



The Equality and Diversity Forum

Minutes of Meeting held on Thursday 13th August 2009

In attendance	
Mr Sat Aggarwal	Bromsgrove Indian Community Forum
Tony Beirne	Executive Director - Partnerships & Projects, Bromsgrove District Council
Jackie Benson	Bromsgrove District Housing Trust
Mr B K Chaudhari	Bromsgrove Indian Community Forum
Mary Collett	Bromsgrove Disabled Access Group and Worcestershire Association of Service Users
Nuala Dalton	Bromsgrove Resident
Rebecca Dunne	Senior Policy and Performance Officer (Community Engagement) Bromsgrove District Council
Cllr Geoff Denaro	Elected Member and Executive Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Legal, Equalities and Democratic Services
Jeff Edwards	Bromsgrove Older People's Forum
Claire Felton	Head of Legal, Equalities and Democratic Services, Bromsgrove District Council
Patricia Hackett	Mencap and Bromsgrove resident
Councillor Stephen Peters	Elected Member for Bromsgrove District Council and Worcestershire County Council, Diversity Champion for elected Members, Bromsgrove District Council
Deborah McIntosh	West Mercia Police (representing Bal Kular-Taylor)
Julie Moss	Administrative Assistant – Equalities Department
Eileen Mulhall	Worcestershire Association of Service Users
Trevor Rigg	Bromsgrove Black History Society ,Chair of Forum
Kathleen Roche- Nagi	Bromsgrove resident, Approachable Coaching
Fiona Scott	Equality Officer, Bromsgrove District Council
Mr Rauf Shah	Oakley Road Residents Association
Sonia Spurr	Community Engagement Manager – Primary Care Trust
Carole Tipping	Secretary, Bromsgrove Older People's Forum
John Tempest	Worcestershire Mental Health Network
P C Mark Townsend	West Mercia Police
Lynn Ward	Pertemps Disability Consultancy
Julie Wright	West Mercia Police
Jo Wright	Bromsgrove resident

Apologies	
Liz Altay	Worcestershire Primary Care Trust
Sandy Bannister	Worcestershire County Council
Hugh Bennett	Assistant Chief Executive, Bromsgrove District Council
Stuart Bray	Pinke.biz
Kevin Dicks	Joint Chief Executive – Bromsgrove District and Redditch Borough Councils
Mark Eastwood	Bromsgrove resident
Nigel Godwin	Bromsgrove resident
Tracy Hodges	Day Services Manger, Bromsgrove and Redditch
Rukhsana Koser	Worcestershire County Council
Sandra Langford	Stroke Association
Keith Sherman	Chief Office, Age Concern Bromsgrove and District

1. Introductions and apologies

Trevor welcomed everyone and commented on the success of the group. Trevor re-iterated that everyone had the right to discuss but were to respect each others rights, especially when working in groups. This group sets the tone for the rest of Bromsgrove.

Apologies – noted as above.

2. Minutes of meeting held on 11th June 2009

Acceptance of the minutes was proposed **Patricia Hackett** and seconded by **John Tempest**.

3. Matters Arising if not included on main agenda

None

4. Items from the Forum Chair

Opening of refurbished toilets block

Bromsgrove should be proud of this achievement. A vote of thanks was noted to all those who had been involved in the opening of the Changing Places facilities and congratulations were due to them for the success of the project.

Mr Chaudri – commented that not many members of the Equality and Diversity Forum had known about the opening.

Trevor stated that most people invited to the opening event were those who were actively involved in the project although Forum was represented.

There was some confusion over the fact that there were two separate meetings on the day and two different groups of people attended, a few people were invited to both meetings. **Fiona** explained that it was not possible to invite everyone to the opening event due to the need to manage numbers .

Trevor commented that this should be a learning point and maybe at similar events in future we could invite the public as it was a facility for Bromsgrove.

Patricia was asked to go through the history of the project and the reason for the need for the Changing Places facility.

Patricia showed two DVDs on why Changing Places was needed and the impact it had on people's lives. Learning Disability Week in June 2009 had the theme of Changing Places, Changing Lives. There are six Changing Places toilets now in West Midlands including the one in Bromsgrove - Birmingham hasn't got even got one. The feedback about the Bromsgrove facility has been very positive. Bromsgrove is on the holiday route so it will be very convenient for travellers. It will also be promoted in MENCAP's magazine. Application forms to access Changing Places are available and currently being issues. Access is by a Personal Identification Number, not by RADAR key as many people have these and they are easy to get hold of. Padstone Day Centre have agreed to train people as needed on the use of the equipment inside.

Arrangements will be made for those on the holiday route to be able to contact Bromsgrove District Council to get a temporary Personal Identification Number to enable access. Times of opening for Changing Places toilets are on the website www.changing-places.org. The Changing Places toilet is available 24 hours a day for those with Personal Identification Number

The other toilets in Bromsgrove are open from 7.00 am to 6.00 pm.

Eileen asked for assurance that the touch pad is easy to use for those with poor eyesight? Carers will be present with the users of Changing Places. **Eileen** can check the outside of the door for herself and can let us know if it is not clear.

Fiona explained that there is a rolling programme to contact identified local organisations who provide care or other services to people who would benefit from the ability to access the Changing Places toilet. This programme will continue throughout September. Those organisations with the highest needs have already been issued with the required information.

RADAR keys are available at Shop Mobility and the Customer Service Centre. There is a small charge. Shopmobility will loan them or give them to people and although they should be returned this does not always happen.

5. Questions from the floor for Tony Beirne, Executive Director of Services on behalf of Kevin Dicks, Joint Chief Executive for Bromsgrove District and Redditch Borough Councils

5.1 Shared Services

Jo Wright – asked how the merger of the two councils, Bromsgrove and Redditch, will affect organisations like the Equality and Diversity Forum

Tony explained that the Council needs to save money but the two councils have not merged. They are still independent councils although they share officers and Kevin is to be the joint Chief Executive for three years. The management structure will be slimmed down.

Mr Chaudhari asked whether this will be beneficial?

Yes – funding for management posts is being tightened so that front line services can be maintained. There has been a report by a consultancy called SERCO recommending the way forward. **Kevin** is going to put forward a structure for management services, which subject to agreement will be implemented across both councils.

Councillor Denaro added that there will be a saving of £2.8 million over five years, which is £1.4 million for each council. The public should not be affected as services will be the same.

Will the savings be passed on to the public in the form of reduction of council tax refunds?

Councillor Denaro stated that the government grant is not likely to increase because of the economic situation so we don't know. The next spending review is not being carried out. The council hopes that efficiency savings will be passed on.

Claire Felton has been involved in setting up an Equality and Diversity Forum in Redditch along similar lines to Bromsgrove. Both Bromsgrove and Redditch have individual needs so the separate councils need to retain their identities.

Tony re-iterated that the two councils will be sharing services. Both councils are presently rated as “fair”, (although Bromsgrove should really have been “good”). Therefore they can face the challenges to come which are due to the state of the economy. Wider changes are also being sought across the county to keep money on the front line.

Trevor appealed to group to keep their ears open and bring the concerns of local residents to the Forum.

Bromsgrove Urban and Rural Transport is an example of a project which has benefited from a joint working relationship between Bromsgrove and Redditch.

5.2 Housing

Jackie Benson agreed to answer general questions but as the group had not prepared for this and items might have to be returned to at a later date. She confirmed that she was happy to respond to any items relating to Equality and

Diversity in this Forum meeting but that other matters should be directed to those agencies and providers concerned.

Eileen stated that she was concerned about the needs of elderly residents who are facing cuts in services especially because of the reduction in warden provided services.

The wardens are funded through Supporting People but carers funding has been changed so that they are targeted at people who need their support. They promote floating support mechanisms which encourage people to be independent. The focus is now on people being independent. These guidelines must be complied with if funding is to be obtained so Bromsgrove District Housing Trust have very little choice.

Another issue is meals. The provider was chosen by customers leading Bromsgrove District Housing Trust to make their directly employed cooks redundant. Concerns can be raised at any time but the contracts have now been now awarded.

Customer surveys show that most people are more satisfied than previously, contrary to expectations, although this obviously only reflects the views of those who actually responded.

Carol Tipping stated that there was a meeting with the meals provider last week but little notice was given for residents to attend. This meeting was told that if more people did not have meals, the service would be abandoned in three weeks time.

Jackie confirmed that she did not know about this meeting.

Carol re-iterated that the meals are poor but residents are frightened to say.

Jackie will discuss these concerns with her colleagues.

Trevor said that we must not let the media tell us what is happening. Concerns should be brought to the Forum by members. There are obviously concerns that need to be clarified and resolved. Bromsgrove District Housing Trust will be invited to a future meeting to report, once **Jackie** has spoken with her colleagues.

5.3 Hate Crime

Trevor reported that there had been a meeting of Bromsgrove Hate Incident Partnership this week and asked whether there should be a representative from the Partnership at this Forum?

Mark Townsend explained that the Police Hate Crime Unit is withdrawn at the moment as there are too few incidents in Bromsgrove to justify two Detective Constables. However, it could be reintroduced if necessary. The crime rate in Bromsgrove is low and there has been an 11% reduction in crime last year and a further 2.5% this year. Aggravated robbery is now the focus for police activity. The police's offer of attendance at yesterday's meeting was declined.

Mark explained that Redditch Police station is currently overstaffed. Bromsgrove will get more student officers. The number of Divisional Inspector's roles is reduced from 4 to 3. Bromsgrove will be one Inspector down. The three Chief Inspectors will have portfolios to deal with areas of business rather than a district.

The areas of business have been readjusted in order for response officers to move to meet high levels of crime. More officers are needed for the 2-10 shift or the half night shift until 4.00 am to cover nightclub activity. Community Support Officers will be more available at the times when they are most needed.

The shortfall in funding means that other areas will be reduced to keep officers on the streets. Office-bound jobs will be lost. There will be two rather than three licensing officers, and more support officers working with agencies to reduce the fear of crime. Despite the low crime rate, the public have a low opinion of the police force; therefore, the police need to focus on customer care and listen to what people want.

There will be increased hours at the front counter at Redditch police station and more police officers on the streets but less managerial roles.

A diary car has been staffed who will complete tasks left by officers going off duty or, to make pre-arranged appointments. These are currently left for too long until the officer returns to work.

Jackie reminded the meeting that 64% of hate crime is unreported. The reporting centre at Bromsgrove District Housing Trust is trying to encourage reporting as the figure is so low. How will the police respond if more incidents are reported but the unit is currently withdrawn?

Mark replied that the public protection unit will be available.

Jo Wright stated how pleased she was that on a recent visit to Bromsgrove Police Station, posters were displayed clearly discouraging homophobic hate crime. Booklets were available showing how to deal with it. Where else are these booklets available?

They are available on line and from libraries, doctors' surgeries, the Hub etc.

Eileen reported that on a recent occasion on visiting the police station she and her family were treated well and she had benefited from her hate crime training so that she could advise family members.

Mr Chaudhari asked whether in the current, economic climate the police are still available for working with first schools etc?

Yes, even Traffic Wardens are involved in the school holidays. The Youth Inclusion Officer goes into schools and this fits in with the requirements of the National Curriculum.

Deborah McIntosh stated that the Diversity Portfolio teaches officers about diversity, each area has its own adviser who educates police staff. The police are keen to recruit people from diverse backgrounds. They are not in a position to recruit officers until 2010 but special constables are currently being sought.

5.4 BURT – Bromsgrove Urban and Rural Transport – Tony Beirne Executive Director - Services, Bromsgrove District Council on behalf of Hugh Bennett, Assistant Chief Executive, Bromsgrove District Council

Apologies were offered from Hugh and thanks were offered to **Mary Collett, Jeff Edwards, John Tempest** and **Mrs Anne Crossland** for their work on the project.

BURT is a minibus adapted for wheelchair users with tailgate access. Costs are £1 per single journey plus an extra of 20p per mile. This means that a journey in BURT from Wythall into Bromsgrove will cost up to £8 compared to a taxi ride which costs approximately £25. Any resident can use BURT if registered.

A leaflet will be available from early September. The volunteers on the bus are not able to assist with personal care or lifting someone so a carer might still be needed, but they can help with shopping bags and the like.

Due to problems with recruiting drivers, the scheme will not go live now until 21 September (original date: 07 September). The scheme is being run by the Women's Royal Voluntary Service. There will be a press launch to raise the profile of the service.

The Women's Royal Voluntary Service are interviewing for a driver next Tuesday but the Criminal Records Bureau checks take three or four weeks.

The demand may be greater than the capacity of one mini bus so the scheme will be reviewed. The Council have put in £30,000 this year.

7. Equality Standard for Local Government – Diversity Peer Challenge Final Report – discussion item

Bromsgrove District Council was assessed through an external Peer Challenge for its approach to equality in April this year and achieved Level 3 of the Equality Standard for Local Government.

Fiona introduced this item and explained that the meaning of the result is not always readily understandable.

To reach Level 3, the Council has to demonstrate that we have set equality targets and objectives across all six strands of equality and that we are starting to get outcomes and results. But, it isn't just a matter of answering one question – we have to demonstrate this achievement against 43 separate elements.

Rather than go through all of these individual elements a discussion exercise was set up to look at two of the main areas in four syndicate groups :-

Community Engagement and Accountability
Customer Care and Service Delivery

Community Engagement

Communication was generally felt to be good but there could be some improvement, especially as the local community does not understand the difference between the county and district councils and which services are provided by each council.

Generally, community engagement has been successful. **BURT** is a good example. People are feeling empowered as they have been part of the process.

Together Bromsgrove does not go to all households. Articles and features about equality issues in Together Bromsgrove could keep this in the front of people's minds.

People generally seem happy with the area. There is a need to publicise the good things in Bromsgrove.

How are we engaging young people?

Rebecca Dunne is working with South Bromsgrove High School on a project on local democracy. She is also working on an eco project with Waseley Schools Pyramid which aims to promote community cohesion as well as raise awareness of environmental issues. Another project running again in 2010 will be "U Decide" where young people across the district will have the chance to produce bids for what activities they want in the District. These ideas will then be put forward, shortlisted and young people themselves will vote on what projects they want to go ahead (participatory budgeting).

The FLOSS (Funding Lots of Super Stuff) Scheme, Worcestershire County Council's Youth Opportunity Fund, funds "U Decide", together with Bromsgrove District Council, who are also leading the project. The bid process will begin this autumn. It is hoped that this scheme will be expanded across Worcestershire and as Bromsgrove is one of the few councils in the Midlands pushing this agenda, Government Office for the West Midlands (GOWM) have taken an interest. **Rebecca** also appealed for any further ideas around engagement.

Customer care and service delivery

The Hub is offers good customer care. Its systems are also good, Blue Badges being obtained within seven days. The library and recycling and waste management services are also good. There are good services from the council to help the disabled. People who don't recycle are being monitored. The refurbishment of the Dolphin Centre is good although the pool is old and needs to be warmer for some users. There is free swimming for the over 60's. The new toilets are good. Sanders Park is good.

Awareness needs to be raised among none service users.

More people need to be involved.

There are gaps. The fringe areas of the District are sometimes left out so it is good to hear that Waseley is included.

Rebecca is also involved in Street Theatre across the whole district. There is a need to get young people involved in citizenship. Perhaps representatives from the high schools and Bromsgrove School could come to this meeting

Fiona – The council got the new blue logo for involving people, although there are still some gaps. "Achieving" means half way to excellent.

Rauf Shah asked whether any grievances have been put forward?

Fiona explained that the Council does get complaints, sometimes they things we can deal with, sometimes they are not things we can change or deal with, for example problems with pavement and road surfaces have to be referred to the County Council Highways department.

Not everyone is happy with the Blue Badge System but someone from the County Council CC has designed the system and attended the Disabled Users Group meeting to explain this.

A document was required in Braille but the document needed to be found first. The request was then passed on.

The council cannot always give people what they want but needs to explain its actions.

Even if the council was “excellent” we could not please everyone as we cannot always do what people want.

Trevor stated that we need to evaluate our successes. This discussion will be useful as a means of identifying some of the items to be discussed at the conference in September. He highlighted this issue and the need to ensure that the workforce of the Council represents the community. According to the Peer Challenge report we need to do more work on the strands of sexual orientation, religion and belief, age and more with young people.

8. Equality High light Report Fiona Scott – Equality Officer

Gender Equality

There will be a Gender Equality Awareness Programme in November and December this year. **Fiona** is having talks with the Gender Trust to start planning the content of the programme. The focus will be equality between men and woman and will include trans-issues and needs. As part of this programme **Joan King** will be one of the speakers at the December meeting of the Forum.

LGBT History Month 2010

In meetings with “Finding A Voice” it has been agreed that there will some event next February. Bromsgrove District Housing Trust have indicated that they would like to be involved and now West Mercia Police have indicated that they would like to join in with any activities.

The Equality and Diversity Forum

The provisional dates for next year are shown in the report. Fiona asked the group to think about next year's programme and whether we want the same format. The Community Bids meeting has been moved from 10th September to 8th October when there will be an election for the Chair.

The Equality Impact Assessment Working Group was due to meet on 22nd July but this had to be cancelled due to lack of time to arrange for managers to attend. The Working Group have now selected a set of Impact Assessments and will reconvene in the Autumn.

The 2009 Community Consultation Conference - Saturday 26th September 2009 - invitations are going out to everyone in the next few days.

Bromsgrove Black History Society - there will be one further meeting in September to confirm the 2009 programme.

Diwali - there will be meeting with the Bromsgrove Indian Community Forum to finalise arrangements.

9. Future Agenda Items

Jackie Treshie from the Primary Care Trust to talk about "trips and falls" at the December Meeting

Jackie Benson from the Bromsgrove District Housing Trust - to discuss support housing

Joan King from the Gender Trust as part of the Gender Equality Awareness programme

Meeting closed at 8.30 pm

Time, Date and Place of next meeting

Thursday 8th October 2009

6.30 pm to 7.30 pm for Community Bids in the Council Chamber

Thursday 10th December 2009 in the Committee Room

6.30 pm to 8.30 pm in the Committee Room





The Equality and Diversity Forum – 13th August 2009

Equality Highlight Report

1. The Revised Draft Gender Equality Scheme

The revised Draft Scheme published in March 2009 committed the Council to a Gender Equality Awareness Campaign in 2009. This is currently being planned for November/ December in partnership with the Gender Trust. It will involve a number of activities including training for elected Members, training for employees and drop in events for the public amongst other things.

Bromsgrove District Housing Trust have indicated that they would like to be involved in this as a partner and the outcomes will be evaluated and used at the next International Women's Day event in 2010. The Gender Equality Working Group will be reconvened later this year to discuss plans in more detail.

2. LGBT History Month 2010

Discussions have started with the founders of "Finding a Voice" with a view to arranging a programme of activities in the District for next year's LGBT History Month. Bromsgrove District Housing Trust have indicated that they would like to be involved.

3. The Equality and Diversity Forum

There are two further meetings of the Forum this year. Community bids meeting - 10th September (to be confirmed) – papers for the meeting will be issued on 27th August (to be confirmed) and 10th December – last meeting of 2009 – papers to be issued on 26th November.

Provisional dates have been identified for the first half of 2010 –

11 th February	8 th April
10 th June	12 th August
7 th October	9 th December

Do Forum members want the same programme of meetings?

- Every alternate month starting in February?
- On Thursdays? If not Thursdays, which day?
- Evenings from 6.30 to 8.30? If not evenings what times?

The Equality Impact Assessment Working Group was due to meet on 27th July but this had to be cancelled due to lack of time to arrange for managers to attend. This group has now selected a set of Impact Assessments and will reconvene in the Autumn.

Selected Assessments are

- Bromsgrove District Council Website
- Electoral Services
- Code of Practice on CCTV
- Lifeline
- Shopmobility
- Car Parking

It has also been proposed (through the Diversity Peer Challenge) that a more participative way for Equality and Diversity Forum members to be involved in the Equality Impact Assessment process should be discussed and considered. For example, inviting community members to try out various services and facilities and give feedback to the Council that way.

4. The 2009 Community Consultation Conference - Saturday 26th September 2009

Invitations are about to be issued. Please promote this event to friends and colleagues. A list of County Council representatives has been requested and we are currently waiting for confirmation.

We are in the process of identifying the workshop facilitators for the morning and afternoon workshops.

We will use the Conference as an opportunity to re-issue the Customer Satisfaction Questionnaire to test the extent that members of the Equality and Diversity Forum and the Disabled Users Group feel able to influence the decisions of the Council. This was first done in July 2008 but received a low response rate so we were not able to set a bench mark.

5. The Disabled Users Group

The minutes of the meeting held on 6th June have been circulated. The meeting on the 6th June had a detailed discussion about the Town Centre redevelopment focusing on the Bus Station and the refurbished Toilet Block. It was noted with regret that Radar access by a key cannot be combined with an automatically opening door for the disabled toilet. Otherwise everything was very well received.

There was also a discussion about the change from the Market Hall to a street market three days a week. The background and rationale behind this was explained and the access issues were debated. Peter Michael agreeing to raise the issue of delivery vehicles using front access to High Street businesses.

6. Bromsgrove Black History Society

The Society meets on 3rd August to finalise the 2009 programme of events.

7. Diwali

The celebratory event will take place in the Spadesbourne Suite on Sunday 18th October. Further details to be provided in due course.

8. Being Different Together

There will be some community based projects in the second half of this year to support the objectives of Being Different Together.

For Bromsgrove these are

- Training and support for the Hate Crime Partnership and Reporting Centres (Bromsgrove Hate Incident Partnership in conjunction with Redditch Anti Harassment Partnership)
- Democracy Week event focussing on involvement of young people
- A Gender Equality Awareness Campaign in November and December

9. Diversity Peer Challenge

The Final Report of the Diversity Peer Challenge team has been circulated with the papers for this meeting. Discussions are taking place in the Council on the way forward and a plan is being developed to reach the next Level (Level 3 – Excellent) in the year 2011/ 2012.

In order to address the urgent recommendation that the Council set objectives for the equality strands of Sexual Orientation, Religion/ Belief and Age, questions will be put to the Workshops at the September Conference to establish what community members want the Council to do for these three strands.

The Council will then incorporate these new objectives and the plan to reach Excellent in the review of the Inclusive Equalities Scheme which will be published in the late Autumn.

To achieve “Excellent” Bromsgrove District Council will have to demonstrate that :-

- Our Councillors and officers have a reputation for championing equality issues and ensure that the equality issues relevant to our communities are embedded in our sustainable community strategy, strategic plans, local area agreements and local delivery plans.
- We work with all strategic partners and the voluntary and community sector acting as advocates to achieve defined equality outcomes.
- We have good evidence of the equalities profile of the community based on national and local data that is regularly reviewed.
- We are measuring progress on equality outcomes, are able to disaggregate data on relevant performance indicators and can demonstrate real outcomes that have improved equality in services and employment.
- We identify the changing nature of our communities and their expectations and then prioritise our activities and explain our decisions.
- We provide good customer care by ensuring that services are provided by knowledgeable and well-trained staff who understand the needs of our communities.
- We have improving satisfaction and perception indicators from all sections of the community and staff.
- Equality groups are integrally involved in community engagement programmes.
- There are forums for all equality stakeholders to share experiences and evaluate the authority’s progress.
- All parts of the authority can show tangible progress towards achieving outcomes which address persistent inequalities and narrow the gaps.
- We have implemented action for equal pay outcomes and demonstrated progress on under-representation, flexible working, access to training and development and promote an inclusive working culture based on respect.
- We review our equality strategy and public duty equality schemes every three years and seek innovative improvement challenges.
- Through our achievements, we are an exemplar of good practice for other local authorities and agencies and work with others to share best practice.

10. Community Bids

The monies have been issued to Finding a Voice, Support Network for Disabled People and Padstone/ Greenscope for the allotment project

The 2010-2011 Community bids meeting is planned for 10th September (to be confirmed). The date for submission of bids is yet to be agreed.

11. Community Transport

The service has been named “BURT” – Bromsgrove Urban and Rural Transport” and was advertised in the summer 2009 edition of Together Bromsgrove. It is expected to start running in early to mid September.

12. Refurbishment of Town Centre Toilet Block including “Changing Places”

This will be opened on 3rd August by a disabled person “Blind Dave Heeley”. There will be a celebratory event in the bus station with speeches and a formal opening.

Application forms have been agreed with community representatives for access to Changing Places. Copies have been issued to the main service providers in Bromsgrove who need immediate access to Changing Places.

There is a secondary list for care homes and housing providers who will be contacted over the next few months with information about the new facility in order to enable them to identify potential facility users.

The availability of the new facility will be advertised in the local press and nationally on the Changing Places website.

13. Interpreting and Translation services

A partnership agreement has been entered with the County Council and three other District Councils. Invitations to tender are to be issued and list of preferred suppliers will be provided to each partner at the end of the process.

