



**Bromsgrove**  
District Council  
[www.bromsgrove.gov.uk](http://www.bromsgrove.gov.uk)

## **Equality and Diversity Forum**

**Meeting held on Thursday 12<sup>th</sup> February 2009**

<b>In attendance</b>	
Sat Aggarwal	Bromsgrove Indian Community Forum
Stuart Bray	Pinke.biz
Rebecca Dunne	Equality and Diversity Officer, Wyre Forest District Council
Claire Felton	Head of Legal, Equalities and Democratic Services, Bromsgrove District Council
Patricia Hackett	Mencap
Joan King	The Gender Trust
Eileen Mulhall	Worcestershire Association of Service Users
Councillor Stephen Peters	Diversity Champion for elected Members, Bromsgrove District Council
Kathleen Roche-Nagi	Approachable Coaching
Trevor Rigg	Bromsgrove Resident and Forum Chair
Fiona Scott	Equality Officer, Bromsgrove District Council
Rauf Shah	Oakley Residents Association
Keith Sherman	Chief Officer, Bromsgrove and District Age Concern
Phil Street	Executive Director of Services, Bromsgrove District Council
John Tempest	Worcestershire Mental Health Network
Carol Tipping	Secretary, Bromsgrove Older People's Forum
Julie Wright	Community Support Officer, West Mercia Police
P C Mark Townsend	West Mercia Police
Jo Wright	Bromsgrove Resident

<b>Apologies</b>	
Hugh Bennett	Assistant Chief Executive, Bromsgrove District Council
Tony Beirne	Executive Director, Bromsgrove District Council
Mr B K Chaudhari	Bromsgrove Indian Community Forum
Mary Collett	Worcestershire Association of Service Users
Kevin Dicks	Chief Executive, Bromsgrove District Council and Acting Chief Executive Redditch Borough Council
Jeff Edwards	Bromsgrove Older People's Forum, Bromsgrove and District NHS Retirement Fellowship
Stephen Haskey	Stephen Haskey Design and Construction Ltd
Tracey Hodges	Day Services Manager, Padstone Day Centre, Worcestershire County Council
Balbinder Kular-Taylor	Senior Positive Action Adviser, West Mercia Constabulary Head Quarters
Elaine Mortimore	Bromsgrove Youth Homelessness Forum
Jim Smith	North Worcestershire Disability Information and Advice Line
Councillor Roger Smith	Executive Cabinet, Bromsgrove District Council
Julie Wright	West Mercia Constabulary

### 1. Introductions and apologies

As Chair, **Trevor** welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked them for their attendance in the poor weather conditions. He asked everyone to introduce themselves and for those members who were attending for the first time, to say a bit about themselves.

Apologies as above.

### 2. Minutes of meeting held on 18<sup>th</sup> December 2008

The minutes were proposed for acceptance by as a true and accurate record by **Jo Wright** and seconded by **Eileen Mulhall**. Agreed.

### 3. Matters arising if not included on main agenda

Page 3 – item 6     6.1 to 6.9

A question had been raised in relation to the policy on gritting at the meeting at the December meeting. **Phil Street** advised that he had established that Councils are obliged to grit around their own buildings when the weather is bad.

The County Highways team grit the roads in accordance with weather reports through an emergency planning process called Silver Command. **Keith Sherman** asked that the legal position to be obtained in relation to people gritting the pavements themselves.

**PC Mark Townsend** reported that the police lawyers have advised that if people gritted outside their own houses and someone falls as a result then potentially, the householder would be liable.

**Keith** asked if the answer given was actually the law? **PC Townsend** reported that he was not aware that it was so but reiterated that it was the legal position that someone gritting could be liable if an accident occurred as a result of it.

**Rauf Shah** expressed his surprise that Council only had a responsibility to grit around their own buildings

**Phil** expressed his opinion that he did not feel that there is a definitive answer to the question. He felt that the legal advice was in relation to civil claims that may arise. The test of reasonableness would be applied but that a definitive answer was unlikely.

Referring to item 6.10, **Fiona** reported that she had tried to follow this up with **Jackie Treshie** and **Emma Barton** without success so far. This was in relation to both statistical information about the number of falls and the Level One falls assessment that the Primary Care Trust has recently introduced.

The Health and Well Being theme group of the Bromsgrove Local Strategic Partnership had discussed falls as an agenda item at a recent meeting. **Keith** and **Trevor** proposed that a letter be sent to Mr. Bates at the Primary Care Trust. **Fiona** agreed to draft a letter on behalf of the Forum and report back to the next meeting.

**Eileen Mulhall** reported that a relative of hers had had a fall and as a result had had a miscarriage.

#### **Page 4 – items 6.11 and 6.12**

**Trevor** requested an item on the next agenda in relation to the Town Centre and the Market Hall. **Trevor** also asked for an item on Bromsgrove being a safe place to live – **PC Townsend** agreed to arrange this for the next meeting.

**Patricia Hackett** asked whether temporary toilet facilities are going to be available whilst the Town Centre toilet block is being refurbished. **Phil** confirmed that arrangements are being made and agreed to report back to the next meeting.

**Patricia** added that 22<sup>nd</sup> to 28<sup>th</sup> June is Learning Disability Week and this year the theme will be the Mencap's national campaign, "Changing Places" which aims to increase the number of public facilities. This campaign could promote the new facilities in Bromsgrove.

**Fiona** confirmed that this information has been passed **Richard Savoury** who agrees that the timing is appropriate.

**Fiona** to make enquiries as to whether a link can be made between the opening of the refurbished toilet block, the Mencap campaign and the Countess of Wessex as she is the patron of Mencap.

#### **Page 5 – item 6.15**

Re the Multi Agency Resource Centre in Charford – **Phil** confirmed that the youth work provided by the Centre recommenced on Monday 9<sup>th</sup> February 2009.

#### **Page 5 – item 7**

##### **7.1 Community Transport**

There is a consultation event on Thursday 19<sup>th</sup> February to make key decisions about what vehicle to buy, what routes to be arranged and at what level the fares should be set.

Key partners and service users have been invited to this event and about 50 people are expected to attend. The service should be in operation sometime in July or August this year.

The drivers will be trained in the needs of the safety of all passengers using the vehicles including the need to safely secure wheelchair users.

##### **7.3 Community bids**

**Trevor** stated that the Equality and Diversity Forum should be involved in the progress of the activities undertaken through the bidding process and regular reports should come to the Forum. The bidding process itself should have this built in as a requirement and **Hugh Bennett** has agreed to ensure that the process for this year's bids will reflect this requirement.

Bids have been approved by the Full Council meeting and it has been agreed that the money will be paid over to the individuals or groups concerned in due course.

**Keith** stated that since those bids came from the Forum, it would be an appropriate part of the monitoring process for those groups to feed back to the forum to create a more sophisticated audit of the process. **Trevor** confirmed that this would be built into the programme of Forum meetings this year.

**Jo Wright** asked that groups be advised on when they will need to report back.

## Page 6 - item 9

**Jo** had asked for items relevant to the LGBT ( Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Trans-sexual ) community to be put on the agenda for the February meeting as February is LGBT History Month. **Fiona** confirmed that she had asked the police to attend to discuss the perception of safety and the issue of hate crime from the LGBT perspective but had been unable to achieve this.

**Jo** is looking for more positive items and proposed that a sub committee be set up to could work towards the organising of celebratory events for next year and to help find out more about the needs of the community in Bromsgrove. Administrative support for meetings and to produce publicity information will be provided by the Council.

**Trevor** apologised for misinterpreting the request made at the previous meeting.

**Jo** invited anyone from other groups to attend and participate and she was grateful for the support.

**Stuart Bray** said there are about 6,000 LGBT people living in Bromsgrove so there is a wider need for understanding of these issues.

**Jo** emphasised that LGBT History Month is all about positively identifying these issues.

The Gender Trust website ( [www.gender.org.uk](http://www.gender.org.uk) ) has a link the LGBT History Month website ( [www.lgbthistorymonth.org.uk](http://www.lgbthistorymonth.org.uk) ).

**Joan** agreed to do a presentation about trans-gender issues to a future meeting.

**John Tempest** suggested that the Gender Equality Working Group that already meets be used to take these issues forward.

## 4. Items from the Forum Chairman

**Trevor** reminded everyone why we are here, and of the need for mutual respect. The meetings of the Forum must set the standard to the rest of Bromsgrove in relation to being able to learn from each other.

An event to celebrate Chinese New Year took place at Guild Hall in Worcester on 8<sup>th</sup> February 2009 but nothing specific took place in Bromsgrove. **Trevor** suggested that we should look to develop something for next year.

## **5. Equality Highlight Report - Fiona Scott**

### **5.1 LGBT History Month**

The Corporate Calender for Bromsgrove District Council now shows February as the LGBT History Month. Details of the Worcestershire Police LGBT Forum have been displayed on the equalities notice board and the minutes of their meetings are available for staff on the Council's intranet.

### **5.2 The Gender Equality Working Group**

The revised Draft Gender Equality Scheme has been issued to the members of the Gender Equality Working Group for urgent last comments.

For the International Women's Day event in the Spadesbourne Suite on 6<sup>th</sup> March, **Fiona** is preparing some case studies of a diverse range of women, one of which will be Worcester born Vesta Tilley. There is to be an exhibition about her life at the Worcestershire County Museum, Hartlebury from 22<sup>nd</sup> March to 31<sup>st</sup> August.

**Joan** has provided information about trans-people for this purpose.

**Jo** suggested that the Citizens Advice Bureau be asked if they could provide someone for the event as there has been an increase of 8% in the level of reports of domestic violence apparently due to the current recession.

**Jo** asked how many of the businesses exhibiting on the 6<sup>th</sup> March are owned and/or managed by women? The event is being organised in partnership with Women In Rural Enterprise and all the businesses participating in the exhibition are owned by women.

### **5.3 The Equality and Diversity Forum**

It was agreed that the next Consultation Conference will be in September 2009. **Fiona** will identify a suitable date. Partners to be invited will include the Primary Care Trust.

### **5.4 The Disabled Users Group**

The February meeting had to be cancelled due to bad weather conditions. **Eileen** did not receive notification of the cancellation in time although fortunately she had checked with another group member. **Fiona** apologised for this.

The meeting has been re-arranged to Monday 9<sup>th</sup> March in order to ensure that the list of highways items is compiled in good time to send to **Jon Fraser** for his attendance at the April meeting. **Keith** requested that gritting actions and policy be one of the items. Agreed.

The minutes of the 12<sup>th</sup> December 2008 meeting of the Disabled Users Group should have been circulated with the papers for this meeting of the Equality and Diversity Forum. They will go out with the next set of papers.

### **5.5 The Equality Impact Assessment Working Group**

The Group is due to reconvene in April 2009. **Fiona** will arrange a meeting and send out an updated list of completed assessments for the group to choose from.

The involvement of community members in the scrutiny and completion of Equality Impact Assessments has been cited as good practice by the Local Government Association.

### **5.6 Bromsgrove Black History Society**

Most of the individual and partner events have now been written up and the full set will be circulated with the papers for the April meeting of the Forum.

### **5.7 Diwali**

In 2009 Diwali falls on Saturday 17<sup>th</sup> October. **Mr Aggarwal** confirmed that it is preferred that the event takes place on Sunday 18<sup>th</sup> October 2009. A meeting will take place with the Indian Community Forum representatives in the near future to discuss the arrangements.

### **5.8 Equalities e-consultation website**

An electronic invitation has been sent out to all those Equality and Diversity Forum members who have internet access. The invitation shows a link to [www.bdc-e-equalities.blogspot.com](http://www.bdc-e-equalities.blogspot.com)

The instructions to accept the invitation are self explanatory and so far 4 people have accepted. The wording of a new poster for staff has been put on the website for comments. The poster was the circulated to the meeting.

**Keith** had looked at the website and now, seeing the poster itself said that the website version does not give enough context to the words as it does not explain the layout and the link with arrows to the word “Equality”. More explanation in the introduction would have been helpful. The website itself is not very user friendly in appearance.

The website makes use of free software so therefore is very limited and basic. It will not support attachments or documents so we can only show the wording or text of something. However, it is easier to access than the previous Equality and Diversity Forum website.

It was agreed that those Forum members who have been invited will complete the registration process and report back to the next meeting of the Forum when a live demonstration will be given.

## **5.9 Being Different Together**

Bromsgrove District Council has asked for a Peer Challenge ( officers and elected Members from other Councils ) to test our claim that we have reached Level 3 of the Local Government Equality Standard. We will be asking for volunteers to attend a focus group meeting in April to discuss your views with the Peer Assessors.

## **5.10 Diversity Week**

This was funded by Advantage West Midlands and hopefully will be repeated in November 2009.

## **5.11 Highway Code for Mobility Scooter Users**

This has been circulated to the Disabled Users Group and the Equality and Forum. It was generally well received but no clear consensus has been established as to whether Bromsgrove District Council should produce a local version.

## **5.12 Review of the Inclusive Equalities Scheme**

**Fiona** is still working on this review and a summary of some of the evidence is included in the Highlight report – attached at the end of these minutes. The Review will form a main agenda item at a future meeting of the Forum.



## **6. Items from the Chief Executive – Kevin Dicks**

### **Items from the floor**

**Phil Street** undertook this item in Kevin's absence.

**Keith** drew the attention of the meeting to the issue of the limited time now available for this item. He felt that there was a lack of respect for the item itself to expect that it could be appropriately discharged in the little time left.

He proposed that from this point onwards, the meeting should be timetabled to finish at 8.30 pm rather than 8.00 pm. This was agreed.

- 6.1** **John Tempest** raised the subject of a letter published in the Bromsgrove Advertiser entitled "concern for your neighbour". **John** suggested that this group ( the Forum ) publish something in the paper to support the Chief Executive. It was agreed that Anne Marie Darroch would be invited to the next meeting of the Forum to discuss this.
- 6.2** **Phil** gave a brief over view of the recent Corporate Performance Assessment results which has given Bromsgrove District Council a "**Fair**" rating over our previous rating of "**Poor**". The Council was in fact very close to "**Good**".
- 6.3** There was a participatory budgeting event called Udecide on Friday 23<sup>rd</sup> January aimed at Children and Young people. The event was held at the Dolphin Centre where the participants could choose how to spend £50,000 which has been allocated to them.
- 6.4** Bromsgrove District Council is continuing to explore joint working with our neighbouring district, Redditch Borough Council.
- 6.5** Christmas Lights – A new set of lights were installed in Bromsgrove High Street and in Rubery. The hope is to improve the general appearance of the High Street at Xmas.
- 6.6** The Council Budget has been considered and approved.
- 6.7** There is to be a housing needs assessment of older people.
- 6.8** Youth work continues in Charford
- 6.9** The Longbridge Area Action Plan has been published.
- 6.10** In 2009, the Housman Society will be celebrating the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the birth of A E Housman.

- 6.11** The Customer Service Centre is offering a “pod” or desk for surgeries to Voluntary Sector and Community groups. **Jo Wright** asked about display facilities and how they could be accessed?

The approach needs to be made to either the manager, Roger Horton or the assistant manager, Val Jarvis who will arrange for display material on the flat screen. Use of notice boards is also possible but this needs to be arranged through Julie Heyes.

- 6.12** The Council has established a Task Force on issues arising from the “credit crunch”.

## **7. Future Agenda Items**

Town Centre redevelopment plans

The Market Hall

The provision of public transport in the Bromsgrove District.

Speaker from the Primary Care Trust – Assessing and Recording Falls

**The meeting closed at 8.10 pm**

**Time, date and place of next meeting –**

**6.30 pm Thursday 9<sup>th</sup> April 2009**

**The Committee Room**



**Signed**

**Trevor Rigg – Chair**

**Date**



## **The Equality and Diversity Forum**

### **Equality Highlight Report – 12<sup>th</sup> February 2009**

#### **1. LGBT History Month – February**

February has been recognised as **LGBT History Month** since 2005 – **LGBT means Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Trans-Sexual.**

**LGBT History Month** is an event designed to introduce a previously “hidden” history to school children in particular as well as to the wider population. Because this history is overlooked in the national curriculum many people in the LGBT community as well as the wider community are unaware of the events and the people who have come before and have made a contribution to history. This means that the contribution which LGBT people have made to society as whole is generally not known and therefore not recognised. LGBT History Month seeks to remedy this lack of historical information by celebrating this history and recognising the contributions made by members of the LGBT community.

A.E.Housman was born in Fockbury, a hamlet on the outskirts of Bromsgrove in 1859. He met and fell in love with a young man while at Oxford but his feelings were not reciprocated. He later travelled Europe indulging in passions which Britain forbade. His brother, Laurence was an early homosexual rights activist.

#### **2. The Gender Equality Working Group**

The revised Draft Gender Equality Scheme will be published in early March 2009 and launched at the International Women’s Day event on 6<sup>th</sup> March 2009. The event will be held in the Spadesbourne Suite from 10.30 am to 3.30 pm – for further details see advertising flyer. The event is open to women and men.

There will be a display table by the Council with information relevant to gender equality, for example, the Hate Crime Incident reporting procedure, services provided for women ( and men ) suffering domestic violence ), details of support groups etc. We hope to have a TV set up showing DVDs relevant to gender equality and LGBT equality.

We will produce a diverse set of positive case studies of women, famous or otherwise, from different ethnic backgrounds, lesbian and trans.

### **3. The Equality and Diversity Forum**

The 2009 programme of meetings for the Forum and the Disabled Users Group has been circulated.

The next Consultation Conference could be early October. This will replace the meetings of the two groups in that month.

Who should attend the conference?

Bromsgrove District Council – Senior Management Team  
and all Heads of Service

Representatives of all the political groups elected to the Council

Parish Councillors

County Council officers for

Highways  
Transport  
Customer Services  
Equality and Diversity

Main partners    Bromsgrove District Housing Trust  
Age Concern  
West Mercia Police

Should we aim to combine our Conference with a County Community Fair for Bromsgrove? If so, we might need a bigger venue.

Consider establishing a small working group later this year.

#### **4. The Disabled Users Group**

The minutes of their meetings are now circulated with the papers for the Equality and Diversity Forum and go to the Corporate Management Team and the Executive Cabinet of the Council.

The Bromsgrove Disabled Access Group has reconvened and the minutes of their meetings and any written replies from the Council will be circulated with the papers to the Disabled Users Group and the Equality and Diversity Forum.

The Council has agreed to print an advertising flyer for the Bromsgrove Disabled Access Group and to distribute it through Council contact points and arrange for it to be distributed in Bromsgrove libraries.

The Disabled Users Group has had presentation on the changed eligibility for Blue Badges and several discussions on changes to sheltered housing provision in Bromsgrove.

The Group will be drawing up a list of issues at the next meeting in February in relation to Highways. Jon Fraser from the Highways Department at Worcestershire County Council has agreed to come to the April meeting of the Group to discuss the list.

#### **5. The Equality Impact Assessment Working Group**

Group reconvened on 29<sup>th</sup> October and examined six selected Equality Impact Assessments. All the managers except one from the service departments attended and had a discussion with the Working Group.

The comments made have now been added to each of the Assessments and the full Assessments have now been posted on the Internet under a new page for the Equality and Diversity Forum.

The involvement of members of the Equality and Diversity Forum in the completion of the Home Choice Plus Equality Impact Assessment has now been identified as best practice by the Improvement and Development Agency for Local Government.

## **6. Bromsgrove Black History Society**

The 2008 programme was a success with events for the public at the Artrix and Bromsgrove Library. Puppet theatre shows for 3-5 year old school children were performed at 5 schools. The puppet show "The Sun Has Got His Hat On" has been recognised as best practice by the Arts Council who have supported a national tour of this show.

Events for staff were held at Bromsgrove District Housing Trust and Bromsgrove District Council and a partnership link was made between the District Council and the North Bromsgrove High School Gambian Link.

An overall write up of each of the events is being co-ordinated by Fiona and this will be provided to the next meeting of the Forum.

## **7. Diwali**

The 2008 event was held on 26<sup>th</sup> October to which all members of the Forum were cordially invited. It was attended by over 120 people including people from all sections of the Community in Bromsgrove. The Leader of the Council ( Councillor Mr R Hollingworth ) and the Chairman of the Council ( Councillor Mrs C Spencer ) both attended and were presented with garlands of Indian flowers during the introductory ceremony. There were art workshops for older age school children making lanterns and hanging decorations during the afternoon and this continued into the evening.

Diwali will fall on Saturday 17<sup>th</sup> October 2009.

## **8. Equalities e-consultation website**

The new version of this website has now been activated and all Forum members on email will have received a notification.

This website won't support attachments and documents but will allow an online discussion about items posted in the spaces available on the website pages.

## **9. Being Different Together**

The report about Worcestershire was delayed due to contractual difficulties which have been resolved and the report is currently being redrafted by a new consultant and will be ready by end of March 2009.

In accordance with the objectives of the Being Different Together project Bromsgrove District Council has arranged for a "Peer Challenge" to our claim that we have reached Level 3 of the Local Government Equality Standard.

## **10. Diversity Week – report back**

Three members of staff attended events during the week. Two attended the event "Taking the Pulse" about disability and Fiona attended a conference about managing trans-gender employees and customers.

## **11. Highway Code for Mobility Scooters**

The document produced by Herefordshire Council was adopted as a good practice example from Conway County Council. It is not enforceable.

It would need to be adapted for Bromsgrove as the District Council does not have a Road Safety Unit. The reference to this would either need to be removed or an agreement reached with the County Council.

There would be a cost to producing a customised version for Bromsgrove and there would be a need to consult organisations and then publicise it.

## **12. Review of the Inclusive Equalities Scheme**

The review is in draft form and further examples and evidence are being collected from service departments.

The lifetime of the Scheme is to be extended for a further 18 months to June 2011. This allows us more time to complete the actions committed to 2006. It will also allow for the possibility of a change in the legal requirements due to the proposals in the Equality Bill and will bring our 3

year Scheme cycles in line with the County Council's Single Equalities Scheme.

Conducting this review has enabled some of redrafting that is needed to produce a really good policy document. The sections on Sexuality, Religion or Belief and Age were particularly weak as was the Gender Equality Scheme although that has now been redrafted separately and will be published in March 2009.

Some of the main achievements are listed herewith.





## **Review of the Inclusive Equalities Scheme**

### **1. The Local Government Equality Standard**

- Level Two was achieved and independently verified in December 2007
- Level Three - a Peer Challenge Assessment has been arranged for April 2008 in anticipation of the recognition of Level 3 achievement against the Local Government Equality Standard transferring to the appropriate level under the Local Government Equality Framework
- Action on achieving targets has started
  - Training for employees and elected Members in Equality and Diversity, the Statutory Equality Duties, Disability Equality and Equality Impact Assessments has been carried out and there is a continuing programme to improve and update knowledge and skills.
  - The Bromsgrove Hate Incident Partnership and process was launched in July 2007 with 22 Reporting Centres established. Reports of incidents have been received and appropriately dealt with.
  - The Disability Equality project worker was seconded from Scope for six months in 2007 and a detailed report was produced and published "Achieving Disability Equality in the Bromsgrove District".
  - Plans have been finalised for the design and build of a Personal Care Suite in the refurbished Bromsgrove Town Centre toilet block – this project is expected to be completed by June 2009.

- We achieved the √√ ( “Disability Two Ticks symbol” ) in relation to the employment of disabled people in partnership with Job Centre Plus in January 2008.
- The Disabled Users Group has been set up and is now meaningfully involved in the decisions which affect disabled people – the provision of community transport, the design of the Town Centre, access to buildings, shops.
- Funds were made available for Community based projects promoting equality in 2008 – these included
  - a drama theatre project for adults with learning disability called “Us and Our Education” which enabled them to tell their own story. This has resulted in a partnership with these adults to assist with tasks that support Shopmobility.
  - Bromsgrove Black History Society organised series of puppet theatre events for 3-5 year old school children telling the story of Black History
  - The Bromsgrove Indian Community Forum organised a celebration of Diwali including groups from all sections of the community and arts workshops for children
- Similar and further community projects are planned for 2009 covering
  - Black history
  - Indian cultural activities in recognition of Diwali
  - Advocacy support for older people
  - Community support group for disabled people
  - Allotment project for adults with learning disability
  - Support and social network for lesbian and gay community

## 2. Race Equality

- Black History month is celebrated in Bromsgrove every year in October. The activities of Bromsgrove Black History Society have been supported by Bromsgrove District Council in partnership with Bromsgrove District Housing Trust and West Mercia Police since 2005 by providing officer time, facilities and funding.
- Events for younger age school children have focused on arts activities explaining Black History through puppet theatre. This has now been recognised as good practice by the Arts Council who have supported a national promotional tour of this event.
- Other activities include film, dance and theatre at the Artrix focusing on black artistes and themes promoting positive images of black people and their contribution to society.
- In 2008 the Council ran activities to promote black history to employees in partnership with Bromsgrove North High School and the Gambian Link. This focused on the historical links that Britain has with the Gambia, an exhibition about the Gambian and the exchange of high school students which take place every year. There were talks and slide shows about the Gambia and a collection of useful items for the Link.
- In 2008 in partnership with the Bromsgrove Indian Community Forum an event was organised to celebrate Diwali involving a wide cross section of the community and arts workshop activities for children.
- The District Council supports and participates in the annual County Council Community Fairs in North Worcestershire which are aimed at Black and Asian Minority communities and promote Council services to residents.
- The Council supports and promotes the Annual Holocaust Memorial Day. A memorial service is held at St. Johns Church which is attended by the Chairman.
- Ethnic Access Link provides an interpreting and translation service for those who need assistance to access services. This is advertised in a multi-language panel on Council publications, an insert sheet is sent with all correspondence, all "Front of House" contact points and on the

Council's website. The service has enabled community members to participate in interviews and community events, to complete forms to claim benefits and enter their details on the Register of Electors.

- Ethnic Access Link provide free “English as a Second Language” training and a range of advisory services to Worcestershire community members including a Polish Clinic and free home tutorial language services.
- The Council's website has an online translation facility which is accessed by clicking on the international flags at the bottom of the main website page.

### **3. Disability Equality**

- The report “Achieving Disability Equality in the Bromsgrove District” was published in November 2007 and provided the evidence of the need for a “Personal Care Suite” which has now been designed with the involvement of community members and the Disabled Users Group.
- The existing town centre toilet block will be completely refurbished to include two separate unisex accessible toilets, the ordinary men's and women's toilets will each include at least one wider cubicle.
- It will also have a separate personal care room large enough for 3 people with a separate toilet for carers to use – this will only be accessed with a Radar key or equivalent.
- The refurbished toilet block is expected to be ready by May/ June 2009.
- The Elections service is carrying out a programme of awareness raising visits to residential homes in the Bromsgrove District to ensure that the Register of Electors is up to date and that the postal voting procedure is understood. Wardens in these residential homes are now including electoral registration information in the induction packs issued to new residents.
- Regular work experience opportunities have been provided to disabled students from Chadsgrove School. Other work experience has been provided to disabled graduates leading to other opportunities or paid

employment elsewhere. These opportunities will continue to be provided whenever possible.

- Bromsgrove Customer Service Centre staff are trained to receive telephone calls through BT Type Talk from hearing impaired service users.
- The look and feel of the Council's website has been changed to make it clearer to read.
- The Council's website can be magnified and a Browse Aloud facility can be downloaded.
- A welfare officer has been appointed who visits people in their homes and assists them with the completion of forms and access to other services through advice and signposting.
- A tactile map of the Town Centre for Braille readers is being developed with the involvement of blind service users.
- A Shopmobility users map for is being developed showing the most convenient routes around town and indicating where the dropped kerbs are.
- In response to the Scope Access Audit we have
  - installed an automatic door for the Members entrance at the Council House
  - widened the access ramp for the Spadesbourne Suite
  - improved the signage and arrangements for Blue Badge allocated spaces in Pay and Display car parks
  - refurbished the main contact point in the Council House and relocated Planning Surgeries from an upstairs contact point to the ground floor of the Council House
  - refurbished Amphlett Hall and improved external and internal access
  - installed a hearing loop in the Spadesbourne Suite
  - at the Dolphin Centre, a full review of the accessible changing and toilet facilities has resulted in extra grab rails, shower seats and alarm pull cords being installed.
  - extra colour contrasting bands added to doorways, pillars/posts, light switches, new colour contrasting manifestations on the entrance door and nosings on all stairs

- purchase of a spare Oxford Dipper pool hoist for swimming pool usage
- doors and access ramp have been refitted to allow easy entrance and egress for all including mobility scooter users
- Disabled people have been involved in wheelchair access audits of the Artrix.
- Annual surveys of Polling Stations are conducted and Polling stations where possible have been moved to more accessible buildings.
- In February 2008 20 taxi drivers signed up for an NVQ in Road Passenger Transport. This NVQ included disability awareness and advice and the need to give assistance to disabled passengers.
- The provision of Disabled Facilities Grants showed that in the first half of 2008
  - there has been a 58% increase in the number of grants completed
  - there has been a 71% increase in the spend
  - this has benefited 137 families with children and other dependants and disabled people
- All our publications explain how to request documents in alternative formats – large print, Braille, audio CD or tape.
- Together Bromsgrove is provided on audio CD on a request.
- Recycling calendars have been provided in Braille and Large Print.
- Letters have been provided on audio CD.
- The Consultation Conference and Achieving Disability Equality reports have been distributed in standard and Large Print versions.
- Braille copies of the above documents have been provided on request.
- An Easy Read Version of the Disability Equality Scheme was published in the summer of 2007.

#### **4. Gender Equality**

- The plans for the refurbished town centre toilet block include a separate baby changing facility with a toilet which is available to parents and carers of both sexes.
- A selected group of service users was involved in site visits to agree the refurbishment of the town centre toilet block and the facilities that will be provided which include parent and baby changing facilities and a personal care suite for higher care needs.
- In both the Gents and the Ladies toilets one cubicle will be of an enlarged size to facilitate the needs of people with small children, shopping, mobility aids etc.
- The town centre toilet block will be refurbished to re-open in June 2009 and the facilities for baby changing will be available to men and women.
- The implementation of an access survey of polling stations will assist parents with children when attending to vote.
- The Council operates a salary sacrifice childcare voucher scheme administered by Busy Bees.
- Sports Development offers a full programme of activities and support participation for both genders in all sports. Programmes offered are fully inclusive within National Governing Body Guidelines.
- A range of programmes is targeted specifically at teenage girls and offering a broader spectrum of non-traditional sports such as cheerleading, trampolining, ultimate Frisbee etc.
- Active Angels – holiday scheme run by Sports Development that combines physical activities such as cheerleading and netball with arts activities such as face painting and costume making. Similar scheme now being developed to appeal to boys, though both schemes are offered to both genders.
- The Council participates in a scheme to support employees who are victims of domestic violence.

- With our partner, Bromsgrove District Housing Trust we support the Sanctuary Scheme for victims of domestic violence and provide financial support for women's refuges.
- We work in partnership with the Youth Service to address school bullying with the aim of increasing awareness through education and reducing the risk of domestic violence in later life.



## **5. Sexuality Equality**

- New staff attend an induction process in which the Equal Opportunity Policy, which covers sexuality, is explained to them. New staff are required to sign to say that they have received and understood this policy.
- Equality and Diversity Part One uses video training scenarios which focus on the inappropriateness of the use of certain words in relation to sexuality.
- Evaluation shows that these courses have been well received and as a result of the training, staff understand their responsibilities better than they did before.
- We have consulted on the extension of the collection of equality monitoring data to include sexuality and plan to implement this for service delivery from April 2009.
- This information will enable service departments to monitor the effect of their policies on sexuality and inform the development of new policies.
- Local people are seeking to establish a Bromsgrove support group with the support of the Council.
- The Council liaises with the Worcestershire Police LGBT Forum and circulates their information to staff and members of the Equality and Diversity Forum.

## **6. Religion or Belief**

- New staff go through an induction process in which the Equal Opportunity Policy, which covers religion or belief, is explained to them. New staff are required to sign to say that they have received and understood this policy.
- Equality and Diversity Part One uses video training scenarios which focus on the inappropriateness in the assumptions made about people who observe a particular religion.
- Events and meetings are planned as far as possible to avoid any religious majority or minority holidays or festivals.

- The access questionnaire for attendance at meetings and Conferences asks for dietary requirements including vegetarian, halal or kosher - these foods are provided if required.
- The access questionnaire also asks for the need for a prayer room or quiet room and prayer rooms are provided at Conferences.
- When Conferences or meetings have co-incided with Ramadan, and food is available a pack of food and a drink is provided for those fasting to take away with them.
- All buffets are 50% vegetarian.
- We have consulted on the extension of the collection of equality monitoring data to include religion or belief and plan to implement this for service delivery from April 2009.
- This will assist in the completion of equality impact assessments and the resultant business planning.
- The Employment Equality Regulations were extended to provide legal protection against discrimination on the grounds of religion or belief in the provision of Goods, Facilities and Services.

## **7. Age Equality**

- In the 2008 Democracy Week, electoral services visited 3 schools with the Council Chairman and played democracy games with schoolchildren aged 9-10. This raised awareness of democratic process and encouraged interest in local democracy amongst future voters.
- The Elections service is carrying out a programme of awareness raising visits to residential homes in the Bromsgrove District to ensure that the Register of Electors is up to date and that the postal voting procedure is understood. Wardens in these residential homes are now including electoral registration information in the induction packs issued to new residents.

- The Council has refurbished Amphlett Hall and much improved the external and internal access which helps to support the needs of groups of older people who use the Hall.
- The Equalities Bill proposes to extend legal protection against discrimination on the grounds age in the provision of Goods, Facilities and Services.
- Age is only used as a criterion for the provision of Council services where it is relevant to do so although some services are specifically provided for certain age groups, for example Sports Services to schools and clubs, housing for older residents.
- We have developed and implemented a process enabling employees to continue working after current normal retirement age
- We make job opportunities open to job applicants already over normal retirement age



