

Meeting of the Social Inclusion Working Group

14 January 2009

Report of the Director of People and Improvement

Disability community representation on SIWG

Summary

1. This report asks members to consider the representation of the disability strand on the Group, following the resignation of the single co-opted non-voting individual who had been representing disability issues whilst a Disabled People's Forum was being formed.
2. Members are requested to recommend to Council the appointment of people from groups that are currently providing "expert witnesses"¹ on disability matters to SIWG, to serve as co-opted non-voting disability community representatives until such time as a single organisation led by and representing disabled people is formed in York.

Background

3. At the first meeting in July 2006 SIWG members decided that:

"..the Equalities Officer [should] write to the following community groups inviting them to nominate representatives to attend future meetings of the Group, with a view to these representatives being appointed by Council as the co-opted members of the Group:

 - The Disabled People's Forum (**once it has been set up**);
 - The BME Citizens' Open Forum (ethnicity);

¹ According to the minutes of the SIWG meeting in March 2008: "*The role of "expert witnesses" is to provide information and [personal] knowledge about specific issues. Expert witnesses will be invited at meetings in 2008/9 at the discretion of the Chair, for relevant agenda items.*"

- The Older People's Assembly;
 - The LGBT Forum (sexual orientation);
 - The Inter-Faith Forum (faith groups)”
4. It should be noted that these community groups are deemed to be the co-ordinated “voice” of the majority of people in the equality strands they cover. They are sometimes referred to as “umbrella groups”.
 5. In 2006, pending the setting up of the Disabled People's Forum, one person (involved in a group of community volunteers meeting with a view to setting up a Disabled People's Forum) came forward and was invited to represent the disability strand on SIWG. There was no disability community consultation or election about this appointment. The invited non-voting co-optee resigned from the SIWG in October 2008.
 6. There is currently no “umbrella group” from which disability community representatives can be drawn. Despite efforts from within the community and by the Council and other organisations, it has not been possible to set up a Disabled People's Forum in York so far. The latest York Citizens Guide lists 45 community groups active in disability issues in York. There are probably other groups in existence not listed in the Guide - like CANDI mentioned in the previous agenda item.
 7. Currently the Council's Housing and Adult Social Services Directorate and York CVS are working together to facilitate the setting up of a Centre for Independent Living (CIL) in York. In line with government recommendations, the CIL should be managed by disabled people to provide services and support for disabled people. Once the Centre is in place and a managing board has been constituted to run it, SIWG will have the opportunity to seek two co-opted non-voting representatives from amongst disabled people members of the CIL management board.
 8. Presently there are disability groups engaged in SIWG. These groups were invited to send expert witnesses to SIWG after the first Development Day in February 2008. This invitation was issued with the agreement of SIWG non-voting co-opted representatives and in some cases because they asked that these particular groups should be invited.

9. Disabled people's groups that currently are invited to provide disability expert witnesses to SIWG are:
 - a. Access Group (physical and sensory disabilities)
 - b. York People First and Valuing People Partnership (learning disabilities)
 - c. York Mental Health Forum (mental health)

It should be noted that each of the 4 disability equality sub-strands (physical, sensory, mental, learning) is represented via these groups.

Consultation

10. Community representatives and SIWG councillors jointly considered and agreed to invite the groups mentioned above to provide expert witnesses, during the SIWG Development Day 2008 and the during the meeting of the Group in March 2008.
11. This issue was discussed at the last SIWG meeting on 19 November 2008.

Options

12. Option 1: To invite the community groups listed in paragraph 9 above to provide one co-opted non-voting representative each (i.e. 4 representatives in total plus personal assistants where needed) to serve on SIWG until such time as a CIL management board has been put in place.
13. Option 2: Not to appoint disability community co-opted non-voting representatives on SIWG until the CIL management board is in place, drawing on the advice of current disabled expert witnesses in the meantime.
14. Option 3: To seek two co-opted non-voting representatives from amongst the 45 disability community groups currently listed in the York Citizen's Guide.

Analysis

15. **Option 1 is recommended.** This option will allow for continuity and will bring a common voice for each of the disability sub-strands (physical, sensory, mental health, learning disabilities) to

the Group, until such time as the CIL management board is formed.

16. Option 2 is not recommended. It is important that disability is represented on SIWG by co-opted non-voting disabled people. The difference between an expert witness and a non-voting co-opted representative is that there is an expectation on representatives to attend all SIWG meetings and bring representative views to the table. On the other hand, expert witnesses are not expected to attend every meeting and are expected to bring personal rather than group views and experiences to the table.
17. Option 3 is not recommended. It is unlikely that we shall find two representatives that will be acceptable to the membership of 45 different groups before the CIL board is formed. Some of these groups concentrate on very specific disability issues such as epilepsy or encephalitis so cannot be deemed to represent broader disability issues.

Corporate Priorities

18. Community representation and engagement in SIWG helps the Council ensure that its corporate priorities are appropriate.

Implications

19. These are as follows:

Financial – None

Human Resources (HR) – None

Equalities - Community representation on SIWG contributes to making York an inclusive city and also contribute to the Council's Equality objectives as well as to SIEG objectives.

Legal - Disability community engagement in service planning and delivery is a requirement under equality legislation.

Crime and Disorder - None

Information Technology (IT) - None

Property - None

Other - None

Risk Management

20. N/A

Recommendations

21. To invite the community groups listed in paragraph 8 above to provide co-opted non-voting representatives to serve on SIWG until such time as a CIL management board has been put in place.

Reason: To ensure that there is appropriate disability community representation on SIWG.

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report:
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Report Date 5-1-09
Approved**

Wards Affected:

All

For further information please contact the author of the report