens between staff and customers
- Must be autism friendly
- Feng Shui (spiritually uplifting)
- A prayer room
- Computers available for customers to use (could be loaded for the City of York Council website). Screens should be suitable for people with epilepsy.
- Gender neutral toilets and gender specific ones too (for staff and customers). Appropriate changing facilities.
- Provision should be made for young children going into the building with their parents/carers and also childcare facilities for staff (for example a crèche, drop-in and play area)





- There should be provision for guide dogs and hearing dogs
- No scary glass lifts
- Should be available out of office hours to make use of the space but must be secure. Should be available for meetings for example SIWG meetings



### Location

- Will a central location attract more traffic into the city centre? - Need to get public transport right to prevent this from happening.
- The building should be on a bus route for every area of York
- For some people having access to services locally is important



### Consultation

- When more detailed information is available about the building it will be easier to comment. More consultation should take place then.
- Consult the voluntary sector and other services with particular areas of expertise
- If there are problems when the building opens - the Council needs to respond and make changes. Contingencies should be in place.

## 4. Accessible Information Workshop

The Valuing People Partnership Board had set up a task group to work with the council and other groups to improve the information that they sent out.



They gave a presentation about how important it is to make information easy to understand. A copy of the presentation is included at the end of these minutes.

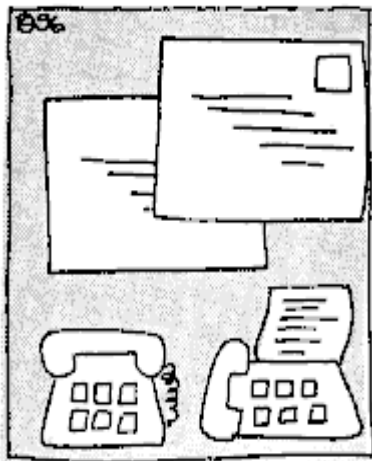
The Group looked at examples of a letter and a leaflet that the Council had sent out. They said that the following things should be done to improve information:



- Think about how you give out information
- Think about what has to be included and what doesn't
- Make sure information is plain-simple-brief and to the point
- Avoid jargon - explain things



- Remember that English may not be the reader's first language
- Use simple language/words
- Use pictures but make sure they relate to the text
- If asking customers to provide documents - explain what they are
- The other formats/language panel on council information needs to be changed



- Give telephone numbers and details of how and when you can contact people
- Avoid using tables
- If writing continues onto the next page - say so
- If you use light print on dark print then it should be in bold
- Should be size 16 font at least
- Use bold type
- Produce DVDs as an option
- Try to avoid folding leaflets
- People don't want to be singled out - the same information should be accessible to everyone
- There needs to be consistency across all of the council and with partners and voluntary groups
- Staff should receive training about how to improve information. They should understand more about people's needs.
- Work with the task group and seek their advice



# By making Council information accessible



Clear Language



Easy Read



Website



Large Print



Braille



Audio



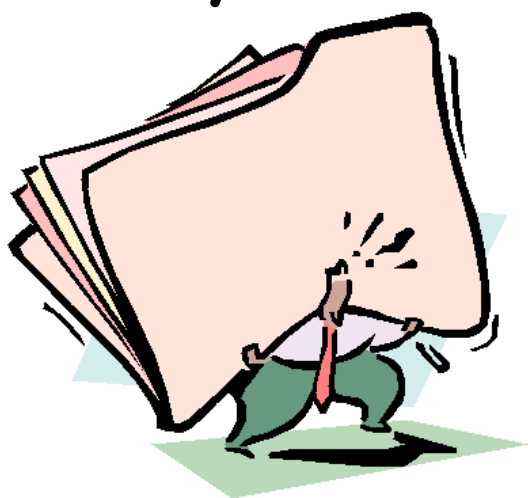
## You can :

- deliver better services by providing clearer and accessible information.
- meet your legal duties
- make it easier for customers and the public to be involved.
- Make better use of resources.

# Why is providing accessible information important?



Access to information and good communication is a basic human right. It is the means by which we are valued by ourselves and society.



The Council produces a lot of information, for example, letters, leaflets and documents.

Accessible information can empower staff, customers and the general public.

**It means they can :**



- Participate



- Claim their rights as users of your services
- Take responsibility for the quality of their own lives.

Public bodies, like the National Health Service and Local Authorities, now have responsibilities to recognise and provide services to diverse communities.



The Law in relation to disability, race, and gender aim to promote equality and eliminate discrimination. Action needs to be taken to revise policies and procedures and the way services are provided.



There are lots of things that stop people from being able to understand information. These include using :

- long words
- abbreviations
- jargon

- more words than needed
- small writing (using a little font size)
- curly writing (using a serif font like Times New Roman or Script)
- glossy paper
- colours that make reading more difficult
- no pictures
- pictures without knowing what they mean
- English only

These barriers affect lots of people, including people with low level literacy skills, people with visual impairments, people who are colour blind, people with learning difficulties, and people from black and ethnic minority communities, and people who don't use English as their first language.



## How many people does this affect?

- There are about 12 million people in employment with literacy skills at level one or below. This is the same as the levels of 11 year olds or lower. One study puts the average reading age for people in the UK at nine years old.
- 15 per cent of the UK population describe themselves as disabled people.
- Four per cent of the population is severely affected by dyslexia. A further ten per cent show some signs of dyslexia.
- Eight per cent of men and one per cent of women are affected by colour blindness
- Nearly eight per cent of the UK population are from ethnic minorities. York has one of the fastest growing Black and Minority Ethnic populations in the UK.



## The Benefits

By providing accessible information, you can remove some of the barriers people experience..

Customers and the public can:

- Find and understand the information they need
- be involved in decisions about their own care
- Get involved in service design and delivery

### **Council staff can:**

- benefit from clear, accessible information
- more easily understand formal documents, and respond quickly to customers.
- Have more confidence when working with customers

### **City of York Council Managers:**



- can be confident that they are meeting the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act

There is a huge cost in producing information that a large proportion of the population cannot read.

The Plain English Campaign state that they have saved the British Government an estimated £500 million in the last 20 years. Poor customer services is expensive - Royal Mail saved £500,000 in nine months by changing one of their most used forms into plain English.



York Valuing People Partnership Board for People with Learning Disabilities 'Accessible Information Task Group'