

## BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL

### MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE EQUALITIES AND DIVERSITY FORUM HELD IN THE COMMITTEE ROOM, THE COUNCIL HOUSE, BROMSGROVE ON THURSDAY, 13TH SEPTEMBER 2007 FROM 6.30 P.M. TO 8.15 P.M.

#### PRESENT

Trevor Rigg (Chair)	Bromsgrove Black History Group
Rhyan Berrigan	Disability Equality Project Worker, Bromsgrove District
Hugh Bennett	Assistant Chief Executive, Bromsgrove District Council
Naomi Bottrill	Communication Plus
Mr B. K. Chaudhari	
Mary Collett	North Worcestershire S.P.I.N.
Ann Crossland	Bromsgrove Disabled Group
Ray Crossland	Bromsgrove Disabled Group
Jeff Edwards	Bromsgrove and District Action Group for Older People and Redditch and Bromsgrove NHS Retirement Fellowship
Patricia Hackett	Mencap
David Hancox	District Councillor and Member of Public Transport (Buses) Task Group
Sarah Kelsey	Equalities Assistant, Bromsgrove District Council
Brian Lewis	District Councillor and Chairman of Public Transport (Buses) Task Group
Tony Lowry	Operations Director, Bromsgrove District Housing Trust
Peter McDonald	District Councillor and Member of Public Transport (Buses) Task Group
Eileen Mulhall	North Worcestershire S.P.I.N.
Huw Moseley	Arts Development and Events Officer, Bromsgrove District Council
Stephen Peters	District Councillor and Equality Member Champion
PC Sam Peterson	West Mercia Constabulary
Jayne Pickering	Head of Financial Services, Bromsgrove District Council
Fiona Scott	Equalities Officer, Bromsgrove District Council
Joe Scott	
Keith Sherman	Chief Officer, Age Concern Bromsgrove and District
Jim Smith	North Worcestershire D.I.A.L.
Ann Sowton	Bromsgrove and Redditch Network
Phil Street	Corporate Director (Services), Bromsgrove District Council
John Tempest	Worcestershire Mental Health Network
Iain Tretheway	North Worcestershire D.I.A.L.
CSO Julie Wright	West Mercia Constabulary

#### 1. Introduction and Apologies

At the start of the meeting, each member introduced themselves and the Chair welcomed everyone, particularly those attending the Forum for the first time.

Apologies for absence were received from:

Kevin Dicks

Chief Executive, Bromsgrove District Council

Claire Felton	Head of Legal, Equalities and Democratic Services, Bromsgrove District Council
Chris Scurrell	District Councillor and Member of Public Transport (Buses) Task Group
Rauf Shah	Oakley Road Residents Association
Roger Smith	District Councillor and Portfolio Holder for Legal, Equalities and Democratic Services and HR

## 2. **Minutes**

The minutes of the last meeting held on 2nd August 2007 were approved as a correct record. It was noted that in relation to the Crabtree Court Garden Party (item 10) part of the money raised would be donated to victims of the recent floods rather than all of the proceeds.

## 3. **Items From The Chair**

### Taxi Ranks

It was felt that in the absence of the Chief Executive this should be deferred until the next meeting of the Forum.

### Annual Event

The Chair referred to discussion at the last meeting regarding the holding of an Annual Event to celebrate the success of the Forum over the past year. He suggested that in view of a new proposal to hold a budget consultation event on 30th October 2007 (which would include making decisions on the submission of budget bids) the Annual Event be postponed until the new year.

**It was agreed that this approach be approved.**

### Involving Children and Young People

Phil Street referred to discussion at the previous meeting and emphasised that the District Council was aware of the need to engage with young people and of the importance of attempting to involve young people in the future of the Bromsgrove District.

The Council was working through the Local Strategic Partnership which had established a Children and Young Person Theme Group. A half day event involving children and young people of various ages from schools and other organisations around the District had been organised for 30th November 2007 in the Spadesbourne Suite. The event would involve discussion of what is important to the participants and the selection of two key issues for further consideration and discussion.

The details were noted and this approach was welcomed.

### Posters Promoting Equality

Following discussion at the previous meeting, it was confirmed that the posters in question had been designed to convey internal messages to Council staff in terms

of their duty to serve the community and were not for the education of the public generally. It was accepted that it would be helpful in future for members of the Forum to have the opportunity to see any similar posters before they were in the public arena. This could be facilitated by the use of the web site and the inclusion of an electronic panel to allow for the submission of views. The position was noted.

### Black History Month

Huw Moseley reported on the progress made regarding events to be included in this year's Black History Month. The programme for this third year was to be printed shortly and copies would be distributed widely. The programme of activities included puppet shows involving local schools, film, performances and workshops at the Artrix and an art competition organised by Bromsgrove District Housing Trust. It was hoped that the event would also help to generate publicity for the work of the Forum and encourage new membership.

### Religious Hate Crime

Fiona Scott referred to the discussion set out in item 8 of the minutes of the last meeting. It appeared it would be more appropriate for letters to be sent to all members of the Forum asking for specific permission for their contact details to be forwarded. This was noted.

### "Glad or Grumpy" Postcards

There was a brief discussion on the "Glad or Grumpy" postcards which had been the subject of comment in the media. Hugh Bennett stated that over 600 replies had been received as part of the consultation which was a good response rate. It was acknowledged that lessons could be learnt but it was felt that it had been successful in engaging the public. The Chair was happy that the matter had been fully debated but also stressed the need for the Forum to move forward on important issues relating to areas such as housing and employment.

## **4. Public Transport (Buses) Task Group**

Councillor Brian Lewis Chairman of the Public Transport (Buses) Task Group and his fellow members of the Task Group were welcomed to the meeting.

Councillor Lewis briefly explained that the Group had recently held their first meeting and were looking at the provision of bus services in the Bromsgrove district. The Task Group was gathering information on the Companies concerned (15 at present), what services they were running, what subsidies were involved, whether they were offering value for money etc. It was likely the County Council could be reducing the subsidy paid to bus companies in view of the budget reduction they would need to make.

The condition of the vehicles and indeed the bus station area and the facilities they offered were also part of the remit of the Task Group. In particular, the members of the Task Group were keen to get the views of the Forum on the accessibility of the bus service and the facilities offered for people who may have difficulties in making use of the bus services. The Task Group had sought information direct from the Companies on the facilities available for all sections of the community.

The Forum discussed the bus services available and the following points were highlighted:

Many areas of the district had no bus coverage at all and this meant shoppers etc. were forced to go elsewhere.

There was a need for co-ordination of bus service with the railway timetable, at present there were inadequate links.

Free bus passes were of little use to wheelchair users if the vehicles themselves were inaccessible.

Not only adjustable platforms but also clamps to hold a wheelchair securely in place were required.

Reference was made to investigatory work and a detailed report on transport which had been produced by the County Council. In addition Worcestershire Association of Old People's Forums had a transport Sub Group and seminars were due to be held in November in Worcestershire.

It was recognised that local Authorities were making a significant financial contribution towards provision of bus services and the Task Group had requested officers to investigate how the bus companies could be compelled to provide certain facilities and services.

Councillor Lewis thanked the Forum for their input and explained that the Task Group had to report in three months.

## **5. Budget Bidding**

Hugh Bennett made reference to the Council's budget process which was now underway. The Authority was keen that the community should have the opportunity to become more involved in the budget setting process through Participatory Budgeting. It was hoped to pilot this with the Forum and to arrange an event on 30th October 2007. This would involve a session on what the Forum would wish to see included in the budget and this would be "whittled down" to a shortlist of specific items which should link to the Council's priorities. Templates were available for Forum members to take back to their various organisations for detailed consultation, completion and return prior to the 30th October.

Mr. Bennett stressed that it could not be guaranteed that the bids would be successful in obtaining funding as they would still be subject to political decisions but it would be possible to track the progress of the prospective projects through the various stages of the budget process.

The opportunity to take part in the budget process was welcomed.

## **6. Key Issues Update**

In the absence of the Chief Executive, Phil Street gave a brief update on three key areas in which he was closely involved these being, Town Centre Redevelopment, Affordable Housing and Customer Service improvement. The Council would also shortly be considering five revised priorities which would drive budget decisions.

The latest position was noted.

## **7. Equalities Officer Report**

### Disabled Users Group

Fiona Scott reported the success of the event in June which had involved around 50 people. The conclusions would be incorporated into the report on the Disabled Equality Project which was being produced by Rhyan Berrigan. It was intended that regular meetings of the Disabled Users Group (likely to be around 20 people) would commence in October/November 2007.

### Disabled Equality Project

Fiona Scott reported on the progress of the Disabled Equality Project. Rhyan Berrigan had met and interviewed many Forum members and other interested persons and that this evidence gathering stage of the project had now closed. The report writing stage of the project was now well underway and it was hoped that the findings would be reported to the November meeting of the Forum. It was anticipated that the report would include input into the Town Centre project.

### Disabled Equality Scheme

It was reported that an "Easy Read" version of the Scheme had now been published and was available to all.

### Gender Equality Working Group

Fiona Scott reported that it was hoped that the next meeting of the Gender Equality Working Group would take place in October with a view to republishing a revised Scheme at the end of the year.

### Equality Impact Assessments

There was a brief discussion on the importance of Equality Impact Assessments which were a vital part of the Authority reaching level 3 on the Local Government Equality Standard. It was agreed this required further discussion at the next meeting.

## **8. Wendron Day Centre**

There was a brief discussion on the County Council's review of its facilities. It was understood that there was no intention to close Wendron Day Centre. It was suggested that a representative from the County Council be invited to attend a future meeting of the Forum.

The Chair thanked those present for their attendance and participation.

Trevor Rigg

Chair