



**The Equality and Diversity Forum**  
**Minutes of Meeting held on Thursday 10 June 2010**

**The Committee Room**

<b>In attendance</b>	
Mr Sat Aggarwal	Bromsgrove Indian Community Forum
Mr B K Chaudhari	Bromsgrove Indian Community Forum
Mary Collett	Bromsgrove Disabled Access Group and Worcestershire Association of Service Users
Kevin Dicks	Joint Chief Executive Bromsgrove District and Redditch Borough Councils
Rebecca Dunne	Senior Policy and Performance Officer ( Community Engagement ) Bromsgrove District Council
Mark Eastwood	Bromsgrove Resident, Worcestershire Police LGBT Forum
Jeff Edwards	Bromsgrove Older People's Forum
Margaret Evans	New Road Group
Nigel Godwin	Bromsgrove Resident
Patricia Hackett - Chair	MENCAP and Bromsgrove Resident
Sgt Tim Harper	West Mercia Police
Tracey Hodges	Padstone Day Centre
Joan King	The Gender Trust
Art Lavelle	Bromsgrove Resident
Cllr Dave McGrath	Elected Member, Bromsgrove District Council
Julie Moss	Administrative Assistant – Equalities
Eileen Mulhall	Worcestershire Association of Service Users
Nina Mumtaz	Bromsgrove Muslim Network
Jackie Murrall	Droitwich Community Voluntary Sector
Asam Nisar	Bromsgrove Muslim Network
Azra Nisar	Bromsgrove Muslim Network
Jayne Pickering	Executive Director of Finance – Bromsgrove District and Redditch Borough Councils
Hazel Robinson	Worcestershire County Council

Fiona Scott	Equality Officer, Bromsgrove District Council
Nishad Searle	Bromsgrove Muslim Network
Mr G Singh	Bromsgrove Indian Community Forum
Sonia Spurr	Community Engagement Manager – Primary Care Trust
John Tempest	Mental Health Action
Julie Wright	Community Support Officer, West Mercia Police

<b>Apologies</b>	
Stuart Bray	Pinke.biz
Cllr Geoff Denaro	Elected Member and Executive Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Legal, Equalities and Democratic Services
Claire Felton	Head of Legal, Equalities and Democratic Services, Bromsgrove District Council
Debbie German	Romani Roots
Lisa Little	HMP Hewell
Kathleen Roche Nagi	Bromsgrove Muslim Network, Approachable Coaching
Jim Smith	North Worcestershire Disability Information Line
Lynn Ward	Pertemps Disability Consultancy

<b>Attending as Guest Speaker</b>	
Arran Sharman	Benefit Services Manager, Bromsgrove District Council

## 1. Introductions and apologies

People were welcomed to the meeting and introductions were made. **Sergeant Tim Harper** made his farewells as he has changed roles and explained that in future Sergeant Rosie Cooper will be taking over his role on the forum. **Patricia** thanked Tim for his support.

**Apologies** – noted as above

Changes were agreed to the future running of the Forum. Meetings will start at 6.15 pm and still finish at 8.30 pm with a short break. Matters Arising will be removed from the agenda. Anything significant will be in the Equality Highlight Report. Queries from the last meeting will be dealt with under Questions to the Chief Executive. Members of the Forum were asked to read the papers in advance. There will only be two main speakers to allow time for questions, debate and workshops. Sometimes there will be additions to the agenda from the Council. Forum members were requested to sign the attendance list and ensure that contact details are up to date in order to facilitate administration.

## **2. Minutes of meeting held on 15 April 2010**

The minutes were agreed.

## **3. Matters arising from 15 April if not included on main agenda**

These will be covered under either Fiona's report or questions to Kevin.

## **4. Items from the Forum Chair**

Savings made from the abolition of the full buffet will fund the tactile map. This is to be updated and reissued every 18 months which will be cost up to £500 each time. It was agreed that this was an appropriate use of available funds in these times of economic difficulty.

MENCAP are organising National Learning Disability Week from 21<sup>st</sup> to 27<sup>th</sup> June. This year it is about health and Equal Access for all. There will be a stand at Worcester Royal Hospital and a 9 point charter for health organisations to work towards.

## **5. Gypsy Roma Traveller History Debbie German, Romani Roots**

This item was postponed due to the unavailability of the speaker.

## **6. Benefits Take Up Strategy – Arran Sharman, Benefit Services Manager**

**Arran** explained that he proposed to talk about the Council's strategy to promote the take up Housing and Council Tax Benefits. All councils must now ensure that people are aware of their entitlements. Benefits is a complex and contentious issue and they are poorly publicised. The strategy ensures that the Council is doing everything possible to promote their take up. Benefits are important for people's quality of life and also affect the local economy. Details for contacting **Arran** were on the handouts.

Confidentiality policies are in place as the strategy is covered by the Data Protection Act. Computer systems are secure and staff must make a declaration of interest if they have personal knowledge of a claimant. The Council has been chosen to pilot a system for collecting information by phone so that documents do not have to be sent.

Recent legislation says that the service has to be more customer focussed rather than just being concerned with the speedy processing of claims. This matter has been addressed and our services are now also more accurate as we are using new technology.

The Council provides a system for visiting the housebound. We can only offer limited help with rent arrears as residents have to be referred to Bromsgrove District Housing Trust. The service is flexible and we will also visit those who cannot come in for financial reasons or because they have leaning difficulties. Residents should ring the Customer Service Centre in the first instance.

It is expensive to send promotional literature so we need to target groups using information from other agencies. We must also ensure that the information is clear and easy to understand. Support workers can speak for people but a signature is required unless they are their legal representative or guardian.

People with learning disabilities need a special sort of literature. They also might have problems signing or understanding. The Council will deal with carers although we will address the person concerned. However a signature is still required by law unless the claim is made electronically and we are currently investigating this. Information will be made available in different formats.

## **7. Gender Equality Campaign – Trans Access Policy to Sports and Leisure Services and Facilities – Joan King, The Gender Trust and Fiona Scott, Equality Officer**

**Fiona** reminded the Forum that the policy originated in the Inclusive Equalities Scheme of 2006 which set out 3 year plans for all areas of equality. The section on gender equality was written ahead of legislation so a separate gender equality scheme was later drafted to ensure compliance with legislation. The Draft Gender Equality Scheme committed the council to providing training on gender equality by the end of 2009. This allowed funding for a consultation on a separate policy for people while transitioning and this was put out for consultation.

The purpose of the Gender Awareness Campaign was to raise awareness of the policy itself as well as to consult on it. It sets out an access policy for trans people especially with regards to sports and leisure facilities.

The campaign ran from November to March and included drop in sessions at the Customer Service Centre and training for elected Members and staff. 58 staff attended these sessions. The policies and campaign went to all relevant internal and external meetings. It was publicised through the local press, the Customer Service Centre, health authorities, the Council's website, and by word of mouth. The campaign was well received and the revised policy takes account of comments made.

It was approved by the Executive Cabinet of the Council on 2<sup>nd</sup> June. Internal processes now need to be updated and the Council's long term aim is to raise wider public awareness of the policy.

**Joan** explained that The Gender Trust began in Brighton in the 1980's as a local support group but is now nationwide, also offering training.

If there is an existing marriage or civil partnership, this has to be legally broken if a gender recognition certificate is obtained and this is not always desired. The partnership can then be renewed according to the new gender(s) of the partners involved. Therefore people do not always apply for the certificate. Transitioning can remove stress from families. Nowadays society is more understanding. The overriding need is to accept people as people rather than as a member of a specific gender.

**Patricia** thanked **Joan** and **Fiona** for their interesting item.

## **8. Questions from floor for the Chief Executive – Kevin Dicks, Chief Executive for Bromsgrove District Council and Redditch Borough Council**

Town centre regeneration is still a top priority but the problem is finance. The application by Sainsburys will be going before the Planning Committee later this month and the Council intends to utilise some of this money to resurface the High Street although we are also seeking contributions from the County Council. In the meantime the District Council will still seek to influence the County Council to rectify some of the potholes.

The amount that Sainburys pay must be negotiated between the District Council and does not indicate whether they will get planning permission. The Council is aiming to get the money in advance so that we can utilise it for the town centre. There is an 18 month build programme.

Aldi are coming by Morrisons. The District Council will check with Worcestershire County Council over funding for the pedestrian crossing

The railway station project has been affected by the widening funding gap which is affecting all of local government and we are working with the County Council to address this issue. Councillors wish to scrutinise this project but Network Rail have not come in to discuss the matter yet.

We are still awaiting a decision as to whether BURT can travel to certain facilities outside the immediate district. This also applies to visits to Redditch, as even though we are sharing services, the two Councils are still funded separately. Bromsgrove District Council will examine the amalgamation of the two disabled transport facilities.

The Regional Spatial Strategy has now been abandoned by the coalition government and we are awaiting clarification. It should mean that there will be no cross border growth.

It has recently been announced that there is to be a £6.2 billion cut to local government finance this year. Bromsgrove District Council should not suffer from these particular cuts but have had some other grants withdrawn. This bodes ill for the future. The Council receives regular briefings from the minister concerned.

## **9. Equality Highlight Report, Fiona Scott, Equality Officer, Bromsgrove District Council**

### **Page 1, Item 2: LGBT History Month**

We are still trying to find someone to take over "Finding a Voice".

### **Page 2, Item 5: The Disabled Users Group**

Information from The Artrix will be fed back to the Disabled Access Group.

The recent open meeting of DUG was very successful. Ideas provided for the proposed disabled access awards scheme will be considered and put out to consultation.

### **Page 5, Item 10: Community Bids**

Community Bids would still be considered this year – the relevant meeting is 23<sup>rd</sup> September with the bids then going through the Councils budget process as usual.

### **Page 6, Item 15: Interfaith Week**

This will be a discussion item at a future meeting.

### **Page 7, Item 18: Tactile Map**

The 7 libraries referred to are in the Bromsgrove District and include a mobile library. The library copies have not arrived yet and are expected shortly.

### **Page 8, Item 20: Census**

Members who were interested in working on the census were reminded to register on line.

### **Further Items**

**Sonia** explained that documents summarising the Draft Cancer Strategy were available. There is also an on line survey and paper copies are available. Consultations are to take place around the area. Further details are available on the web. The PCT is aiming to improve cancer services throughout the county.

We will try to get Debbie German from Romani Roots to speak a future meeting.

The Being Different Together DVD featuring the Disabled Users Group meeting in March and BURT was shown. Drivers of BURT were commended for their helpfulness. This DVD may be put on YouTube as part of the overall project. Bromsgrove is the regarded well throughout the county because our projects have delivered practical results.

Members were encouraged to visit Rubery festival on Sunday.

**10. Agenda items for future meetings:**

<b>Inter Faith Week 2010</b>	<b>October meeting – to be included in Equality Highlight Report</b>
<b>Trips and Falls</b>	<b>October meeting – Amanda Wheeler from the PCT</b>
<b>Community Engagement Toolkit</b>	<b>August Meeting - Rebecca Dunne</b>
<b>Draft Cancer Strategy</b>	<b>August Meeting – Sonia Spurr, PCT</b>
<b>International Older People’s Day</b>	<b>October meeting – to be included in Equality Highlight report</b>
<b>Hate Crime Reporting</b>	<b>Update</b>
<b>The Signposting Scheme</b>	<b>To be confirmed.</b>

**The meeting closed at 8.25 p.m.**

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

**6.15pm to 8.30p.m**

**Thursday 12 August 2010**

**The Committee Room**

