

BRIGHTON & HOVE CITY COUNCIL

EQUALITIES FORUM

MONDAY, 12 JULY 2004

4.00PM – 6.00PM

COUNCIL CHAMBER, HOVE TOWN HALL

MINUTES

Present

Councillor Elgood (Chair), Councillors Burgess, Framroze, Meadows, A Norman, Pidgeon, Wrighton, Young

Community Representatives: Dr Davoodi (Disability Access Advisory Group), Joan Moorhouse (Older People's Council)

Brighton & Hove City Council: Alex Bailey (Director of Strategy and Governance), Andy Renaut (Transport Planning and Public Transport Manager), Maggie Squire (Head of Performance and Equalities), Peter Bloxham (Traffic Management and Road Safety Manager), Lisa Johnson (Committee Administrator)

PART ONE

ACTION

1. WELCOME.

2. PROCEDURAL BUSINESS

2A Declarations of Substitutes

2.1	<u>Substitute Councillor</u>	<u>For Councillor</u>
	A Norman	Giebeler

2B Declarations of Interest

2.2 There were none.

2C Exclusion of Press and Public

2.3 The Committee considered whether the press and public should be excluded from the meeting during the consideration of any items contained in the agenda, having regard to the nature of the business to be transacted and the nature of the proceedings and the likelihood as to whether, if members of the press and public were present, there would be disclosure to them of confidential or exempt

information as defined in Section 100A(3) or 100 1 of the Local Government Act 1972.

2.4 RESOLVED - That the press and public not be excluded from the meeting during consideration of any items

3. APOLOGIES

3.1 Apologies were received from Valerie Mainstone (Welfare Rights Group of BUCFP), Barbara Wiseman (The Pensioners Forum) and Martin Campbell (Equalities Brighton PCT).

4. CHAIR'S COMMUNICATIONS

4.1 Councillor Elgood thanked the previous Chair of the Equalities Forum, Councillor Meadows, for her hard work and strong leadership of the Forum. The Chair also thanked the past members and welcomed the new members to the Forum.

4.2 Councillor Meadows noted that the previous committee administrator of the Forum, Kathryn Gorse, had now left the Council. Councillor Meadows wanted to thank Kathryn for her work with the Forum and wish her the best of luck for the future.

5a MINUTES

5.1 Joan Moorhouse referred to paragraph 7.3. It was confirmed that the event to celebrate old age had been very successful, and some exhibitors had already confirmed that they wanted to sponsor another event.

5.2 **RESOLVED** - That the minutes of the meeting held on 8 March 2004 be approved and signed by the Chair.

5b FEEDBACK ISSUES FROM LAST MEETING

5.3 Disabled Parking - A report on disabled parking in the city was requested, following a letter dated 15th January 2004 from Councillor A Norman. This matter was covered under item number 9 on the agenda, by way of a report on 'Parking Policies for Disabled Drivers'. This report was prepared and presented by Andy Renaut, Transport Planning and Public Transport Manager'.

5.4 Transport and Disability Issues – A report on transport and disability issues was requested following discussions between council officers and the RNIB. This matter was covered under item number 9 on the agenda, by way of a report on 'Parking Policies for Disabled Drivers'. This report was prepared and presented by Andy Renaut, Transport Planning and Public Transport Manager'.

5.5 Expenses of Members of the Forum – Lisa Johnson informed the

Estelle

Forum that the Independent Remuneration Panel (IRP) had looked at the issue of payment of expenses for non-committee co-optees. The IRP had made its recommendations and these were subject to a report due to go before the Policy & Resources Committee on 21st July 2004. The report recommended the reimbursement of expenses for non-committee co-optees on all of the Council's corporately led groups panels and Forums. The report recommended the rates mirrored that applied to the Members' Allowances Scheme. The Forum will be advised of the recommendation of the Policy & Resources Committee at the meeting of the Forum on 11th October 2004.

5.6 **RESOLVED** – That the information provided be noted.

6. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

6.1 The following question was received on 2 June 2004 from Julia Hunte (Brighton & Hove Black Women's Group):

- (1) Who are the community equalities reps?
- (2) When and how were they elected by the communities they represent?
- (3) What is their term of office?
- (4) How are they supported in consulting with their constituency and gathering information?
- (5) When are the next elections?

Ms Hunte was not at the meeting, but the question was read out by the Committee Administrator and the Chair provided the following answer:

- (1) The Community Reps are those named on the agenda
- (2) They are not directly elected by the communities they represent, but their attendance is agreed by the group they represent
- (3) There is no fixed term of office
- (4) No formal assistance is given as the representatives talk with their own communities in different ways, however all attempts are made to ensure that the representatives are able to fully participate in the meetings and have the minutes to share with others as needed
- (5) There are no direct elections

6.2 Arran Evans, manager at Sussex Interpreting Services, was present at the meeting and asked the following question:

'Do individuals living within the boundary of Brighton & Hove City Council have the right to a free trained community interpreter when

they wish to consult with their Member of Parliament or Councillor'

The Chair confirmed that there is no absolute right to a trained community interpreter when residents wish to consult with their Councillor, but it is reviewed on a case by case basis. Members of Parliament (MPs) are outside bodies and are not connected with Brighton & Hove City Council. Councillor Burgess confirmed that MP's would not have a budget for this, but they too were likely to review each request for an interpreter on a case by case basis.

Arran Evans responded that he was a manager at Sussex Interpreting Services, and they were funded by the NHS to provide an interpretation service as and when required. He was disappointed that Brighton & Hove City Council did not offer a similar service.

7. COMMUNITY REPRESENTATIVE ISSUES AND QUESTIONS

7.1 Dr Davoodi raised the point that some of the items on the agenda for this meeting were the same issues that were being discussed by the Disability Access Advisory Group (DAAG) at their meetings. Brighton & Hove City Council should pay attention to the views and comments of DAAG before considering the same issues.

7.2 Dr Davoodi was also concerned that although DAAG was discussing similar subjects to the Equalities Forum, they were not paid for their attendance at the meetings, nor did B&HCC provide suitable refreshments. It was agreed that the Committee Administrator would confirm the issue of refreshments for DAAG.

**Estelle
Woodcock**

8. "FAIRNESS FOR ALL" : THE GOVERNMENT'S WHITE PAPER ON THE CREATION OF A NEW COMMISSION FOR EQUALITIES AND HUMAN RIGHTS

8.1 The Forum considered a report of the Director of Strategy & Governance.

8.2 Councillor Burgess was pleased that the Government was pressing ahead with this issue and welcomed the creation of a commission. Councillor Burgess referred to paragraphs 9.4 and 9.5 of the report and confirmed that the Labour Party would put in their manifesto that a single Equality Act should be drafted. He thanked the officers concerned for preparing an interesting report.

8.3 Councillor Wrighton felt that the creation of a commission was a very positive thing. She asked for confirmation as to how the performance indicators would be assessed. Whether there would be a general performance indicator or whether each stakeholder, such as the LGBT, would monitor the performance for their own issues? Alex

Bailey said that a number of different groups such as the police or the local authority would monitor performance. However, there was no baseline figure for some groups such as the LGBT. In the national census, information regarding age, race etc is requested but not for someone's sexual orientation. Therefore, there was no base figure available to measure performance against. Councillor Wrighton suggested that groups such as Spectrum could be used to assess the size of the LGBT community.

8.4 Joan Moorhouse (Older People's Council) welcomed the idea of the commission. There are some people who for example, are older and gay, and are therefore affected by a number of different issues. A Commission for Equalities and Human Rights would benefit all groups in the area.

8.5 Councillor Framroze said that were certainly advantages to having such a commission, as it ensured that some people didn't fall between different groups. However, he had concerns that the organisation could be so large that it could become remote. Councillor Framroze asked that the Forum raised awareness of the Commission, and the appropriate local funding be made available to fully support it.

8.6 Alex Bailey confirmed that the points raised by the Forum would be considered when the Council submits its response to the White Paper.

Alex Bailey

8.7 **RESOLVED** – That the Forum recommends that (1) That the ESJCF notes the proposals set out in the "Fairness for All" White Paper.

(2) That the ESJCF requests officers to prepare a response to the White Paper by 6th August 2004 reflecting the discussion of the Forum in relation to the consultation questions.

(3) That the ESJCF requests officers to take steps to develop links with the CEHR at an early stage with a view to influencing and contributing to the strategic planning process and ensuring that this reflects regional priorities.

9.A TRANSPORT PROVISION AND FACILITIES FOR DISABLED PEOPLE IN BRIGHTON & HOVE

9.1 Andy Renaut (Transport Planning and Public Transport Manager) presented the Forum with a presentation on Transport Provision and Facilities for Disabled People in Brighton and Hove.

9.2 The Forum were advised that a Shopmobility scheme was launched in March 2004 at the Churchill Centre in Brighton. It is operated by Community Transport and supported by Brighton & Hove

City Council and Standard Life.

9.3 Brighton & Hove City Council have been working in partnership to improve public transport facilities for disabled people. Where appropriate bus stops have been adapted, with kerbs being raised to allow easier access to the buses. Real-time information display signs are available at a number of stops. There is a system available where people can phone in and get the time of their bus. Steps are being taken to have a real-time information system with talking bus stops. However, it has been decided not to pursue this further until a nationally compatible system has been agreed.

9.4 The Council has a concessionary travel scheme. A County Card is available across the county. This card provides half price travel to people aged 60 and under who are disabled or can't drive for medical reasons. This card is free. If people would be eligible for bus passes but can't use them, they may be entitled to taxi vouchers. It is possible for disabled people to purchase rail cards, which allow discounted fares.

9B PARKING POLICIES FOR DISABLED DRIVERS

9.5 The Forum considered a report from the Director of Environment on Parking policies for disabled drivers.

9.6 The Forum considered all the issues under paragraphs 9A and 9B.

9.7 Councillor Pidgeon was concerned that it could take up to two years to get steps and/or handrails fitted. He was also concerned that in the outskirts of the city there was a lack of ramps at bus stops, for wheelchair users.

9.8 Andy Renaut explained that the department did work closely with Adult Social Care, but how long it took to provide a handrail for example, would depend very much on the availability of resources. Andy Renaut said that they were working to get ramps installed at bus stops on the outskirts of the city. There was also provision for low floor buses, which were able to raise and drop their floor, and this would allow easier access for wheelchairs.

9.9 Councillor Wrighton asked when the low floor buses would be rolled out to all areas. Andy Renaut confirmed that that would be a matter for the bus company.

9.10 Councillor Framroze wanted to acknowledge the advances, which had been made over the last ten years, and wanted, thank both Andy Renaut and his team and the members of DAAG for their hard work.

9.11 Dr Davoodi thanked Andy Renaut for his excellent report. He

raised a number of issues; (1) whether training could be made available to wheelchair and scooter users, (2) whether an advert could be placed in City News to advertise the telephone numbers of those taxi firms who cater for disabled people and (3) in the states of Victoria in Australia, and Michigan in the USA, taxis are free for disabled people. Dr Davoodi hoped that something could be learnt from the way these states treat disabled people.

9.12 Andy Renaut responded to the issues raised. He said that (1) no official training was available for people who used either wheelchairs or scooters. However, the Shopmobility scheme did offer users some training in how to use them. (2) If taxi firms want to pay to advertise in the City News they can. However, a leaflet on taxis and a bus timetable were available free of charge. (3) Whilst the Council was always open to new ideas, it would not be feasible to offer free taxis to disabled people.

9.13 Councillor Meadows suggested that to make the best use of resources when for example installing ramps, all the departments i.e. Housing, Adult Social Care etc should work together.

9.14 Joan Moorhouse asked if there could be a campaign for cars not to use pedestrianised areas. Andy Renaut said that most pedestrianised areas would not be available for cars, although some areas would have limited access for some vehicles, in any event any restrictions would be enforced.

9.15 Councillor A Norman supported the items that had been covered in the report. Andy Renaut confirmed that provision and enforcement of parking in the city was important.

9.16 Councillor Burgess commented that if there is an event in any part of Madeira Drive, the whole of the road was closed, which impacted on the number of available parking spaces. Peter Bloxham (Traffic Management and Road Safety Manager), confirmed that parking in Madeira Drive was being reviewed at the moment and that it was an issue they would take on board.

9.17 Dr Davoodi asked why the Council put disabled parking in unsuitable places, for example in Cannon Place where the spaces are on a slope. Andy Renaut said that they have been there for a while. They were originally placed there as they were felt to be the nearest available places to the Churchill Centre. Peter Bloxham confirmed that they were put in place when the Churchill Centre was redeveloped. Following consultation with DAAG there were now new spaces in Clarence Square. Mrs Davoodi said they were still on a slope, and the Council had promised two years that they would be changed. It was agreed that this would be looked into.

**Peter
Bloxham**

9.18 Councillor Framroze said that once the council took over the

responsibility for disabled parking, it would need to concentrate on how badges were issued and to enforce the misuse of blue badges. Andy Renaut confirmed that the Traffic Management Bill would allow parking attendants to speak to drivers and check details about their Blue badge.

9.19 **RESOLVED** – (1) The Forum notes the report on 'Parking Policies for Disabled Drivers', and the current policies in place to provide parking bays for Blue Badge holders and forward it onto the Disabled Access Advisory Group for consideration.

(2) The Forum requests that the Director gives a high priority to the review of Highways Policy HP4/14 'Provision of special on-street parking places for Blue Badge holders' and consult the Forum at the appropriate time

(3) The Forum requests that the Director seeks an indication of the arrangements made by local branches of the major four supermarkets to fulfil the objectives of the Baywatch campaign

(4) The Forum request that the Director reports the results of the Baywatch campaign's feasibility study on the best way to reduce the abuse of allocated parking for disabled people to a future Forum meeting.

10. FUTURE DEVELOPMENT OF THE EQUALITIES FORUM

10.1 The Forum considered a report from the Deputy Chief Executive & Director of Corporate Services.

10.2 The Chair referred to paragraph 2.2 of the report, and confirmed that over the summer the officers would consult with the Chair and all the political parties for their views as to the membership of the Forum, and not just consult with the Chair and the opposition spokesperson as stated in the report.

**Maggie
Squire**

10.3 Councillor Burgess welcomed the development of the Forum and thought it would make it more interesting to small groups.

10.4 Councillor Wrighton also welcomed the changes and the concept of having small workshop discussions, but was concerned that not all communities were involved with the Forum. Councillor Wrighton referred to the Terms of Reference and agreed with the idea of forming ad hoc action groups.

10.5 Councillor Framroze asked how the groups would be facilitated to attend the Forum's meetings. He raised the point that if people were working it could be hard for them to attend a meeting which started at 4.00 pm. As an equalities Forum it should be available to all and not just those who were able to attend a meeting in the

afternoon.

10.6 Joan Moorhouse welcomed the changes and said it was a good opportunity to bring all the different communities together in small groups. It could be intimidating to speak to a large group, and speaking in small groups may encourage more people to attend and to speak.

10.7 **RESOLVED** – That the Forum notes and considers the recommendations set out in the report :

(1)

- The new Chair of the Forum has initiated some discussion with Forum members, by letter, about the future development of the Forum.
- This action has been taken as a follow-up to previous discussions that the Forum has had on the need to extend the membership of the Forum so that it is more representative and can therefore play a more leading role.
- A recent development which may in time affect the Council's approach to equalities is the Government's proposal to create a Commission for Equalities and Human Rights.
- The Forum will in future be known as the 'Equalities Forum' (for ease of reference) rather than the Equalities Social Justice Consultation Forum.
- Extending the membership of the group to ensure that representatives provide an overall balance of communities of interest.
- Officers should seek to confirm a broader and balanced membership for the Forum with the Chair and Opposition Spokesperson in time for new members to be invited to the next meeting. The representatives will total no more than 15.
- Meetings could usefully be structured in a different way in order to facilitate the achievement of the work programme, perhaps involving small group discussions as well as the more usual formal style of debate.

(2) The Forum confirms that the work programme of the Forum is to oversee the implementation of the 'Inclusive Council Policy & Programme of Action 2004-07'.

The meeting concluded at 6.05 pm

Signed

Chair

Dated this

day of

2004