

City of York Council

Draft Committee Minutes

Meeting	Equality Advisory Group
Date	11 November 2010
Present	Councillors Ayre (Chair), Aspden, Brooks, Crisp (Vice-Chair) and Gunnell Non-voting Co-opted Members: David Brown – York Access Group John Burgess – Mental Health Forum Lynn Jeffries – York Independent Living Network Sue Lister – York Older People’s Assembly Diane Roworth – York Independent Living Network Rita Sanderson – York Racial Equality Network Expert Witnesses: Hann Bunn – LGBT Forum Tony Martin – York Older People’s Assembly Claire Newhouse – Higher York Russell Norton – LGBT Forum Simon Rodgers – LGBT Forum Maureen Ryan – Valuing People Partnership
Apologies	Daryoush Mazloum – York Racial Equality Network Carolyn Suckling – Access Group Paul Wordsworth – Churches Together in York George Wright - Humanist

11. 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.

12. MINUTES

Resolved: That the minutes of the meeting of the group held on 30 June 2010 be approved as a correct record subject to minute 4 being amended to record “that other members of the group supported Councillor Aspden’s request that his unease at perceived narrowing of the group’s focus be recorded”.

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) Allocation of £1000 Poverty and Exclusion Awareness Raising Fund

It was noted that Sarah Fennell, who had been co-ordinating the arrangements for the filming of a documentary to raise awareness of poverty and social exclusion, had resigned as a member of the Equality Advisory Group. It was unclear as to whether any progress had been made with the project.

Resolved: (i) That Simon Rodgers look into this matter following the meeting.¹

(ii) Disabled User Toilets

The Group was informed that discussions were still ongoing as to whether it would be possible to ensure that a member of staff was alerted if an alarm in the disabled user toilets was activated. Members of the Group suggested that the alarms should be linked to warden call. If this was not possible the alarms should be removed as they currently provided a false sense of security. Concerns were also raised regarding problems in respect of accessibility and design of the toilets and basins.

Resolved: (ii) That "Disabled User Toilets" be an agenda item for the next meeting and relevant officers be invited to attend to discuss the issues that had been raised.²

Action Required

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| 1. Notify EAG members of progress | EC |
| 2. Agenda item for next meeting | EC |

13. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

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

14. COMMUNITY ISSUES

The Chair welcomed new members to the group. Introductions were carried out.

Community representatives were given an opportunity to raise equality and inclusion matters about council policy and services as they affected them and the groups they represented. The following issues were raised:

(i) Green Badge Scheme

Sue Lister, on behalf of the York Older People's Assembly, raised concerns regarding the difficulties that a member of the public had faced when trying to obtain a green badge permit. Members of the

group agreed that there was a lack of clarity as to the areas covered by the green badges, how they differed to the blue badge permits, and as to whether they had to be renewed on an annual basis.

Resolved: (i) That further information on this issue be provided at the next meeting¹.

(ii) Pedestrian Safety on Beckfield Lane

Sue Lister, on behalf of York Older People's Assembly, raised the issue of pedestrian safety on Beckfield Lane. Concerns had been expressed as to whether an Equality Impact Assessment had been completed which considered the needs of vulnerable pedestrians in the context of encouraging cycling on pavements. Members of the group stated that pedestrian safety was an issue in many areas of the city. Shared space could be very difficult for pedestrians, particularly for children, people with mobility problems or those with hearing or sight difficulties.

Resolved: (ii) That officers from Cycling City be requested to attend the next meeting to give further information on this issue.²

(iii) York Older People's Assembly Questionnaire

The Group was informed that 105 questionnaires had been completed at the 50+ Festival. It was hoped that the information they contained would be very useful to the council. Thanks were expressed to Claire Newhouse for the advice she had offered in respect of processing the data.

(iv) Homecare

Lynn Jeffries drew the group's attention to the Equality and Human Rights Commission Inquiry into Homecare. It was suggested that the Equality Advisory Group may wish to contribute to the inquiry.

Resolved: (iii) That details of the inquiry into homecare be forwarded to the group³.

(v) Good Neighbour Guide

Claire Newhouse gave details of the work that Higher York's students' forum was carrying out to prepare a "Good Neighbour Guide". Ideas for items for inclusion in the guide were welcome.

(vi) Valuing People Partnership

Maureen Ryan gave details of issues that had been raised by the Valuing People Partnership including:

- Respite care
- Leisure – how people with disabilities spend

their time.

It was hoped that a survey could be carried out which would assist integrated working as well as highlighting any omissions in provision.

It was noted that at the launch of the York Independent Living Network, the issue of respite care had also been raised and hence there might be the opportunity for the two organisations to work together on this. It was suggested that the personalisation agenda would link to the issue of leisure.

(vii) YREN Representation on the Equality Advisory Group

Rita Sanderson reported that, at their next meeting, YREN would be nominating their two representatives to serve on the Equality Advisory Group for the next year. In view of the Equalities Act the group would not be specifying that there should be one male representative and one female representative. YREN's feedback report on its involvement with the Equality Advisory Group would be made available. The feedback would acknowledge that there had been some very positive changes in the development of the EAG.

(viii) Sharing of Information

Rita Sanderson drew the group's attention to work that the City of York Council's Early Intervention Manager was carrying out to obtain information about child poverty in the city. YREN would be contributing to the information and encouraged other groups to do the same, as the sharing of information prevented duplication of work.

(ix) York Independent Living Network

Lynn Jeffries informed the group that there had been very positive feedback following the launch of the York Independent Living Network (YILN). The key issues for members of the network were around personalisation.

Members of the group stated that they hoped that the council would engage in honest and open dialogue with community groups with regard to the personalisation agenda.

(x) Accessible Buildings

Lynn Jeffries, on behalf of YILN, expressed concern that a number of council buildings were not accessible, including the equipment centre. It was also a cause of concern that guidance was not always followed in terms of the decorating of council buildings and signage.

Resolved: (iv) That an item on “planning, access and design” be included on the agenda for a future meeting.⁴

(xi) International Shared Meal

The Group were invited to look at the display boards illustrating the recent international shared meal. This had been a very successful event.

(xii) Forthcoming Events

The EIA Fair would take place on 30 November 2010. The programme for the day would be circulated to members of the group and via the York CVS.⁵

Representatives of community groups gave details of forthcoming events to which members of the EAG were invited to attend.

Action Required

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| 1. Report back to next meeting | EC |
| 2. Report back to next meeting | EC |
| 3. Circulate weblink to EAG members | EC |
| 4. Include on EAG workplan | EC |
| 5. Circulate EIA Fair programme | EC |

15. **SPENDING REVIEW AND COUNCIL BUDGET**

A presentation was given on the Spending Review and how the review was expected to affect council budgets and ways of working. Officers explained that the actual financial impact for the City of York Council would not be known until December but that the potential loss to the council could be several million pounds. In order to meet this challenge, work was already taking place, under the More For York programme, to transform the way in which the council operated.

The presentation included details of how members of the Equality Advisory Group could be involved in the budget consultations that would be taking place. There would be an initial opportunity for members of the group to raise issues at the meeting that had been arranged with the council’s chief executive and directors on Wednesday 15 December 2010. A special meeting of the Equality Advisory Group would be convened in January when more detailed information about the budget would be available.¹ Community representatives on the EAG would then have the opportunity to consult their groups about the impact of proposed cuts or growth areas.

The group’s attention was drawn to a government document entitled “Overview of the impact of Spending Review 2010 on equalities”. It was reported that the Equalities and Human Rights Commission had issued guidance for people making budget decisions in the public sector. The guidance had been circulated to relevant council officers and councillors. Following the presentation the group made the following comments:

- In respect of the data that indicated that 2.5% of the population in York received help to live at home, the group requested more information as to how this figure was defined.²
- Because both the City of York Council and the PCT were low spending authorities this meant that any cuts to services had an even greater impact.
- Community representatives were encouraged to stress to their members, the importance of completing next year's census. It was important that the data collected about the city was as accurate as possible and that it was funded accordingly.
- It was important that the information that was presented to the public as part of the consultation was fully accessible. The York Blind and Partially Sighted Society offered their services in making information accessible and distributing it to those on their database³.
- It was important that very effective audit and monitoring arrangements were in place when services were commissioned.
- The council could save money by ensuring that the information that it provided to the public was accessible at source. It was noted that the Corporate Equality and Inclusion Manager served on the Accessible Information Working Party convened by the Valuing People Partnership. There was a commitment to create a charter to ensure that information provided by the council and other organisations such as the PCT was accessible and that the guidance was disseminated to all staff.
- Members of the group stated that it was important that EIAs focussed on the needs of groups of vulnerable individuals and the level of care they required.
- Information was sought as to whether there had been a change in council policy in respect of people receiving residential care outside of the authority, as it appeared that a number were now returning to be cared for within York. Clarification was sought as to whether this decision had been taken to make financial savings.⁴
- Clarification was sought as to whether EIAs were being carried out as part of the More for York process. Officers confirmed this to be the case and stated that a number of these had been considered by the EAG.
- During discussion regarding collecting equality data from people who respond to council budget consultations, Simon Rodgers requested that the equalities questionnaire that had been agreed at the meeting on 30 June 2010 be amended to read "sexual orientation" rather than "partnership preference". This terminology was in line with guidance issued by organisations such as Stonewall. Members of the group explained why the recommendation had been made to use the term "partnership preference" but agreed that this should be replaced by "sexual orientation" when the questionnaire was used in future.⁵

Action Required

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| 1. Update EAG workplan | EC |
| 2. Circulate information to EAG members | EC |
| 3. Notify relevant officers | CC |
| 4. Circulate information to EAG members | EC |
| 5. Update questionnaire | EC |