

City of York Council	Draft Committee Minutes
Meeting	Social Inclusion Working Group
Date	17 February 2010
Present	Councillors Ayre (Chair), Aspden, Brooks, Crisp (Vice-Chair) (agenda items 30-32 and 35) and Gunnell (agenda items 30-32 and 35)
	Non-Voting Co-opted Members: David Brown – York Access Group Sarah Fennell – LGBT Forum Sue Lister – York Older People's Assembly Rita Sanderson – York Racial Equality Network Fiona Walker – Valuing People Partnership
	Expert Witnesses: Maureen Ryan – Valuing People Partnership Carolyn Suckling – York Access Group George Wright – Humanist
Apologies	John Burgess – Mental Health Forum Daryoush Mazloum - YREN

Mrs Corry Hewitt

The group was saddened to hear of the death of Mrs Corry Hewitt, who had served as a representative of York Interfaith on SIWG. A card of condolence would be sent to Mrs Hewitt's family on behalf of the group.

30. 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.

31. Minutes and Matters Arising

Resolved: That the minutes of the meetings of the Group held on 2 December 2009 and 28 January 2010 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair subject to it being noted that Fiona Walker and Maureen Ryan had

submitted their apologies for absence for the meeting on 28 January 2010 and that the meeting finished at 10.00 pm.

In accordance with the Group's request that their recommendations were tracked to ensure that they were being actioned, an update was given on matters arising from the previous minutes:

(i) SIWG Display Boards

Arrangements had been made for the SIWG display boards to be placed in the foyer at York St John University during International Women's Week. Information for inclusion on the boards should be forwarded to Sue Lister by the end of the week.

(ii) Name of the Group

Clarification was sought as to whether the suggestions regarding the name of the group were to be taken on board. It was noted that this would be considered further at the Development Day on 29 March 2010, along with issues including the SIWG budget¹.

(iii) Roles and Responsibilities of Elected Members and Community Representatives

The minutes of the meeting of 28 January 2010 had made reference to the need to look at the role that Elected Members should play when future discussions took place with SIWG to examine the impact of budget proposals on the equality strands. Some Elected Members suggested that they felt that it would be appropriate for them to be present when such discussion took place but would not wish to participate. Others stated that they were happy to participate. It was agreed that further consideration would be given to this matter when the next budget round took place.

Members of the group suggested that there was a more general issue in terms of clarifying the roles and responsibilities of Elected Members and non-voting co-opted members on SIWG. Rita Sanderson offered to support the group in this matter¹. Officers informed the

Group that this issue would be discussed and finalised at the Development Day on 29 March 2010.

Action Required

1. Include in programme for Development Day EC

32. Public Participation

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

33. Council Workforce Strategy

A presentation was given on the council's Workforce Plan 2010-12. A copy of the presentation is attached as Annex A to these minutes.

SIWG were requested to offer feedback about diversity issues in the plan. It was noted that the council was the largest employer in the city. Consideration was given to York's population profile and how this compared to the council's workforce profile.

The Group welcomed the plan and put forward the following suggestions as to areas that needed further consideration:

- As well as encouraging disabled people to work for the council, more should be done to retain people who become disabled whilst working as an employee of the council.
- Flexible working is important.
- It is important that jobs are not "token jobs" – the level of job is also a key factor.
- Staff training is important – there needs to be a culture of tolerance. Diversity training should be a compulsory part of staff induction.
- Consideration should be given to job carving (The Blueberry Academy could advise on this)
- It was noted that there was no reference to LGBT in the plan. Officers explained that this was because they did not have this data from employees, although there was representation on the Staff Equalities Reference Group (SERG).
- It was suggested that some staff who are disabled or from a minority group may not wish for this to be known. It was

acknowledged that this made it more difficult to ascertain where there was under-representation.

- A suggestion was put forward that people might be reluctant to provide information regarding their sexuality but that if questionnaires were reworded to ask for “partnership preference” this may seem less intrusive.
- Officers were asked how robust the council’s arrangements were in ensuring that young people were represented in the workforce. Attention was drawn to the government funding that was available to support apprenticeships. Officers confirmed that the employment of more young people was a priority, as the number of 16-24 year old employees was very low. It was proposed to take a more directive approach to address this matter, for example the Corporate Management Team were to be asked to consider whether posts should be designated as apprenticeships up to a certain level unless there was a proven business case for alternative arrangements to be put in place.

Resolved: That it be requested that the comments put forward by SIWG be taken into account when the Workforce Plan is developed.

Reason: To help officers put in place a fair and inclusive Workforce Plan.

34. Progress with the new Council Headquarters Project and related Equality Impact Assessments

The Group received a presentation on the council’s Accommodation Project.

Copies of the comments made by SIWG when they were consulted on the project on 24 September 2009 were circulated, along with the response that had been made to each recommendation. This document is attached as Annex B to these minutes.

The Group was informed that the contract would be formally awarded to York Investors LLP the following Monday. The company would provide the council’s new headquarters and York Customer Centre at West Offices on Station Rise by 2012. The Group were shown diagrams illustrating the location of the new headquarters and initial design proposals. 70% of the

building would be new-build. The building would be very efficient in terms of the use of non-renewable resources and would have a BREEAM rating of “excellent”.

The Group made the following comments regarding the proposals:

- Whilst it was pleasing to note that the building would be accessible due to its central location and excellent public transport links, concerns were expressed that the appropriate use of the disabled parking bays may not be enforced. Officers stated that there would be a 24-hour presence on the site and therefore the use of the bays would be monitored.
- Because of the open-plan nature of the design, concerns were expressed regarding possible noise levels and the impact that this may have on those with autism. It was suggested that the acoustic specialist employed by the developer should be requested to consult with disabled people regarding this matter.
- It was important that appropriate consideration was given to the interior of the building, including the impact of colour and soft furnishings on behaviour. Meditation rooms should also be available.
- The Valuing People Partnership had been working on “Your Journey to Hospital” and would be pleased to assist the council in preparing similar accessible information on “Your Journey to York Council Headquarters”.
- The Group was informed that rationalisation from sixteen administrative offices to four would achieve significant long-term savings and fund the cost of the new headquarters. The Group stated that it was important that employees and members of the community were aware of this, as the project was taking place at a time when jobs were being cut at the council and some members of the community were losing valued services. It was important to make clear that the project was about delivering excellent services to the community as well as providing appropriate facilities for staff.

Details were given of the next stages in the process. The developers would be holding a pre-planning event at the Mansion House on Friday 5 March 2010 and Saturday 6 March 2010 to seek views on their latest design proposals. Invitations would be circulated to SIWG members, along with

details of how to access further information on the website¹.

SIWG would continue to be consulted on developments regarding the council's new headquarters.

Action Required

1. Circulate details of consultation event and website link JC

35. Community Cohesion - Approach and Plans

The Group received a report about the council's approach and plans for community cohesion. Officers explained that community cohesion was about respect, fairness and inclusion for everyone who lives York. The council's Fairness and Inclusion Strategy made a commitment to develop a Community Cohesion Strategy/Action Plan by July 2010. A government-funded postholder would be working with the council until the end of May to support the work that was being carried out.

Work had started to explore some objectives and to find out what activities were already taking place that promoted cohesion. Inclusive York had been consulted about the work that was taking place and had emphasised the need to involve all partners. It was noted that many groups already had action plans in place, for example most schools had implemented community action plans.

Members of SIWG stated that YREN had considerable expertise in this issue and it was important to involve them in the work that was taking place. Officers explained that it was the intention to involve community groups but that the current focus was an audit of council activities. It was noted that if community groups were to be involved this had resource implications for them. It was therefore important that the work was appropriately resourced. YREN had previously carried out a considerable amount of work as the lead body of a Local Area Agreement (LAA) partnership bid, and whilst the application had been unsuccessful, the content and work should be acknowledged.

Members of the group stressed the importance of ensuring that the community cohesion strategy also took into account the need to have in place effective hate incident reporting arrangements.

Resolved: That a progress report on the Community Cohesion Strategy be presented at the next meeting¹.

Reason: To help officers put in place a fair and inclusive community cohesion plan and to give SIWG the opportunity to influence the plan.

Action Required

1. Include as agenda item for next meeting EC

36. Progress with More for York Equality Impact Assessments and Next Steps

A report was received that outlined progress with More for York Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs) in 2009/10. It was noted that, as part of the More for York Initiative, a staff suggestion scheme was being set up.

The Group was updated on some of the ways in which the suggestions that they had put forward had been actioned:

- Parking arrangements at St Leonard's were being reviewed
- Consideration was being given to voice recognition software
- The council had signed up to the Plain English Standard and a Style Guide was in place¹
- Suggestions regarding debt collection had been incorporated into the policy
- New recycling containers would have holes in the bottom to prevent water from collecting. The Chair informed the Group that he had also requested that the possibility of supplying tactile containers be explored.

Attention was drawn to the work streams in the report that had been considered by the staff equalities group.

The Group was informed of forthcoming EIAs on which their views would be sought. These included:

- The teams forming part of the Chief Executive's Office
- Fleet management (including minibuses for home to school transport)
- Taxi services/pool cars

- Property management and facility management
- Housing
- Children's social care
- Policy review for recruitment and selection
- City Strategy – planning
- Mobile working

Community representatives suggested that the council should consider whether it would be appropriate to reimburse community groups for the time and expertise that they gave to the council when considering EIAs. It was agreed that this should be discussed further at the Development Day².

Resolved: That the report be noted.

Reason: To inform SIWG on progress with More for York EIAs and to present next steps as the programme progresses.

Action Required

1. At request of Group, circulate copies of Council's Style Guide to SIWG members JC
2. Include as issue to be considered at Development Day EC

37. SIWG Development Day

Copies of a report on the purpose and content of the next group Development Day had been circulated. SIWG members were encouraged to attend the event.

Resolved: That the report be noted.

Reason: To help the Group finalise the improvement work it started in 2009/10 and put in place a work programme for 2010-11.

38. Any Other Business - Hate Incidents

The Group was informed that YREN had been successful in its tender to help the Police Independent Advisory Group for York and Selby better understand Hate Crime. The work would enable the Police to improve its service to the victims of Hate Crime and the community. Copies of the proposed questionnaire were circulated. SIWG's support was sought in preparing an easy-read version of the questionnaire.

Resolved: That arrangements be made for an easy-read version of the questionnaire to be prepared¹.

Reason: To support the process in ensuring that all members of the SIWG had the opportunity to be involved in the consultation.

Action Required

1. Prepare easy-read version of questionnaire

JC

Annex A – Council Workforce Strategy Presentation

Annex B – Council Headquarters: Response to Feedback from SIWG

Councillor N Ayre, Chair

[The meeting started at 6.30 pm and finished at 9.00 pm].