

BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE EQUALITIES AND DIVERSITY FORUM HELD IN THE COMMITTEE ROOM, THE COUNCIL HOUSE BROMSGROVE ON THURSDAY, 26TH APRIL 2007 FROM 6.30 P.M. TO 8.10 P.M.

PRESENT

Trevor Rigg (Chairman)	Bromsgrove Black History Group
Kevin Dicks	Chief Executive, Bromsgrove District Council
Phil Street	Corporate Director (Services) Bromsgrove District Council
Hugh Bennett	Assistant Chief Executive, Bromsgrove District Council
Claire Felton	Head of Legal and Democratic Services, Bromsgrove District Council
Fiona Scott	Equalities Officer, Bromsgrove District Council
Anne - Marie Darroch	Communications and Customer First Officer, Bromsgrove District Council
Cllr. Stephen Peters	Bromsgrove District Council
Patricia Hackett	Mencap
Jeff Edwards	Bromsgrove and District Action Group for Older People and Redditch and Bromsgrove NHS Retirement Fellowship
John Tempest	Worcestershire Mental Health Network
Mary Collett	North Worcestershire S.P.I.N
Eileen Mulhall	North Worcestershire S.P.I.N.
Mr B.K. Chaudhari	
Jim Smith	North Worcestershire DIAL
Joe Scott	
Anne Sloan MBE	
Mr and Mrs. R. Crossland	Bromsgrove Disabled Access Group
Rauf Shah	Oakley Road Residents Association

1. Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from

Rukhsana Koser	Corporate Diversity Director, Worcestershire County Council
Mike Brown	Bromsgrove District Housing Trust
Tony Lowry	Bromsgrove District Housing Trust
Keith Sherman	Age Concern
Councillor Mrs C. Spencer	Bromsgrove District Council
Nina Mumtaz	
Sarah Kelsey	Worcester Race Equality Council

2. Minutes

The minutes of the last meeting held on 15th March 2007 were approved as a correct record.

3. Matters Arising Not on the Agenda

(i) Car Parking

Mr. Dicks briefly updated the Forum on the situation relating to car parking in Bromsgrove. The Scrutiny Task Group which had been looking at this issue had reported to Cabinet. As a result, it had been agreed that Blue Badge holders would receive an additional hour above the time they had purchased. Officers were also working on the best way to utilise the sum of £50,000 which had been allocated to facilitate the use of the car parks by all sections of the community. It was queried whether a system of using mobile phones to make car park payments was to be introduced. Mr Dicks stated this had been raised as a possibility but was not being introduced at present.

It was **AGREED** that in view of the importance of car parking, it be requested that a short presentation on the issues involved be made to a future meeting and if possible the presentation also be made available in writing to enable those representatives present to take back the information to their individual Groups.

4. Items from the Chair

Trevor Rigg, Chairman of the Forum congratulated Kevin Dicks on his recent appointment as Chief Executive at Bromsgrove on a permanent basis. The opportunity for the Forum to share openly information and opinions with the Chief Executive of the District Council was recognised as being very valuable to all those involved.

Trevor Rigg requested that new Members of the Forum took the opportunity to fill in the forms which requested information on their primary interests and contact details. This would assist Fiona Scott when views were being sought on particular issues or when smaller Working Groups were being set up to look at subjects in more detail.

The Chairman also requested an update on the information on the Forum which was available on the Council's website. Fiona Scott confirmed there was still work required on this but it was intended to build up a page on the website which would encourage others to become involved with the Forum.

As at the previous Meeting the Chairman encouraged members to put forward suggestions for the next agenda.

5. Key Council Issues – Update From The Acting Chief Executive

Kevin Dicks gave a brief update on relevant issues since the last meeting of the Forum in March. Some of the issues had already been referred to but the following matters were highlighted:

Spadesbourne Suite – a Hearing Loop had been installed and had been praised by organisations using the facility.

District and Parish Elections – as with many other Councils there had been difficulties with regard to the issuing of postal votes. These problems had largely been overcome due to the hard work of the Elections Staff and with the assistance of the Post Office who had been very helpful in arranging additional collections. There had been a review of buildings used for Polling Stations to ensure that they were accessible to all. Two stations were still not well suited in terms of access and were not easily adapted to improve access by way of temporary ramps etc. Alternative arrangements would be sought for future elections.

“Chats with the Chief” – It was reported that Kevin Dicks was available to attend meetings of local Groups and Organisations to talk about key issues in the District and to gain an understanding of local concerns, opinions etc. The talks which had been arranged so far had been very successful.

6. **Corporate Style Guide**

Anne-Marie Darroch, the Council’s Communications and Customer First Officer was introduced to the Meeting. Anne-Marie presented a report on how the Council was working on improving its reputation and image. Clearly improved services were a pre-requisite but it was important to improve communications and customer service. As part of the work required, it had been recognised that there was a need to develop a clear brand for the Council’s communications and in conjunction with this to produce a Style Guide for staff to follow. The Draft Style Guide was still a work in progress and it was being presented to the Forum to seek any comments on its suitability and effectiveness from an equalities perspective.

The opportunity to comment was welcomed and the following issues were highlighted:

- Council Website – would be useful to have the option to have sound as with the website for the County Council. Also needs to be promoted through “Together Bromsgrove”
- Uniforms – these would only be replaced with those bearing the logos as and when they would need to be replaced anyway.
- Font Size – It was noted that easy read versions of some documents would be produced in 20pt Arial.

Ms. Darroch thanked the Forum and stated she would be pleased to receive any further comments within the next few weeks.

7. **Progress Report from the Equality Officer**

Fiona Scott stated that at future meetings it was hoped she would be in a position to submit a written report to the Forum.

(i) Disability Equality

Fiona Scott reminded the Forum of the previous discussions on the requirement on the Authority have a Disabled Users Group. The arrangements for the setting up and operation of the Group had proved to be quite involved, particularly in the light of the large number of Groups which exist within the District representing various

aspects of disability. The decision had now been taken to hold an open meeting at The Council House on 29th June 2007 which would be chaired by Phil Street, Corporate Director (Services). At that meeting decisions would be made regarding how the Disabled Users Group would be set up and how it would work. It was hoped that all of the existing Groups representing disabled people would be represented together with disabled service users. It was intended the meeting would cover areas such as what are the priorities in Bromsgrove, what form the Users Group should take and how Groups representing disabled people and the service providers can work together in a flexible and productive way.

It was suggested that a press release could be produced promoting the work of the Forum as part of the publicity for the open meeting.

Fiona also referred to Rhyan Berrigan who was a project worker and would be undertaking work for the Council for a six month period. An important part of Rhyan's role would be to contact disabled people and Groups from within the community and to gather information on needs and priorities.

(ii) Gender Equality – The Gender Equality Working Group

Fiona Scott reported that a small group of volunteers had been put together to sit on this Group and that the work was going well.

It was hoped the Group would be in a position to complete the review by the end of June.

(iii) Hate Crimes Incidents Procedure

Fiona Scott reported that the procedure for reporting Hate Crimes incidents was now almost completed. The final meeting of the Group setting up the process was due to take place on 18th May 2007. There would then be a launch for the process so that appropriate publicity could be given to the scheme. It was intended to give a final report on this matter to the next meeting of the Forum.

The Forum welcomed the progress made.

(iv) Future Training Needs

Fiona Scott reported that it was recognised that training was important if the Forum was to function in the most effective way. The members of the Gender Equalities group had already received some training to enable them to undertake the tasks required.

It was felt that it would be useful to spend some time on a "jargon busting" session. In addition there was a need to understand the legislation surrounding Equality and Diversity issues. It was important to break the training down into small chunks so that it was not too overwhelming.

A training programme for frontline staff had been developed to include the practicalities and not just legislation. It was important that any training package was meaningful.

It would also be useful to understand what was required for the Authority to reach level 3 on the Equalities scale. Officers were undertaking planning at the present time to understand fully what was required.

8. Agenda Items for 14th June Meeting

The following items were put forward as possible agenda items for the next meeting:

- Dial a Ride Scheme for Bromsgrove
- Comments on County Transport Strategy
- Needs of a Growing Elderly Population in Bromsgrove (Hugh Bennett would be including this in a future report to the Forum on the Community Strategy)
- Car Parking (as referred to in the earlier discussion)

The Chairman thanked those present for their attendance and participation.

Trevor Rigg

Chairman