

BRIGHTON & HOVE CITY COUNCIL

EQUALITIES FORUM

3.00 PM, THURSDAY, 20 NOVEMBER 2006

HOVE TOWN HALL

MINUTES

Present

Councillor Elgood (Chair), Councillors Burgess, Framroze, McCaffery, Meadows, Mears, A Norman, Oxley, Pidgeon (OS), Williams.

Community Representatives & Representatives of other organisations: Arthur Law (Spectrum), Joan Moorhouse (Older People's Council), Judy Richards (COIN), Betty Skolnick (Racial Harassment Forum), Mary Baldock (Brighton Women's Centre), Anne Marie Hines (Mosaic), Neil Ansell (Friends, Families & Travellers), M Asaduzzaman (Turner Community), Joe Ifill, (Carr-Gomm).

Brighton & Hove City Council: Alex Bailey (Director Strategy & Governance), Furrakh Mirza (Equalities Manager), Andy Staniford and Petra Davis (Housing Strategy), Rob Fraser and Ashwag Shimin (Planning Strategy), Estelle Woodcock (Committee Administrator), Carmel Millar (Head of Human Resources), Richard Tuset (Policy Officer), Judith Macho and Linda Beanlands (Public Safety), Jake Lee (BMewf Support Officer)

Primary Care Trust: Martin Campbell

Apologies were received from: Dr Sajid, Sylvia Alexander Vine, Althea Wolfe, Sarah Danily

PART ONE

ACTION

26A Declarations of Substitutes

26.1 There were no declarations of substitutes.

26B Declarations of Interest

26.2 There were none.

26C Exclusion of Press and Public

26.3 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.

26.4 **RESOLVED** - That the press and public not be excluded from the meeting during consideration of any items on the agenda.

27 CHAIR'S COMMUNICATIONS

27.1 The Chair invited all present to join him in a minute's silence to acknowledge the contribution Shirley West of the Women's Centre had made to the work of the Forum.

27.2 The Chair stated that the present meeting had started at 3 pm to avoid a clash with the Children's Trust meeting. He invited people to email him if they had any views on the timing of the meeting.

27.3 The Chair advised that 20 November was the date of the Transgender and Transsexual Day of Remembrance, especially in relation to victims of hate crimes. Councillor Burgess stated that there remained an enormous task to stop the bigotry prevalent in society and that organisations should examine the way they operated. The Forum agreed that many issues remained, for example, birth certificates could not be changed under current legislation.

27.4 The Chair stated that an event to celebrate the International Day for Disabled People would be held at 6 pm on 4 December at Hove Town Hall.

27.5 Two letters had been circulated. One from Councillors Oxley and Pidgeon concerned Homophobic Bullying in Schools. The Chair asked for a report on this to the next meeting. The other letter was from Spectrum, entitled "Bisexual & Trans inclusion and Brighton & Hove City Council" (see item 30).

Chris Owen

28 MINUTES

28.1 **RESOLVED** - That the minutes of the meeting held on 12 October 2006 be approved and signed by the Chair.

28b FEEDBACK ISSUES FROM LAST MEETING

28.2 The Forum noted the list of feedback issues from the previous meeting.

28c CLOSING TIME OF PUBLIC TOILETS

28.3 The Assistant Director, Quality of Life and Green Spaces, made a brief presentation addressing concerns raised at the previous meeting about the council closing public toilets, including disabled ones, at 4.30 pm. She advised that, although councils have no statutory duty to provide public conveniences, Brighton & Hove provided a larger number than average. The main reason for closing toilets early was vandalism but there were also safety issues after dark. With regard to the Radar Scheme, she advised that special keys were provided to people with disabilities. Unfortunately dealers had managed to obtain them illegally to open up the premises and sell drugs. There had been incidents when the dealers had abused cleaning staff. Radar was a national scheme, so the council had very limited power to influence it. The Forum remained concerned about provision for disabled people. The Assistant Director was asked to inform members how much it would cost to close all public toilets at 5.00 pm, which seemed a more reasonable time.

[Note: Following the Equalities Forum meeting, the Assistant Director provided the following information:

"If the winter closing time was put back to 5pm, the additional cost would be approximately £22,000 per annum. The contractors would wish to finish the task more quickly than at present, due to the increased risk to their staff. Therefore, they would employ 2 extra staff and vehicles, accounting for the extra cost."]

28.4 Councillors Elgood and Pidgeon both thanked Pat Foster for her help and support in the past and wished her well in her retirement.

28d IMPROVING THE SERVICES DENTISTS PROVIDE TO DISABLED PEOPLE

28.6 Dr Davoodi was not present, so this item was not discussed. The Primary Care Trust's response to the report Dr Davoodi had circulated last meeting is appended.

Estelle
Woodcock

29 PUBLIC QUESTIONS

29.1 There were none.

30 COMMUNITY REPRESENTATIVES' ISSUES

30.1 Mohammad Asaduzzaman, of the Tarner Community, spoke on behalf of multi-cultural groups not represented on the Forum. The

Chair stated that the Constitution only allowed 15 community representatives at the present time; however, the Forum could ask the Policy & Resources Committee to increase the number. Anne Marie Hines advised that Mosaic represented all Bme communities and Betty Skolnick added that the Racial Harassment Forum was considering how best to represent all groups. The Chair undertook to meet Mr Asaduzzaman with the Head of Performance and Equalities to discuss the way forward.

Maggie
Squire

30.2 The Forum considered a letter from Spectrum, entitled Bisexual & Trans inclusion and Brighton & Hove City Council. It advised that new, complex and varied statutory duties in relation to Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender people were pending. Arthur Law proposed that the council should set up a councillor task group to consider the action which needed to be taken and that a place should be made available on the Forum for a suitable representative. It was agreed that this should be an agenda item for the next meeting.

Maggie
Squire

30.3 Neil Ansell objected to the offensive image which the council gave to Travellers and Gypsies, by linking them in publicity to rubbish and crime. He referred to an article in East Brighton News, a newsletter which bore the council logo and was the subject of a complaint to the council. He stated that it was anachronistic for Travellers' issues to continue to be the responsibility of the Environment Committee and asked for this to be reconsidered.

31 LGBT HOUSING NEEDS

31.1 The Forum considered a report of the Director of Housing & City Support explaining how his department is addressing the key recommendations of "Out on my Own" survey and report, carried out by the University of Brighton/Hove YMCA, published in June 2006. The report summary was appended for information. The Forum also noted a letter from Councillors Oxley and Pidgeon concerning LGBT housing needs (see minute book).

31.2 Members expressed an interest in reading the Youth Homelessness report considered by Housing Committee on 16 November. The link to this is

<http://www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/index.cfm?request=c1107343&view=agenda&committee=Housing%20Committee&date=16%2DNOV%2D2006%2015%3A00>

31.3 Arthur Law congratulated officers in Housing Strategy and the researchers for their excellent work; while members thanked him for his own work on the Action Plan and Working Group. Joan Moorhouse reminded members that not only younger people were affected. "The Whole of Me" campaign had aimed to address the housing problems

experienced by the older community.

31.4 **RESOLVED** – (1) That the Forum welcome the work being carried out by Spectrum, the council's Housing Strategy Division, and the new LGBT Housing & Support Working Group to bridge gaps in service provision to better meet the housing and support needs of the city's LGBT community.

(2) That the Forum welcome the recognition of LGBT youth homelessness and proposed action outlined in the city's draft Youth Homelessness Strategy.

(3) That the Forum welcome the proposal to include a dedicated LGBT Housing Strategy as part of the proposed "Housing Strategy 2007-2012: healthy homes, healthy city, healthy lives" to be developed over the next year.

32 THE EQUALITIES FORUM A GUIDE FOR MEMBERS

32.1 The Forum considered a report of the Director of Strategy & Governance concerning a draft Guide for Members (see minute book).

32.2 Members debated increasing the number of community representatives on the Forum. Councillor Burgess requested that meetings should not become unwieldy. It was emphasised that representative of all communities are welcome to observe meetings and can be allowed to speak at the Chair's discretion.

32.3 Councillor McCaffery reminded members that it was the responsibility of the Forum to promote equality and good practice rather than merely discuss issues.

32.4 Arthur Law requested that gender identity should be included as a separate issue from gender.

Maggie
Squire

32.5 **RESOLVED** – (1) That the draft Guide for Members be approved.

(2) That it be noted that the Guide includes some expectations regarding behaviour, which have been included in response to a request that a Code of Conduct is introduced for members of the Forum.

(3) That it be noted that the Guide is for all members of the Forum, Councillors, Community Representatives and Officers.

33 CORE STRATEGY PREFERRED OPTIONS AND SITE ALLOCATIONS ISSUES AND OPTIONS

33.1 The Head of Planning Strategy advised that consultation was

taking place on the Core Strategy and the Site Allocations Scoping report. He invited members to view these documents and send him their comments by 21 December. The documents could be found on the council's website or he would send hard copies if requested. He introduced Ashwag Simin who was on job experience working on the equalities and diversity appraisal of the Core Strategy.

33.2 He advised that the Core Strategy would influence development in the city for the next 20 years, so it was important to take advantage of the opportunity to comment. He requested the Forum to let him know if there was anything in the documents which was discriminatory against different sections of the community.

34 DRAFT DISABILITY EQUALITY SCHEME

34.1 The Forum considered a report of the Director of Strategy and Governance concerning the council's draft Disability Equality Scheme (see minute book). The Equalities Manager explained that consultation was currently ongoing and the scheme being amended in the light of new information. It was due to be launched on 4 December at the International Day of Disabled People event.

34.2 Arthur Law pointed out that there was a serious omission; namely a lack of detail on mental health as a disability. Mental health was included in the definition of disability in paragraphs 1.23 and 1.24 but Mr Law felt that it should be addressed in the context of using council services and working for the council. Councillor Williams supported this. The Chair requested the Equalities Manager to meet Mind and Spectrum with a view to including this in the scheme.

FurraKh Mirza

34.3 Joan Moorhouse stated that people with hearing problems often have problems communicating at Reception Desks and suggested that simple, inexpensive measures could make the situation better. Councillor Pidgeon suggested members visit Worthing to see their new talking bus stops and requested that the Scheme refer to disability in the context of using public transport.

FurraKh Mirza

34.4 The Forum requested to be kept up to date with statistical information on disability in the council workforce and benefit claimants claiming disability allowance.

Carmel
Millar FurraKh
Mirza

34.5 **RESOLVED** – That the draft Disability Equality Scheme 2006-2009 and the consultation arrangements be agreed prior to publication on 4 December.

35 EQUALITIES POLICY REVIEW PROGRESS REPORT

35.1 The Forum considered a report of the Director of Strategy & Governance concerning progress being made on responding to the

recommendations of the Equalities Policy Review (see minute book).

35.2 Councillor Burgess reminded the Forum that the council had to work within financial constraints to implement these recommendations.

35.3 It was noted that the Older People's Council had not been formally notified of the arrangements for them to speak at committee meetings (paragraph 10.3). The Chair requested officers send written details to the Older People's Council. Joan Moorhouse requested that, when the council undertakes areas of work or research such as those set out in paragraphs 8.1 and 9.7, Age should be included as a category.

Mark Wall

Maggie
Squire

35.4 Councillor McCaffery enquired about the continuing involvement of travellers. The Chair stated that it had been agreed that Friends, Families and Travellers would be involved in updating the Travellers Strategy.

35.5 Arthur Law requested report writers, every time "gender" was mentioned to add the words "and gender identity". He said that the recommendations relating to confidentiality in paragraph 8.4 should be extended because visitors sometimes feel that a judgemental attitude is being taken by staff or anyone overhearing. He stated that the report contained no recommendations in respect of council consultation and that communities should be involved in the preparation of the new Inclusive Council document.

Maggie
Squire

35.6 Judy Richards enquired about grants: the applicants who had been unsuccessful and what help had been given to applicants. The Manager, Voluntary Sector and External Funding Unit, was due to report to the next meeting. She was asked to provide information about who had applied and who had dropped out to identify support needs.

Jude Tyrie

35.7 Concern was expressed that the recommendation for a dedicated LGBT officer had been met by giving an existing officer additional duties. Also the outcome in respect of Whistle-blowing was not what had been envisaged. The Director of Strategy & Governance replied that recommendations had been made to the Policy & Resources Committee who had agreed the action to be taken within the budget available. The council had been able to use special funding to provide the Access Officer post. The Director confirmed that the Access Officer's remit would include all issues relating to access.

35.8 Martin Campbell suggested that the Forum should consider whether any of the work could be undertaken by the council and PCT working jointly. Judy Richards replied that communities would find it

easier to participate in just one consultation exercise rather than two.

35.9 **RESOLVED** – (1) That the progress being made on responding to the recommendations of the Equalities Policy review be noted.

(2) That the report on Whistle-blowing should come to the Forum for consideration before Policy & Resources Committee.

Maggie
Squire

The meeting concluded at 5.40 pm.

Signed

Chair

Dated this

day of

2006