



Bromsgrove
District Council
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The Equality and Diversity Forum
Minutes of Meeting held on Thursday 15 April 2010
The Committee Room
The Council House

In attendance	Organisation
Mr Sat Aggarwal	Bromsgrove Indian Community Forum
Sabiha Azmi	Bromsgrove Muslim Network
Jackie Benson	BDHT
Mary Collett	Bromsgrove Disabled Access Group and Worcestershire Association of Service Users
Rebecca Dunne	Senior Policy and Performance Officer (Community Engagement) Bromsgrove District Council
Mark Eastwood	Bromsgrove Resident
Claire Felton	Head of Legal, Equalities and Democratic Services, Bromsgrove District Council
Margaret Evans	New Road Group
Nigel Godwin	Bromsgrove Resident
Patricia Hackett - Chair	MENCAP and Bromsgrove Resident
Sarah Hemming	Hereford and Worcester Fire and Rescue
Art Lavelle	Bromsgrove Resident
Councillor D McGrath	Bromsgrove District Council
Julie Moss	Administrative Assistant – Equalities
Eileen Mulhall	Worcestershire Association of Service Users
Jackie Murrall	Droitwich CVS
Farrah Rehman-Hine	Bromsgrove Muslim Network
Trevor Rigg	Bromsgrove Resident, Chair of Bromsgrove Black History Society
Hazel Robinson	Worcestershire County Council
Fiona Scott	Equality Officer, Bromsgrove District Council
Mr G Singh	Bromsgrove Indian Community Forum
Jim Smith	North Worcestershire Disability Information and Advice Line
John Tempest	Mental Health Action

Lynn Ward	Pertemps Disability Consultancy
Julie Wright	Community Support Officer, West Mercia Police

Apologies	
Stuart Bray	Pinke.biz
Mr B K Chaudhari	Bromsgrove Indian Community Forum
Cllr Geoff Denaro	Elected Member and Executive Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Legal, Equalities and Democratic Services
Kevin Dicks	Joint Chief Executive Bromsgrove District Council and Redditch Borough Council
Jeff Edwards	Bromsgrove Older People's Forum
Joan King	The Gender Trust
Bal Kular-Taylor	Senior Positive Action Adviser, West Mercia Constabulary Head Quarters
Sonia Hambridge	Citizen's Advice Bureau
Sgt Tim Harper	West Mercia Police
Huw Mosely	Bromsgrove District Council
Cllr Stephen Peters	Elected Member for Bromsgrove District Council and Worcestershire County Council, Diversity Champion for elected Members, Bromsgrove District Council
Jayne Pickering	Executive Director of Finance – Bromsgrove District and Redditch Borough Councils
Kathleen Roche-Nagi	Approachable Coaching and Bromsgrove Resident
Ivan Smith	North Worcestershire Disability Information and Advice Line
Sonia Spurr	Community Engagement Manager - PCT

Attending as Guest Speakers	
Michael Carr	Scrutiny Officer, Bromsgrove District Council
Mike Dunphy	Strategic Planning Manager, Bromsgrove District Council

1. Introductions and Apologies

New members were welcomed including Councillor Dave McGrath, Sarah Hemming, Hazel Robinson and Margaret Evans. Michael Carr and Mike Dunphy were welcomed as guest speakers.

Apologies noted as above.

2. Minutes of meeting held on 11 February 2010

The attendance and apologies record has been corrected. The numbering has also been changed.

The minutes were agreed.

3. Matters arising from 11 February if not included on main agenda

Page 5 Item 4: Items from the Forum Chair

The **Traffic Lights Cards** were demonstrated again and it was requested that they are used in meetings from now on.

Over 100 people had attended **The Hate Crime Conference** and although all groups had been invited, some were turned away because of numbers or had not replied. The conference was very thorough, the emphasis being placed on people articulating their own needs. Evaluation sheets showed that some respondents felt the conference should have included all disabilities not just learning disabilities.

The **cost of meetings** was not discussed fully at the February meeting. It was agreed that refreshments be further reduced but that the preliminary part of the meeting be maintained as this provides a valuable networking opportunity.

A copy of the **Finding Funds** presentation has been requested and will be circulated when it arrives.

Equality Highlight Report - the date on this has been corrected.

Patricia explained that following comments from the LSP, (Local Strategic Partnership) future minutes will be shorter and in a slightly different format.

4. Items from the Forum Chair

None today.

5. Redditch Growth Consultation – Mike Dunphy, Strategic Planning Manager, Bromsgrove District Council

Mike Dunphy explained that “Redditch Growth” is relevant to Bromsgrove because housing strategy is applied across the region and not just within district boundaries.

The Core Strategy is part of the Development Plan called the Local Development Framework produced by the Council. It interprets policy that comes from central and regional government into the local context. It determines what happens in the District for the next 20 years and is therefore very important. The difficult part is not saying what we want to happen but who is going to deliver it. In the past it was not done by planning and left to the end of the process but now we need to see the whole picture and any public enquiry will be held in front of inspectors. Currently 91% of the district falls within the Green Belt.

“Area of Development Restraint” means that it is highly likely there will ultimately be building. This land has been taken out of the Green Belt so that it can be developed. In future it will be called “Strategic Housing Allocation”. Housing numbers are always controversial and the “West Midlands Regional Spatial Strategy” indicates that 7000 new houses must be built to meet the needs of Redditch with 3000 of them within the Bromsgrove District. The numbers are based on projected population. The District’s boundary could be moved at a later date but this is not relevant to the planning process as this is a matter for the Boundary Commission.

A feasibility study on the necessary services and facilities is currently being undertaken. It is still uncertain as to who will pay for all the increases in services required by the new houses. This information will be published as evidence for choosing the sites. The consultation period has not closed and comments are welcomed as to which of the proposed areas should take the new housing. These comments will be taken into account when reaching a consensus on the area or areas chosen for development.

The town centre regeneration is also part of this programme and will be supported by this process as the Core Strategy may attract funding, new businesses etc. The budget at the moment is that of the Council and there is no money upfront from the government to fund the development. However funding streams are available. The developer will be expected to help pay for the infrastructure such as road building.

The number of new houses needed is based on many sources of information including data calculated by the Office for National Statistics who have taken vacant dwellings into account.

Matters are still at an early stage but it is necessary to consult with as many people as possible now. Officers have been asked to bring topics to the forums in both Redditch and Bromsgrove where there is a wide interest in them within the community as a whole. However, an Equality Dimension is needed. It has been noted that such items should be at the end of the agenda.

The consultation will help decide what is important. We also need to assess how our options fit in with policies of partner organisations so guidance is also being given by the LSP. (Local Strategic Partnership)

6. Feedback on Community Involvement in the Democratic Process – Claire Felton, Head of Legal Equalities and Democratic Services for Bromsgrove District and Redditch Borough Councils and Michael Carr, Scrutiny Officer, Bromsgrove District Council

Members of the Forum and the Disabled Users Group who had participated in the consultation exercise were thanked.

Claire explained that the Council aimed to increase the number of people voting at elections although these are always higher for General Elections. The Council would also like to encourage more people to become involved in local democracy especially younger people. We need to hone in on their interests to make it more attractive and popular. This will lay foundations for the future.

Michael Carr explained that Overview and Scrutiny is part of every council's governance arrangements, where elected councillors can contribute to policy development by undertaking investigations and putting forward recommendations to the Council Cabinet. In Bromsgrove Overview and Scrutiny is carried out through the Overview Board, the Scrutiny Board and the Joint Overview and Scrutiny Board. The Boards commission Task Groups to carry out particular investigations in depth.

The Community Involvement in the Democratic Process Task Group was commissioned in February 2010 and is due to conclude with a report and recommendations at the end of April 2010. The Task Group is expected to put forward between 15-20 recommendations and a series of proposals to develop the Council's approach to promoting democracy and improving accessibility and involvement.

The Task Group investigation is envisaged as the beginning of an inclusive process to promote and engage people in the democratic process that will be taken forward by the Council in partnership with other local organisations.

There is a fund which gives young people job opportunities for 6 months which could fund a young person to go out into the community to talk to others.

Fiona emphasised that the Task Group had already involved a substantial consideration of equalities issues and had interviewed a range of community stakeholders. The investigation has revealed some potential obstacles to democratic participation for some sections of the population and possible solutions have already been found to some of these, although it was noted that many aspects of electoral services are prescribed by law. The evidence considered by the Task Group will be reflected in the final report which will be available next month and circulated.

Alternative means of communication and engagement have been considered by the Task Group, such as improved web based interaction. We are to build on our relationships with young people and may consult them in the redesigning of the Council website.

The Task Group will recommend that a Democracy Year Campaign be run throughout 2010-2011, to coincide with the cycle of elections. It is envisaged as a programmed series of events to include as many people as possible so building up relationships with the Council and being a celebration of local democracy and civic participation in Bromsgrove.

Any comments or further ideas should be emailed to Michael Carr at m.carr@bromsgrove.gov.uk as soon as possible.

7. Questions from the floor for the Chief Executive – Kevin Dicks, Chief Executive for Bromsgrove District and Redditch Borough Councils

None today.

8. Equality Highlight Report -Fiona Scott, Equality Officer, Bromsgrove District Council.

The date on the report has been changed.

Gender Equality Awareness Campaign

Responses to the consultation are to be compiled in a report to the Council's Cabinet. **Joan** is to make a full report at the June meeting when there will also be feedback on final outcome.

Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Trans History Month 2010

This event was well supported by members of the forum and partners. A similar event is to take place next year when the film will be "Priscilla Queen of the Desert".

Equality and Diversity Forum

The Equality Impact Assessment Working Group has yet to be reconvened. In order to ensure that we are compliant with legislation, we need to look at our policies to see that they are equally accessible for all groups.

The 2009 Community Consultation Conference – Saturday 26 September 2009

Ideas for up to 10 priorities for the Council Plan have been agreed. The suggested wording is as follows:

Town Centre Redevelopment – ensure accessibility for all including road and pavement surfaces to be improved and dropped kerbs installed where needed

Parking across dropped kerbs causes problems for scooters and can be very dangerous.

An enforcement campaign in Stourbridge has been very successful.

Under the new parking regulations blue badges are given to person not car and this continues to cause concern for those who travel in different cars. However off street parking is a concession only, although on the street it is a right. Disabled Users experiencing problems could use a pay and display car park. At present there is no technical solution to this problem but the Council are continuing to look for one.

Accessible Public Transport – ensure services are available where needed and lobby for accessible transport

Parking – improve enforcement generally including against people who block dropped kerbs

Housing – housing plans to take account of needs of all age groups and abilities/ housing schemes to enable residents to have choices/ retain independence

Housing is not necessary available in the right area although there is an attempt to have a county wide policy. Aids and adaptations will continue to be very important.

Community Engagement – continue with Equality and Diversity Forum, Disabled Users Group, Black History, Diwali – continue to develop links with LGBT community, Religion/ Belief and Faith groups, migrant workers especially the Polish community.

The Council will continue to focus on building links with migrant workers

Age – ensure that services are responsive to the needs for younger and older people and that services are designed to recognise the needs of those in the “middle” (i.e. people of working age)

Directory of Services and Facilities - to be provided for disabled people and older people

This is supported and already in hand.

Take Action on Climate Change and the Environment - through positive local initiatives in partnership with the community and business recognising urban and rural issues

This is one of the Council's priorities.

Disabled Users Group

The DVD featuring the group filmed during the meeting on 26 March has had very positive responses. This item will be followed up at the June meeting.

Community Transport – BURT

Paragraphs 2 & 3 should read as follows:

“From 5 April there will be a change to the entitlement to a free bus pass for those aged 60 on or after this date. The entitlement to the pass will be based on a changing age qualification for state pension for women. This will be over a 10 year period and the changes are being implemented in two month steps.

Men aged 60 before and up until 4 March can get their free bus passes at age 60 even though they don't get their state pension until 65. Anyone (man or woman) who is 60 on or after 5 April 2010 needs to check their date of birth against the state pension age calculator for women. This will tell you when you can get your free bus pass, and for women (only), it will tell you when you will qualify for your state pension. The state pensionable age for men is not changing.”

Interfaith Week 2010

Bromsgrove Muslim Network will hold an event at this time but it is to be inclusive as the week covers religions, faiths and beliefs. The permitted beliefs are ethical and moral but not political. This also provides an opportunity for partnership working.

9. Agenda Items for Future Meetings

Gender Equality/Trans Access Policy	Joan King and Fiona Scott – June Meeting
Gypsy Roma Traveller History	Debbie German, Romani Roots – June Meeting
Revised Hate Crime Reporting Publicity	Speaker to be confirmed – June meeting
Interfaith Week 2010	Speaker(s) to be confirmed – August meeting
Trips and Falls	Amanda Wilson, Primary Care Trust – August meeting
Community Engagement Toolkit	Rebecca Dunne, Bromsgrove District Council – August meeting
Older People’s Task Group	Follow on, speaker to be confirmed
The Sign Posting Scheme	Speaker and meeting to be confirmed

Time, date and place of next meeting –

**6.30 pm Thursday 10 June 2010 - The Committee Room
Light Refreshments Available from 5.30 pm**

