



Bromsgrove
District Council
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Equality and Diversity Forum

Meeting held on Thursday 16th October 2008

In attendance	
Sat Aggarawal	Bromsgrove Indian Community Forum
Emma Barton	Health Improvement Manager, Worcestershire Primary Care Trust
Tony Beirne	Director, Bromsgrove District Council
Mr B K Chaudhari	Bromsgrove Indian Community Forum
Mary Collett	Disabled Users Group
Nuala Dalton	Bromsgrove Resident
Jeff Edwards	Bromsgrove Older People's Forum, Bromsgrove and District NHS Retirement Fellowship
Nigel Godwin	Bromsgrove Resident
Patricia Hackett	Mencap
Tracey Hodges	Padstone, Worcestershire County Council
Eileen Mulhall	Worcestershire Association of Service Users
Sharon Murphy	Benefits Welfare Officer, Bromsgrove District Council
Trevor Rigg	Bromsgrove Resident and Forum Chair
Mark Townsend	West Mercia Police
Ian Roberts	Supervisor, Street Scene and Community, Bromsgrove District Council
Fiona Scott	Equality Officer, Bromsgrove District Council
Joe Scott	Bromsgrove Resident
Phil Street	Director, Bromsgrove District Council
	Worcestershire Mental Health Network
John Tempest	
Jo Wright	Bromsgrove Resident
Fozia Yamin	Malvern Hills District Council

Apologies	
Hugh Bennett	Assistant Chief Executive, Bromsgrove District Council
Kevin Dicks	Chief Executive, Bromsgrove District Council and Acting Chief Executive Redditch Borough Council
Claire Felton	Head of Legal, Equalities and Democratic Services, BDC
Joan King	The Gender Trust
Wayne Knighton	Bromsgrove resident
Tony Love	West Mercia Constabulary
Tony Lowry	Bromsgrove District Housing Trust
Logan Mailvaganam	North Worcestershire Mental Health Partnership
Superna Makwana	Bromsgrove resident
Joanne Pitman	Head of Human Resources and Organisation Development, Bromsgrove District Council
Julie Wright	West Mercia Constabulary

1. Introductions and apologies

Apologies as above.

2. Minutes of meeting 14th August 2008

Acceptance of the minutes was proposed by **Mr B K Chaudhari** and seconded by **Mary Collett**.

3. Minutes of meeting 18th September 2008

Acceptance of the minutes was proposed by **Joe Scott** and seconded by **Tracey Hodges**.

Matters arising from both previous meetings are covered by items on the Main Agenda.

Jo Wright asked about the next steps for the community bids. **Hugh Bennett** has proposed a meeting for all the new bidders this year round to discuss the next steps. **Fiona Scott** will liaise with **Hugh** and establish the timescale for this.

4. Items from the Forum Chair

None.

5. Items from the Chief Executive

Phil Street took this item on behalf of **Kevin Dicks**.

It was clarified that any question from the group relating to the community would be accepted. If the question couldn't be answered immediately a written response would be issued in due course.

Mary Collett asked about the parking for the newly refurbished toilet block in the Town Centre as it had been made clear at the Disabled Users Group meeting that the only parking available will be on the car park in front of Asda. **Mary** asked whether the Disabled Parking Space that used to be by Iceland could be re-instated. There is little Disable Parking available in the Town Centre. **Phil Street** will take this back for further consideration.

Patricia Hackett asked that if parking is provided for Disabled People by the toilet block that there will be a sign indicating this and this will be kept under surveillance.

Joe Scott asked whether the last space at the end of the taxi rank could be designated for use by Disabled People.

Phil Street outlined other recent developments.

- 5.1** The Choice Based Lettings Scheme has now been introduced for public housing tenants. This Scheme gives people more choice and replaces the old points and list system.
- 5.2** The Budget for the next financial year is occupying a lot a time for managers and priorities have to be agreed. These will be finalised in February 2009.
- 5.3** Disability Facilities Grants – a number of changes have been made to improve the speed at which the system works.
- 5.4** The plans to provide improved toilet facilities including better disabled toilets and a Personal Care Suite are making good progress
- 5.5** A proposal to provide free swimming for older people was the subject of debate at the recent Full Council Meeting

- 5.6** All Departments in the Council are looking at their Equality Impact Assessment processes to ensure that the services meet the needs of all sections of the community.
- 5.7** The project to improve the railway station has been delayed because of a £6m gap in the funding.
- 5.8** Kevin Dicks is continuing his joint role as Chief Executive for Bromsgrove District Council and Acting Chief Executive for Redditch Borough Council. This is part of a general move to provide shared services which means better services for the same or less money.

Joe Wright asked why the Council approved free swimming for older people but not for younger people – this is an equality issue particularly given the demise of the facilities in Charford.

Phil explained that the way this initiative is being funded and the period of funding means that the Council might find itself in a years time with more costs. The difficulty is in trying to get the balance between providing services and not putting more strain on Council tax.

Tony Beirne explained that Central Government have a history of starting initiatives with some funding and then leaving Local Government with the responsibility for the longer term financial consequences.

A number of councils have agreed to do this and those councils will have an influx of non local people which could be a disadvantage to other users. It could have left Bromsgrove District Council with a shortfall of £100,000 to £180,000.

Jo Wright asked where this fits in with the aims and objectives of the 2012 Olympics as there is a need to train youngsters for this event? This doesn't seem to fit with the objective of encouraging more young people into sport. Is Bromsgrove District Council going to give further consideration to other ways of helping young people get involved in sport in other, more cost effective ways?

Tony Beirne is currently looking into various options for future service provision.

The Council is trying to balance the reasonableness of the provision of service and balance the books.

Trevor Rigg, as Chair stated that the Forum is a critical friend of the Council and this feels as if the Council is off the mark in this case.

Tony Beirne has checked with other nearby councils and we are in line with what they are doing. Central Government is sending mixed messages by not cutting back on new initiatives whilst not providing sufficient funding to grow those initiatives.

Tracey Hodges raised the issue that adults with learning difficulty can go free but their supporters/ enablers still get charged and without this support the adults concerned cannot access the services.

A future next meeting of the Disabled Users Group will be having a full discussion item on access to leisure services with someone from Sports and Leisure.

We are building on our first Children and Young People's event by holding a second event in partnership with Worcestershire County Council. This will involve the participants deciding how to spend money that they have been allocated.

The District Council does not have a statutory duty for young people but contributes to the theme group on the Local Strategic Partnership which is one of the best in the County.

It was agreed that as there are high feelings about this item it will be brought back to a future meeting.

6. Sharon Murphy – Benefits Welfare Officer

This was a new post when **Sharon** took it up. She visits people and provides them with help to make claims for Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit claim forms. She helps people to complete forms and where necessary refers them to other agencies.

She gets some requests for help from the Customer Service Centre.

She also works jointly with the County Council, for example assessing circumstances under Fairer Charging for Home Care. Part of the initiative is to try to reduce repetition of providing information for claims. She will also be involved in benefit take-up campaigns to make people more aware of what they can claim.

Nigel Godwin said that he had recently experienced deterioration in his health but during contact with various agencies had not been told that there was anyone like Sharon who could help him.

Nigel felt that he had been discriminated against, it wasn't that they were not interested but that they didn't know that this service exists. He can no longer he can't fill in any forms on his own.

It was accepted that **Nigel** should have been informed about this service by the Customer Service Centre.

Tony Beirne apologised for this but pointed out that the in the Customer Service Centre in the main has excellent satisfaction scores but even one poor experience is not acceptable.

7. Emma Barton – Health Improvement Manager

Emma started with Worcestershire Primary Care Trust in July. Emmas predecessor was previously based in the Princess Community Hospital and is now based with the District Council. This is now in common with the other Districts in Worcestershire.

Emma works with statutory and non statutory organisations and sits on most of the Local Strategic Partnership Themes Groups.

There is a Health and Wellbeing Theme Group with 2 sub groups – smoking and BECAN Bromsgrove Extended Community Activity Network

They are due to set up an alcohol sub group to work on issues around hospital admissions and anti social behaviour.

The minutes of the meetings held on 14th August mention an Activity Referral Scheme which is being launched in December this year. The Primary Care Trust has commissioned the Dolphin Centre to provide this service.

Emma will be trying to get General Practitioners involved – previously they weren't willing to be involved. Practice nurses will also be targeted.

Emma is willing to come back to a future meeting to discuss progress on this project and others.

The Activity Referral Scheme involves evaluation and assessment by Dolphin Centre staff who monitor progress. After the 12 week programme they can signpost people to do other things.

This is not a free a service and is based on needs but also based on the participant taking some responsibility for themselves. There is a concessionary rate of £12.50 – it is £25 for the full course

Tony Beirne asked how differently would things look in 2 years time? What would **Emma** see as being successful?

Emma said that a key aim is to reduce smoking, increase active participation in life, in particular to target deprived areas and reduce alcohol consumption.

Sat Aggarawal asked what happens at end of the 12 weeks?

Emma explained that a variety of activities and different options are available. There is a directory of places where a participant can continue their activities.

Jeff Edwards asked who it is who decides what is needed ?

A medical assessment is undertaken first at the GP's surgery. Then it is up to person to discuss suitable activities. It is not just about physical activity. It can be about exercise or mental health.

Mr B K Chaudhari asked whether initiatives about anti-social behaviour are in relation to alcohol? The concern seems to be about the physical rather than mental. What about people who commit acts of vandalism.

The Local Strategic Partnership have an action plan for mental health which includes Wellness at Work with employers in Bromsgrove. **Emma** is also having discussions about mental health with Age Concern.

The sports development activity previous held in the Spadesbourne Suite has now moved to the Dolphin Centre.

There is a £1 million bid for health improvement fund which communities can bid up to £75, 000 per project to improve health.

Emma is also doing outreach by going into schools – initiatives around some of these problems have to slot in with the curriculum.

8. Equality Officer's Highlight Report – 16th October 2008

8.1 The Equality and Diversity Forum

The regular meetings continue and next year's programme including the Conference needs to be agreed.

The annual meeting to take community bids was held in September and all the bids put forward were supported. It was agreed that the Forum would get reports and feedback from the initiatives undertaken in due course subject to final approval by the Full Council.

Trevor Rigg pointed out that the Equality and Diversity Forum has always sought to involve partners – the Police, BDHT, Hereford and Worcestershire Fire and Rescue and we want them to hear our points of view. However, we have not succeeded so far in getting the Primary Care Trust involved. We have tried numerous ways which haven't worked. The message this sends is not good. It seems as if the Primary Care Trust is telling us what they are doing from the top down. What we would like is to put our views forward and see them being taken on board. Anyone can sit on the Local Strategic Partnership as a member of the Health and Well Being Theme group. **Trevor** would like a representative from the Primary Care Trust at the equivalent level of Tony Love, Area Commander, West Mercia Police. **Emma** will take this back to her line manager.

In terms of continuously seeking to recruit new members to the Forum, **Fiona** reported that part of the work of the Equality Impact Assessment Working Group is looking at a logo for the Forum and developing a recruitment leaflet which can be displayed in any areas of public contact.

8.2 The Disabled Users Group

The Disabled Users Group has now agreed their Terms of Reference and the minutes of their minutes are now circulated to the Equality and Diversity Forum. A report will be taken at the Forum meetings from a member of the Disabled Users Group.

There was a discussion about the exclusive membership of the Group which has been raised as an issue by members of the Equality and Diversity Forum at the August meeting.

Fiona has consulted **Sandy Bannister** at the County Council about the arrangements for the Disabled Users Group at County level. There is no agreement on the lifetime of their group. The feeling amongst members of the Bromsgrove Disabled Users Group is that if the Group gets any bigger it will be difficult for people to get their views heard - they favour staying with the membership of the group as it is.

Fiona said that at some time this will have to be reviewed, perhaps when the Equalities Bill becomes law which is likely to establish a similar “involvement” requirement for all strands of equality that currently only applies to disability.

8.3 The Gender Equality Working Group

The Revised Draft Gender Equality Scheme is ready to go back to the Gender Equality Working Group who is meeting on 13th October. Subject to their comments and any further amendments, the revised Scheme will then need to go back to the Trade Union Liaison Group at the District Council.

The Gender Equality Working Group will be looking at a new training video and discussing the next steps of promoting the revised Scheme and developing a Gender Equality training module for employees.

Jo Wright asked whether the Council had carried out an Equal Pay audit?

Tony Beirne replied that a detailed audit of pay had been done through a Job Evaluation exercise which is due to be implemented in agreement with the recognised Trade Unions. There has been some delay because of a recent court case and discussions on implementation are continuing. Management are confident that the process was thorough and full upholds the principle of Equal Pay.

The Council has purchased a new training DVD which focuses on Gender Equality in relation to the culture of organisations. It was agreed that a selection of case studies from this video would be shown at a future meeting of the Forum.

This training DVD will be used as part of a new training module to promote Gender Equality.

8.4 The Equality Impact Assessment Working Group

The group reconvenes on 29th October to examine the selected Equality Impact Assessments. The managers from the relevant service departments will be attending to discuss the assessments which were completed for their services.

The group will select the next set of Equality Impact Assessments and agree the time and date for the next meeting.

They will also review the completed Assessment on the Equality and Diversity Forum and monitor the progress of the action plan at the end of the assessment.

8.5 The Inclusive Equalities Scheme

The review is still in progress and will be ready for the next meeting of the Forum on 18th December.

8.6 Bromsgrove Black History Society

The Society has met every month this year and has planned a detailed programme of activities for October. The leaflet and posters have been circulated.

In support of the programme, Bromsgrove District Council and Bromsgrove District Housing Trust are organising events for employees to increase interest in and understanding of Black History.

This is the best year so far and all those who have been involved in getting the programme organised have been invited to a celebratory event in December.

8.7 Diwali

A celebratory event is being organised by the Bromsgrove Indian Community Forum with the support of the District Council for Sunday 26th October. All members of the Forum are *cordially* invited.

8.8 Equalities e-consultation website

The Council's website designer is working on this and it should be ready for demonstration at the December meeting of the Forum.

8.9 "Being Different Together"

This is a County Wide project involving all the Councils in Worcestershire to promote equality and improve delivery of services. A detailed report has been prepared of the perceptions of the community of the services that they receive. This report is still being finalised and a summary will be made available for the December meeting of the Forum.

It was agreed that when this item has been clarified **Fiona** will bring it to the attention of the Forum.

8.10 The Equalities Bill

The Bill was published in June 2008. It sets out the Government's intentions to bring in further legislation which will

- create a new Equality Duty covering all six strands – race, disability, gender (including gender re-assignment) age, sexual orientation and religion or belief which will replace the current duties on race, disability and gender
- require Public Bodies in their role as employers to report on
 - gender pay
 - ethnic minority employment
 - disability employment
- require public bodies to tackle discrimination and promote equality through their purchasing functions
- outlaw unjustified age discrimination in the provision of services against over 18 year olds – this will not affect the differential provision of products or services for older people where this is justified
- extend positive action so that employers can take into account when selecting between two equally qualified candidates under-representation of disadvantaged groups
- strengthen enforcement by allowing Employment Tribunals to make wider recommendations in discrimination cases so that there are benefits for the rest of the workforce of the employer found to have discriminated

Jo Wright asked about the procurement policy of the Council in relation to the requirements of the Equalities Bill which places an increased emphasis on the behaviour of suppliers that from whom public bodies purchase goods and services?

Fiona replied that there is a detailed Procurement Strategy in place which gives guidance to suppliers about the expectations of the Council as a public authority. Seminars are held for suppliers on a regular basis but the District Council does not have the resources to check the actions of supplier organisations.

Mr B K Chaudhari commented that selecting people for jobs because of their race or gender has not worked at all well in India. **Fiona** clarified that the proposed change to the definition of Positive Action in the Bill makes it clear that a person can only be selected if they are able to do the job. They still can't be selected just because of their race or gender.

9. Future Agenda Items

Tony Love had agreed to come to a meeting to discuss how safe Bromsgrove is in the evenings, particularly the High Street and particularly for older people. This may have to be dealt with by **Tony's** successor as **Tony** is leaving the Bromsgrove District at the end of December.

Joe Scott asked whether the Highway Code for the users of mobility scooters had been acquired. **Fiona** will report back to the next meeting.

Meeting closed at 8.00 pm

Time, date and place of next meeting -

6.30 pm Thursday 18th December

The Committee Room

