

Meeting	Social Inclusion Working Group
Date	30 June 2010
Present	Councillors Ayre (Chair), Aspden, Brooks, Crisp (Vice-Chair) (Item 6 onwards) and Gunnell (Item 6 onwards) Non-voting Co-opted Members: Peter Blackburn – LGBT Forum David Brown – York Access Group John Burgess – Mental Health Forum Sarah Fennell – LGBT Forum Daryoush Mazloum – York Racial Equality Network Rita Sanderson – York Racial Equality Network Expert Witnesses: Carolyn Suckling – York Access Group Tony Martin – York Older People’s Assembly Maureen Ryan – Valuing People Partnership George Wright – Humanist
Apologies	Nicola Bedford – Higher York Claire Newhouse – Higher York Sue Lister – York Older People’s Assembly Paul Wordsworth – Churches Together in York

1. **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.

2. Minutes

Resolved: That the minutes of the meeting of the Group held on 17 February 2010 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

3. Public Participation

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

4. Group Working Arrangements 2010-11

A report was received that summarised the decisions that the group had made during its development day on 29 March 2010 about the way it would operate from April 2010 to May 2011.

Further consideration was given to the recommendation arising from the Development Day that the name of the group should be changed to "Council Equality Advisory Group" (EAG) to avoid any confusion with the Inclusive York Forum. Whilst some members of the group felt that the new name gave greater clarity as to the purpose of the group, views were also expressed that the existing name was more appropriate. Councillor Aspden requested that his unease at a perceived narrowing of the group's focus be recorded.

Following discussions that had taken place at the Development Day, the group looked at the draft of a form that the council could use to collect information about people from the equality strands. Officers went through the questionnaire with the Group and invited their input.

Resolved: (i) That the contents of the report be noted.

(ii) That the Executive be requested to approve a change of name for the group and for it to be known as the "Equality Advisory Group"¹.

(iii) That the questionnaire (attached as a minute annex) be recommended for use by the council.

Reason: To note and record group working arrangements for 2010-11.

Action Required

1. Refer to Executive for consideration

JC

5. Budget 2010-11: Allocation of £1000 Poverty and Exclusion Awareness Raising Fund

The group received a report that sought views as to how to use £1000 available in 2010-11 for its community organisations to work collaboratively to promote awareness about poverty and social exclusion.

The community organisations that were members of the group were invited to work together to put forward one common proposal.

The group discussed the pressures that were placed on people who were living in poverty and considered how best the funding could be used to raise awareness of the issue and to identify possible ways forward.

The following projects were put forward for consideration:

- A video documentary to promote awareness about poverty and social exclusion. This would provide an opportunity for the different strands to work together and for students to be involved in the filmmaking.
- Raising awareness of homelessness by persuading a local leader of the community to spend a night on the streets.
- A conversation café event to enable groups to debate issues in respect of poverty and look at ways of tackling the problem.

The group was also asked to appoint one of the community organisations to project manage the fund.

Officers gave details of a workshop that they would like to hold in order to seek the group's views on the "One City Strategy".

Details of the workshop would be circulated once the arrangements were finalised.

- Resolved:
- (i) That the £1000 funding be used to produce a documentary to raise awareness of poverty and social exclusion and to hold a conversation café event.
 - (ii) That any member of the group wishing to be involved in the documentary project would notify Sarah Fennell of their interest.
 - (iii) That a workshop be held on the “One City Strategy”.
 - (iv) That, subject to the necessary consents, the LGBT Forum be appointed as project managers for the fund.

Sarah Fennell was thanked for the work that she was carrying out.

6. Meeting the Needs and Aspirations of the Ageing Population in York

The group received a report that summarised how the council was meeting the needs and aspirations of older people living in the city and its proposals as to what needed to be done in the future.

A video was shown that highlighted issues in respect of dignity for older people.

Officers gave details of how the council was looking to develop its customer insight and to improve co-ordination within the council. It was also keen to promote positive messages and images about age.

The group was informed of changes to the way in which the sharing of resources would become more important in the future and of the way in which services were commissioned.

The group’s views were sought on the following issues:

- Is what the council does now enough?
- Is what the council plans to do in the future enough?

- What else should the council be doing?

The following issues were discussed:

- Putting out refuse can be very difficult for some elderly people. Although the council has good assisted collection arrangements in place, more should be done to make people aware of this, including ensuring that front line staff were aware of the services available.
- Most elderly people are proud and may be reluctant to seek help. They like to be independent. This has to be taken into account when services are offered.
- People who have hearing difficulties or memory problems would prefer to speak to a person rather than an automated telephone system.
- Some elderly people fear that if they complain about a service it will make things even worse.
- Improvements could be made in the communication between council departments. Officers should be able to direct customers to the person who can best deal with their problems. An example of poor practice had occurred when a member of the group had to report a problem with rats and was passed to several different offices.
- There should be more staff training on meeting the needs of the ageing population.
- There should be improvements made to the way in which the council works with tenants when housing improvements are required. These can be summarised as follows:
 - Forward planning could be improved so that work is carried out in stages rather than tenants having a prolonged period of disruption. It is also important that officers make tenants aware of what the work will entail and of any preparations they need to make.
 - The present level of compensation is not sufficient to cover the costs involved in using professional decorators to carry out work. Many elderly or disabled people may not be able to carry out the work themselves. The council should also consider issuing an approved list of contractors who could be used.
 - The council should be better aware of the impact that work of this nature can have on tenants, particularly those who are elderly or vulnerable and for whom living in a house whilst the work is ongoing

can be very difficult. Alternative arrangements should be offered if required.

- Older people who live on their own may suffer from isolation or depression – this should be taken into account. More needs to be done to break down social isolation. Initiatives such as “Adopt a Granny” and “Do you know your neighbours?” had taken place in the past and had proved to be a useful way of engaging with older people. Consideration should be given to arranging similar campaigns.
- Clarification was sought as to whether the council had a database in place that identified elderly people to ensure that help and support could be better targeted. Officers explained that a record was kept of vulnerable people in the city in order that they could be easily contacted in the event of an emergency such as flooding. The list was predominantly comprised of people known through social care.
- There is a need to raise awareness of the services and support that can be offered by the council and voluntary groups. It was also important that the services are targeted appropriately. It was noted that an Information Fair was due to be held at the Guildhall on 14 September 2010, at which officers would promote the services that were available. The group also suggested that, if written information was to be used to notify people of services available, the ward newsletters were more widely read than the council wide publication. Details were given of a project that the CVS was carrying out to identify voluntary and community groups in the city. This would enable people to be directed to a group that could best meet their needs.

Officers stated that they would welcome any further comments via email to: chris.weeks@york.gov.uk

- Resolved: (i) That the contents of the report be noted.
- (ii) That the group’s comments regarding ways in which the council could improve its provision for older people be taken into account when services are developed¹.

Reason: To ensure that the group has input in this area.

Action Required

1. Group's comments to be forwarded to GT - Assistant Director JC

7. Fairness and Inclusion Strategy and Single Equality Scheme

The group received a presentation on progress with the council Fairness and Inclusion Strategy and Single Equality Scheme in 2009-10.

A report on progress was due to be considered by the Executive Member for Leisure, Culture and Social Inclusion at a Decision Session on 13 July 2010 at 4.15 pm. The meeting was open to the public and members of the group were welcome to attend.

It was noted that good progress had been made during the year but that work was still ongoing on several issues, including procurement practices and working with partners on common approaches to equality.

Resolved: That the contents of the presentation be noted.

Reason: To inform the group about progress in 2009/10.

8. Progress with Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs) 2009-10

The group received a report that summarised progress with Equality Impact Assessments in 2009-10. Consideration was given to the progress that was being made.

Members of the group commented that the way in which the group was now working was leading to changes in practice. It was also pleasing to note that it had been recognised by organisations such as Inclusive York that the group had helped to improve accessible information.

Referring to the EIA in respect of public toilets, concerns were expressed that the alarms on disabled user toilets were not linked to anywhere.

Resolved: (i) That the contents of the report be noted.

- (ii) That, at the next meeting, an update be received regarding the alarms on the disabled user toilets¹.

Reason: To inform the Group about progress in 2009/10.

Action Required

1. Report back to next meeting

EC

9. Single Equality Act 2010

An easy-read report on the Single Equality Act was presented to the group. It was noted that the Act would have far reaching implications. The group would give further consideration to the Act as further information became available.

At the Development Day it had been agreed that each of the groups would receive a sum of £250 in lieu of making members' time available when required, to attend discussions about EIAs. YREN asked for the group's support in using this funding to look into the possibility of facilitating an equalities meeting that would explore the merit in organising an equalities group/forum/network meeting. This would include all of the equalities strands and would be in line with the Equality Act 2010. The group supported this proposal. YREN confirmed that they would also make time available to meet with officers to discuss EIAs as required.

Resolved: That the update be noted.

Reason: To inform the group about the implications of the Single Equality Act 2010.

10. Any other business which the Chair considers urgent under the Local Government Act 1972

Consultation on Cuts to Services

Members of the group, recognising the current economic situation, expressed concern at the impact that possible cuts to council services could have on members on the community.

A request was made that, because of their insight into the particular problems faced by vulnerable members of the community, the group be consulted on any proposed cuts to services.

It was noted that the outcome of the spending review would not be known until October and hence there would be a very short timescale in which to formulate a response.

Resolved: That the Chair, Vice-Chair and the Equality and Inclusion Manager discuss how best to address the group's request to be consulted on any proposed cuts to services.

Reason: To ascertain whether it would be possible to put a mechanism in place to enable the group to be consulted on any proposed cuts to services.

Councillor N Ayre, Chair

[The meeting started at 6.00 pm and finished at 9.05 pm].