

Meeting	Equality Advisory Group
Date	18 July 2011
Present	Councillors Crisp (Chair), Richardson (Vice-Chair), Aspden, Barnes and Jeffries Community Representatives: David Brown – York Access Group John Burgess – York Mental Health Forum Marije Davidson – York Independent Living Network Christopher Edmondson – York Independent Living Network Sue Lister – York Older People’s Assembly Daryoush Mazloum – York Racial Equality Network Sarah Nicholson – Youth Council Simon Rodgers – LGBT Forum Carolyn Suckling – Access Group Fiona Walker – Valuing People Partnership Paul Wordsworth – Churches Together in York George Wright - Humanist
Apologies	Claire Newhouse – Higher York

1. **Welcome and Introductions**

The Chair welcomed new members to the Group and introductions were carried out. It was noted that Marije Davidson would, subject to approval by Cabinet, be the representative of the Independent Living Network on the Equality Advisory Group in place of Lynn Jeffries who had been appointed as a City of York Council representative.

2. **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. Councillors Barnes, Jeffries and Richardson declared personal interests as having disabilities. Councillor Jeffries also declared a personal interest as Co-Chair of York Independent Living Network.

3. Minutes

Resolved: That the minutes of the meeting held on 15 February 2011 be approved as a correct record subject to the following amendments:

- minute 19 (v) being amended to include a sentence stating “The Group recommended that, in addition to the consultant employed by the contractor, an independent person should also be invited to advise on access issues.”
- minute 20 (v) being amended to read “**37** promises”
- minute 21 remove the wording “that was being co-ordinated by the LGBT Forum”.

4. Public Participation

There were two registrations to speak under the council’s Public Participation Scheme.

Colin Hall informed the group of his concerns regarding the co-ordination of equalities policies across the city. He made particular reference to the following issues and drew attention to the council’s duty to promote disability equality:

- Not all ward committee meetings were held in accessible venues and hence some people were excluded from attending. Although this disenfranchisement had been addressed in some wards, there needed to be a city-wide approach to this issue.
- The council should do more to address the problems caused by A-boards in the city.
- The council should ensure that the groups to which it provided support or financial assistance were inclusive. An example was given of an event organised by York Open Studios, which was held in an inaccessible venue and the information that had been provided had not addressed accessibility issues.

Officers stated that the issues that had been raised would be taken on board.

Carolyn Suckling raised concerns regarding the taxi card system. She stated that the technology had not been in place on the implementation date and that this had resulted in the service not being available. The fact that only two companies had been included in the scheme was also causing difficulties, particularly as one of these was heavily committed to providing home to school transport. Other members of the group endorsed these concerns and requested that the arrangements be extended to include all taxi firms.

The Chair informed the group that she understood that the taxi companies involved in the scheme were those which had the most wheelchair accessible vehicles. She detailed arrangements that were being put in place to increase the number of vehicles that would be available.

The Group requested that an update on the implementation of the taxi card scheme be provided at the next meeting.¹

Action Required

1. Update to be provided at next meeting

EC

5. Update On Actions Agreed At The Last Meeting

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

(i) Accessible Toilets

The Group was informed that, although the Executive had agreed to the installation of signs, it had subsequently been ascertained that a risk assessment would identify that this was not an appropriate measure and that the alarms should be removed. The Chair stated that a report on toilet facilities within the city was currently being prepared and hence the colour code alert for this action had been amended to amber.

Since the last meeting, officers had contacted representatives from the disability strand regarding this issue. Some members of the group expressed concern

that only representatives from the disability strand had been consulted and requested that future consultations be extended to all members of the group, who would then have the option of responding should they so wish. At the request of the group, the Chair stated that she would find out the mechanism by which the group would be consulted as part of the report on toilet facilities in the city.¹

(ii) Access Issues in New Council Building

Information was tabled on the Accommodation Project. The contractors had attended the EIA Fair in March 2011 and the colour code for this item was now at green.

(iii) Poverty Awareness Raising Project

The status of this action was coded as red as difficulties had arisen in establishing a working party. The funding had been safeguarded for a year and it was proposed that an update on progress be given at the next meeting.²

(iv) Library Square Proposals

The Chair updated the group on discussions that she had had with officers regarding the need to ensure that disabled parking spaces were in place in Blake Street and Lendall Street. An update would be provided at the next meeting if this issue had not been addressed in the meantime³.

(v) Carers Forum

Officers confirmed that discussions were ongoing with the Carers Forum to find out how best they could engage with the EAG. Representatives had been invited to attend the Development Day. It was agreed that an update would be provided at the next meeting.⁴

(vi) Pedestrian Safety in Shared Areas/Footstreets Review

As the design standards were not yet in place, this action remained coded as red. The representative of

York Older People's Assembly stated that footstreets was an issue of particular concern to the Assembly and hence they would wish to be involved in the Footstreets Review.⁵

Action Required

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| 1. Update to be provided at next meeting | EC |
| 2. Update to be provided at next meeting | EC |
| 3. Update to be provided at next meeting | EC |
| 4. Update to be provided at next meeting | EC |
| 5. Update to be provided at next meeting | EC |

6. Community Issues

Community representatives were invited to raise further equality and inclusion matters about council policy and services as they affected the groups they represented. The following issues were discussed:

(i) Public Right of Way

A member of the group drew attention to a public right way that had been blocked between Outgang Lane and Bad Bargain Lane. Concerns were also expressed regarding a rumour that a travellers site in that area was to be sold. The Chair stated that she had looked into this matter and that there were no plans to sell the site. She would look into the concerns that had been raised regarding the inaccessible right of way.¹

(ii) Car Parking

Concerns were expressed regarding cars parking on paved areas, which caused difficulties for pedestrians. The Chair stated that if details were forwarded to her she would carry out a piece of casework on this issue.

(iii) Union Terrace Car Park

Members of the group expressed concern at the possible sale of the Union Terrace Car Park. As well as the loss of thirteen disabled parking spaces, concerns were expressed that visitors needed to be able to return to coaches during the day and that a drop-off facility was not a suitable alternative. It was noted that an Extraordinary

Meeting of Council had been called to discuss this issue and that this would be followed by a meeting of the Cabinet, which would make the decision.

(iv) York Older People's Assembly

An update was given on issues affecting older people, including a document on "Building an Age Friendly York" and a women's focus group that had been convened by Age UK.

(v) Young Carers

Details were given of a card scheme that was being piloted for young carers in some secondary schools and colleges in York.

(vi) Dementia Working Group

Details were given of the work that was taking place to consider how the national dementia strategy should be implemented in York. The Joseph Rowntree Foundation had provided funding towards the project and the report should be available in the near future.

(vii) Open House

Members of the group were invited to attend a YREN Open House event that was due to take place on 3 August 2011.

(viii) North Yorkshire Police

Concerns were expressed that it appeared that the Diversity Unit at North Yorkshire Police was to be disbanded. Clarification was sought as to how the police were intending to meet their duties under the Equalities Act. It was agreed that a response would be sought from the police regarding this issue.²

Action Required

1. Update to be provided at next meeting
2. Update to be provided at next meeting

EC
EC

7. Equality Advisory Group Development Day 2011

Members of the group considered a report regarding the planning of the group's Development Day 2011, which would take place on 11 October 2011.

Resolved: That the report be noted.

Reason: To ensure that EAG works effectively, meeting its stated objectives.

8. Equality Framework For Local Government Diversity Peer Challenge

Consideration was given to a report detailing the Council's Equality Framework for Local Government Diversity Peer Challenge. The challenge was due to take place on 26 and 27 July 2011.

Details of the arrangements that had been made for representatives of stakeholder groups to meet with the assessors, were confirmed. It was hoped that the council would meet the criteria to be designated as an "achieving" authority. There was still some work to be done before it could be designated as "excellent" but this was the aim in the longer term.

It was noted that the assessors' report would be a public document. At the request of members of the group, officers agreed to circulate the self-assessment submission that had been prepared and the Improvement Plan¹. The Chair stated that she would welcome feedback on these documents.

Resolved: That the report be noted.

Reason: To ensure that the Equality Advisory Group knows about the peer challenge.

Action Required

1. Circulate information to members of the group

EC

9. Community Stadium

A presentation was given about the current status in respect of the community stadium. Details were given as to ways in which

parts of the stadium could be used for community provision. The Group was informed of ways in which community stadiums in other parts of the country had utilised their facilities. Examples of possible uses included: provision for hospital outpatients, Independent Living demonstrations and library provision. Officers stressed that these were only examples and that no decisions had been made at this stage.

The group was invited to put forward their views as to what they would like to see in relation to the stadium. The following points were made:

- The design of the stadium must be accessible. This should include giving full consideration as to where seating for disabled people would be in respect to other facilities in the stadium.
- Safety was a key consideration – for example there should be good lighting.
- It was important that there was good public transport in place. Concerns were expressed that the community stadium was not being sited in a more central location. If facilities such as an Independent Living Assessment Centre were to be based at the stadium it was important that there was good public transport available.
- It was important that the activities that were provided were inclusive and that there were also opportunities for disability sports.
- Arrangements must be in place to tackle any issues of homophobia in sport. The Rugby Association's guidance on this issue was particularly useful.
- Consideration should be given to employment opportunities for people with disabilities.
- Clarification was sought as to whether PAs would have free admission.
- It would be useful for the Youth Council to be consulted on the proposals.
- Consideration should be given to providing a skate park.
- Consideration should be given to providing opportunities for volunteering.

Officers gave details of the timescale for the project.

Members of the group were encouraged to notify officers of any further suggestions in respect of the community stadium and to seek the views of the organisations they represented. Further consideration would be given to the proposals at the EAG Day.

Resolved: That the group's comments be taken into consideration by the project team.

Reason: To assist the project team in ensuring that the community stadium is accessible to all.

10. Round Table Discussions For City-Wide Equality Groups

Consideration was given to a report about the planning and delivery of a series of discussions about important quality of life issues as they affected equality community groups in York's neighbourhoods and ward committee areas. It was proposed that these discussions be called "round tables".

Officers explained that it was proposed that the first round table discussion would focus on hate crime. Members of the group commented on the under-reporting of hate crime and the need to encourage victims to report any such incident.

Members of the group suggested that the round table discussions should be open to individuals as well as organisations. Officers requested that if members of the group had suggestions for future topics for round table discussions, these be forwarded to officers.

Members of the group stated that if voluntary organisations were to be able to fully contribute and take ownership of the round table discussions, it was important that the appropriate support was made available.

Resolved: That the group supported the proposal to hold round table discussions.

Reason: To ensure that EAG influences discussions about issues that affect the quality of life of people living in York neighbourhoods and ward committee areas, who may face disadvantage because of who they are.

11. Urgent Business - Fairness Commission

Details were given of the York Fairness Commission, which was an independent advisory body that had been set up to look at

issues affecting equality and fairness in the city. Officers detailed the membership of the commission and the background of the members. The Group was informed of the different approach that would be taken to budget consultation. A report from the Fairness Commission would be used to inform service priorities.

Clarification was sought as to how groups would interact with the Commission. Details were given of the opportunities that would be made available to groups and individuals, including public consultation meetings in September/October, via the website, email or Freepost. There would also be a special event for the Equality Advisory Group. A suggestion was put forward that it would be helpful for a list of questions to be provided to enable EAG to consult with the groups which they represented.

Referring to the fact that public meetings were to be held at various locations in the area, the Group stated that the venues must be fully accessible. Meetings also needed to be accessible in terms of the documentation provided and any presentations that were given.

It was noted that some people found it difficult to attend meetings during the day because of their work commitments. It was also problematic for pupils to attend events during the school day. Requests were made for the Commission to attend a Youth Council meeting and an event coinciding with the 50+ Festival.

Clarification was sought as to whether formal research would be carried out in addition to the public consultation events. Officers confirmed this to be the case and stated that the Joseph Rowntree Foundation would be involved. There would be a focus on well-being, access to services and work.

Resolved: That the Fairness Commission be made aware of the Group's comments.

Reason: To assist them in carrying out their work.

Councillor Crisp, Chair
[The meeting started at 6.00 pm and finished at 9.25 pm].