

Social Inclusion Working Group

Questions and Answers

1. What is SIWG's Purpose?

The Terms of Reference in the Council's constitution outlines the purpose and role of the group:

It is the role of this group to advise the Executive on all matters relating to equalities issues . It seeks to promote awareness of equalities issues and to ensure improved access and facilities for all service users . It is concerned both with improving the Council's own services and facilities and, by adopting good practice, to encourage other service providers to improve their services.

In that context the group will:

- i. advise the Executive on major projects and initiatives on equalities issues and on equalities issues generally in the City of York Council;
- ii. extend and build contact with groups and individuals in the area in order to facilitate input into equalities and provide opportunities for all citizens in the area;
- iii. provide a link with Ward Committees so that equalities issues which are raised can be taken further.

2. Who are members of SIWG?

The chair of the group is the Executive Member for Social Inclusion and Youth, Ceredig Jamieson-Ball. There are 6 other elected members on the group:

- Councillor Ian Cuthbertson (Vice-Chair)
- Councillor Bill Fairclough
- Councillor Susan Galloway
- Councillor Ken King
- Councillor Ruth Potter
- Councillor David Scott

The Group can decide to co-opt community representatives to ensure that each of the equality strands (disability, gender, ethnicity, age, religion and sexual orientation) are involved.

3. How will these community representatives be nominated?

The Group will invite the appropriate community forums to nominate a representative to attend. This would mean inviting the Older People's Assembly, the BME Citizens Open Forum, and the LGBT Forum to send a representative. There will be disabled

people's representative nominated by an independent disabled people's forum as soon as it is up and running. The Group would monitor the gender profile of representatives to ensure there is a fair gender balance.

Until such time as these forums have nominated a representative the SIWG will invite the relevant cooptees on the Ad-Hoc Scrutiny Panel to attend instead.

4. Will the SIWG have a budget?

Yes. There is £7,240 available this year to the group to help ensure that:

- The meetings are accessible and inclusive (eg provision of accessible information, to meet travel costs of community representatives, to pay for interpretation etc).
- The community representatives can effectively represent the views of the community forum.
- The community representatives can feedback to the community forums on the work of the SIWG.
- The community forums can communicate effectively with the wider communities of interest that they represent.

It will be for the SIWG to assess how best these resources can be spent to meet these aims.

5. What is the difference between the SIWG and the Inclusive York Forum?

SIWG will be focused on improving the Council's policy and practice on issues of equality and social inclusion. The Inclusive York Forum addresses the same issues but focuses on the city as whole and in particular the work of the Local Strategic Partnership. Given the similar issues of interest, albeit a different focus of activity, it would be sensible for both groups to have a relationship. Hence officers will ensure that both groups are kept informed of the work of the other group. The purpose should be to ensure that rather than overlapping, the two groups complement and strengthen the work of each other. The support the SIWG gives to the community forum should also be of assistance to the IYF, helping it to involve the community in its work and to help it meet its objectives for the community strategy.

6. What type of issues will the SIWG discuss?

The purpose of the SIWG would be to discuss issues of equality at a strategic level in a number of areas:

- **Employment:** how the council could make its workforce better reflect the diversity of the local population and to evaluate progress.

- **Service delivery:** council strategies and plans for making services more inclusive and accessible and to evaluate progress.
- **Community concerns:** issues about services raised by forums that have significant implications for the wider community.
- **Community involvement:** how the council can effectively involve people from disadvantaged communities in consultation to shape and evaluate services.

7. Can you give some specific examples of what we could discuss?

Topical examples of what would be discussed include:

- **Employment Equality Improvement Plans**– each year HR produce a plan that reports on the equality profile of the workforce and actions it intends to take to improve this. This plan could come to the SIWG so forums know how well CYC is doing and comment upon the actions proposed.
- **Local Development Framework** – this will include a vision as to what the city should look like and the principles that should underpin future planning decisions. The SIWG could usefully discuss what these principles should be. They could also comment on how communities should be involved in planning and development decisions in the future.
- **Equality strategy and schemes** – the Council has an equality strategy that incorporates its Race, Disability and Gender Equality Schemes. The Group could advise the council on what the priorities should be and to help the council to assess its effectiveness.
- **Traveller strategy** – the CRE has recommended that all council’s develop a strategy to improve services for Gypsies and Travellers. The group could advise on the principles that should underpin this and to check that it is implemented.
- **Changing BME population** – how is this BME population in York changing and how should the Council respond to those changes?
- **Equality Consultation strategy** – The group could advise the council on its draft equality consultation strategy.
- **Inclusive living for disabled people** – the group may wish to discuss the implications of the white paper on the future of social and health care services and how changes in York could change to improve the life chances of disabled people.

8. So what would the group not discuss?

- The group is not a substitute for consultation with the community groups who are represented on the SIWG. If services need to consult those communities then they should do so directly. However the services may want to seek the SIWG’s advice on how best to undertake major consultation activity.
- Complaints or concerns about individual services (unless there is concern about wider implications or there have been lots of similar complaints). These can be

dealt with using the council's complaints procedure, by referring the individual to the relevant section, or by using other established channels.

- Plans for new developments (building, road crossing etc) will be sent to disability organisations for comment.

9. How will community groups know what is going to be discussed?

The agenda would be based on a forward plan agreed at each meeting based upon suggestions made by the various community forums, elected members and council officers. The forward plan would be circulated to all forums so they had the chance to discuss the issues due to be raised in advance of the SIWG so representatives could contribute to SIWG discussions informed in advance of the views of the forum.

Community forums will be expected to notify their members of the work of the SIWG and to encourage them to share their views and experiences to help future discussions.

10. What will the meetings be like?

Meetings will try to be as informal as possible and to encourage the use innovative / creative ways to consider topics and reach decisions.