

BRIGHTON & HOVE CITY COUNCIL

EQUALITIES FORUM

MONDAY, 17 JANUARY 2005

COUNCIL CHAMBER, HOVE TOWN HALL

MINUTES

Present

Councillor Elgood (Chair), Councillors Barnett, Burgess, Framroze, McCaffery, Meadows, Pidgeon, Mrs Theobald and Wrighton

Community Representatives: Sylvia Alexander-Vine (Domestic Violence Forum), Dr Davoodi (Disabled Access Advisory Group), Mrs Davoodi, Valerie Mainstone (Welfare Rights Group of BUCFP), David Harvey (Pride), Joan Moorhouse (Older People's Council), Neil Ansell (Racial Harassment Forum), Keith Beadle (COINetwork), Althea Wolfe (Black & Minority Ethnic Community Partnership), Dr Sajid (Interfaith Contact Group), Bert Williams (Brighton & Hove Black History, Community Base), J Ledward (G Scene Magazine), Lisa Timerick (Sussex Police, LGBT Community Safety Liaison Officer), Sergeant Mark Andrews (LGBT Community Police Officer).

Brighton & Hove City Council: Alan McCarthy (Chief Executive), Maggie Squire (Head of Performance and Equalities), Jo Barringer (LGBT Staff Forum), Gillian Cunliffe (Head of Social Inclusion), Diana Barnett (Head of Communications), Geraldine Opreshko (Corporate Services), Mary Evans (Learning and Development Manager), Gwendolyn Brandon (Corporate Services Research), John Irvine (LGBT Community Safety Officer), David King (Corporate Services).

PART ONE

ACTION

24. PROCEDURAL BUSINESS

24A Declarations of Substitutes

24.1 Neil Ansell, Director of Friends, Families and Travellers, stated that he was substituting for Kadeer Arif, representing the Racial Harassment Forum.

24.2 Councillor Young had sent her apologies, as she had to attend the Overview and Scrutiny Organisation Committee. Kevin Reeves and Grace Towner, Youth Parliament, had sent their apologies that they would be unable to make their presentation "Making meetings accessible" (Item 38c on the agenda) and Karen Moore, Women's

Centre, also sent apologies.

24B Declarations of Interest

24.3 There were none.

24C Exclusion of Press and Public

24.4 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.

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

25. CHAIR'S COMMUNICATIONS

25.1 The Chair welcomed new representatives, including Councillor Dawn Barnett, to the meeting.

25a. LETTER FROM THE MAYOR, COUNCILLOR MRS PAT DRAKE

25.2 Members noted a letter from Councillor Mrs Drake stating that she had enjoyed meeting members of the Forum at the reception held in December and confirming her commitment to Equal opportunities and access.

25b. CO-OPTED MEMBERSHIP OF THE EQUALITIES FORUM

25.3 The Forum considered a report of the Director of Cultural Services concerning the co-opted membership of the Equalities Forum (see minute book). The Chair advised the Forum that he and Maggie Squire were continuing to meet local groups with a view to widening the scope of the Forum.

25.4 **RESOLVED** – That the co-opted membership be confirmed as set out in paragraph 3.3 of the report.

25c. MEETING WITH BRIGHTON & HOVE BUSES

25.5 Notes of a meeting on 17 December, when Councillors Elgood, Pidgeon and Wrighton had met Roger French, Director of Brighton & Hove Buses, were circulated (for copy see minute book). Councillor Wrighton stated that there was a need to consult Blind and Partially-Sighted representatives on how technology could be used to make buses more accessible to them.

HEAD OF
PERFORMANCE
AND
EQUALITIES

25d. PAVEMENT OBSTRUCTIONS

25.6 Members of the Forum had attended a meeting on 11 January with the Head of Cityclean and the Head of Contracts and Performance concerning obstructions on Brighton & Hove pavements, particularly wheelie bins and recycling bins. Several members remained unconvinced of Cityclean's commitment to address the problems and it was agreed to invite the Director of Environment and the Head of Cityclean to a future meeting of the Forum

DIRECTOR OF
ENVIRONMENT

25.7 **RESOLVED** – To invite the Director of Environment and the Head of Cityclean to the next meeting.

HEAD OF
PERFORMANCE
AND
EQUALITIES

25e. HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL DAY ON 27 JANUARY 2005

25.8 The Head of Performance and Equalities provided leaflets about attending Holocaust Memorial Day and reminded members that 2005 was the 60th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz.

26a MINUTES

26.1 Dr Sajid commented on issues arising from the previous minutes. Regarding the Human Resources Equality Monitoring report, paragraph 19.4 of the minutes, he suggested the next quarterly update should show comparative figures for 1999 and 2004 for black and ethnic minority and disabled applicants and whether they were successful or not. He also requested that there should be a future agenda item "Equality and Faith".

HEAD OF
HUMAN
RESOURCES
MANAGEMENT

26.2 **RESOLVED** - That the minutes of the meeting held on 11 October 2004 be approved and signed by the Chair.

26b FEEDBACK ISSUES FROM LAST MEETING

26.3 The Head of Performance and Equalities had produced a booklet "Guide to the Equalities Forum at Brighton & Hove". It was noted that the Members' Allowances Officer was producing a separate booklet giving details of eligibility and how to claim expenses and the co-opted members of all the council committees and fora covered by the scheme would receive this.

MEMBERS'
ALLOWANCES
OFFICER

26.4 A member enquired whether 4.00 pm was a convenient start

time for the majority of members. The Head of Performance and Equalities stated that the Youth Parliament had some excellent recommendations for making meetings more accessible to young people.

[Note: Further discussion about Forum meetings took place later in the meeting, when it became apparent that it would be impossible to cover all the business on the agenda within two hours. It was agreed that future meetings should last two and a half hours with a break in the middle. However, members felt that even this would not allow them to consider issues in the depth they needed.]

26c TRAVELLERS' HEALTH STATUS

26.5 Members noted a report by Dr Parry, University of Sheffield, entitled "The Health Status of Gypsies and Travellers in England". Councillor McCaffery stated that the report contained disturbing information, especially the mortality rate of travellers' children. She added that the report did not cover the East Sussex and Brighton & Hove areas. Neil Ansell stated that gypsies' health declined if they moved into fixed housing; they often found it necessary to conceal their identities from neighbours and felt excluded from completing census forms, as there was no category they could identify with under Ethnicity.

26.6 Councillor Wrighton recommended that the report should be considered at meetings of Adult Social Care and the Children's Trust.

26.7 Councillor Mrs Theobald enquired about the assessments travellers had to undergo every time they were moved on and whether they were excessive. The Community Participation Manager undertook to report back on this and other local issues. Councillor McCaffery asked him to report back on the difficulties travellers experienced in accessing health services.

COMMUNITY
PARTICIPATION
MANAGER

26.8 **RESOLVED** – That the matter be discussed more fully at a future meeting.

27. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

27.1 There were no questions from members of the public. Councillor Burgess referred to the difficulties experienced by wheelchair users on rail services. Booking a place meant a long distance phone call and often when the train arrived, no booking had been made. Councillor Mrs Theobald added that people with limited mobility had problems on platforms when there was a large gap between trains and the platform edge.

28. COMMUNITY REPRESENTATIVES ISSUES AND QUESTIONS

28.1 The Head of Performance and Equalities read out a proposal by Dr Davoodi that the city should recognise each 3 December as the International Day for Disabled Persons. Disabled people still suffer discrimination in many countries and is a social issue, as well as a personal issue. Councillor McCaffery supported the proposal stating that international organisations helping the disabled and raising awareness abroad could use such an occasion to raise funds.

28.2 Neil Ansell and Dr Sajid were both concerned that meetings might be held between council officers and local residents about issues relating to travellers or faith communities without the relevant organisations being able to put their point of view or even being aware that meetings were taking place. The Chair asked the Head of Performance and Equalities to investigate the matter and report back.

HEAD OF
PERFORMANCE
AND EQUALITIES

28.3 Valerie Mainstone informed the Forum that resources at the Welfare Rights Group Family Centre were being severely stretched by government pressure to get sick and disabled persons into work. Voluntary advice agencies needed grant funding to help the large number of people affected to make appeals; currently they were referring them to the Welfare Rights Group.

28.4 David Harvey had been informed by the Director of Cultural Services that the government was proposing that councils should charge organisers substantial fees for festivals. He requested that charities and non-profit organisations should be exempt. The Chair stated that the council should make this point to the government.

DIRECTOR OF
CULTURAL
SERVICES

29. CONVERSATION WITH THE NEW CHIEF EXECUTIVE, ALAN MCCARTHY

29.1 Alan McCarthy introduced himself to the Forum and confirmed his commitment to Equalities. He then responded to members' questions.

29.2 Forum members were concerned to ensure that the council employed people from minority groups and made every effort to retain them. The Chief Executive explained how the council exercised its responsibilities in employing people belonging to minority groups. He advised that the Human Resources Equalities Group and Programme Board monitored staff training and development with a view to retaining staff once they were appointed. Councillor Framroze asked whether all job vacancies were open to applicants from minority groups. The Chief Executive replied that vacancy management was subject to budget restrictions and legislation: displaced staff were entitled to apply for vacancies before they could

be advertised externally.

29.3 Dr Sajid was concerned to note that the document "The Inclusive Council" made very little reference to Faith. The Chief Executive acknowledged this and stated that this should be considered when the report on Faith and Equality came to the Forum.

29.4 Councillor Wrighton enquired about best value and performance indicators. The Head of Performance and Equalities stated that she was meeting the different staff fora with a view to establishing the most appropriate indicators.

29.5 Councillor Framroze suggested that the Forum might consider an analysis of exit interviews held with staff from minority groups.

HEAD OF
HUMAN
RESOURCES
MANAGEMENT

29.6 To a question from Councillor Pidgeon about street clutter, the Chief Executive advised that there were various considerations. The council needed to meet recycling targets and to manage refuse collection most efficiently. A-boards served to promote the diversity of the city, but should not be allowed to cause problems for disabled people. He suggested that the matter be discussed fully when the Head of Cityclean was present.

29.7 Councillor McCaffery recommended that the council should consider employing signers for deaf people at its meetings.

29.8 **RESOLVED** – (1) To invite the Chief Executive to attend a meeting later in the year.

(2) To invite the Leader of the Council to attend a future meeting.

30. POLICE REVIEW MAGAZINE AWARD TO SUSSEX POLICE FOR THE WORK OF LISA TIMERICK & MARK ANDREWS WITH THE LGBT COMMUNITY

30.1 The Forum was pleased to meet Lisa Timerick & Sergeant Mark Andrews, who were presented with a national award for their work with the LGBT Community. This was part of an annual award scheme organised by the Police Review Magazine but was the first time a diversity award was given. They made a brief presentation about their work and advised that they would be using the award to visit San Francisco Police to exchange ideas and discuss best practice. Sergeant Andrews requested the council and Sussex Police to continue to work together in a joint approach to LGBT issues. The Chair congratulated Lisa Timerick and Sergeant Mark Andrews on their achievements.

31. COIN

31.1 This item was deferred to a future meeting

32. BLACK HISTORY MONTH

32.1 Leaflets were circulated concerning Black History Month (for copy see minute book). Bert Williams expressed concern that the council had taken over the project. He requested that the black community be included in planning and arranging future events. This was seconded by Althea Wolfe who stated that Black History Month should include black history and education, but had focussed on the arts. Dr Sajid agreed, stating that it was essential to record history (including recent history) for future generations.

HEAD OF ARTS
AND CREATIVE
INDUSTRIES

and

32.2 **RESOLVED** – That the Head of Performance and Equalities advise the Head of Arts and Creative Industries of the Forum's concerns.

HEAD OF
PERFORMANCE
AND
EQUALITIES

33. LGBT HISTORY MONTH

33.1 The Forum considered a report of the Director of Strategy & Governance informing members about the nationally recognised LGBT History Month which takes place for the first time in February 2005 (see minute book).

33.2 Jo Barringer of the LGBT staff forum advised that an archive of the history of the past 50 years was being maintained. Posters advertising LGBT History Month would soon be posted.

33.3 **RESOLVED** - To note that the LGBT History Month will provide an excellent opportunity to raise awareness about the histories of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people, nationally and locally.

34. RACE EQUALITY SCHEME : QUARTERLY UPDATE

34.1 The Forum considered a report from the Director of Strategy & Governance informing of the recent progress in implementing the Council's Race Equality Scheme (see minute book). The Head of Performance and Equalities drew attention to the appendix to the report and confirmed that every director was prioritising work on the Impact Assessments. To questions from Dr Sajid, she confirmed that the programme of work does meet legal requirements and that the council will include Faith.

34.2 **RESOLVED** – To note that the Race Equality Scheme includes a commitment to ensuring that issues of gender, sexual orientation, disability, age and faith are considered as well as race when the Council is carrying out its equalities impact assessments (EQIA).

35. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENTS: RESULTS FROM CHILDREN'S SERVICES

35.1 The Forum received a presentation by the Head of Social

Inclusion concerning the Equalities Impact Assessments in Children, Families & Schools Department. She circulated a copy of her slides (for copy see minute book). In response to members' questions, she explained how homophobic bullying was been addressed.

35.2 Councillor McCaffery suggested that the Head of Social Inclusion should make the same presentation to Children, Families & Schools Committee.

HEAD OF
SOCIAL
INCLUSION

36. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENTS: RESULTS FROM HEALTH

36.1 This item was deferred until a future meeting.

37. THE WORK OF THE REFUGEE FORUM

37.1 The Policy and Development Co-ordinator for Asylum Seekers and Refugees made a presentation on the Work of the Refugee Forum: a multi-agency forum involving council officers and representatives from the voluntary sector, who give advice to refugees and asylum seekers. She circulated a copy of her slides (for copy see minute book).

38. WORKSHOP

38.1 This item was deferred to a future meeting.

The meeting concluded at 6.40 pm

Signed

Chair

Dated this

day of

2005