



Bromsgrove
District Council

www.bromsgrove.gov.uk

The Equality and Diversity Forum

Thursday 14th August 2008

In attendance	
Sat Aggarwal	Bromsgrove Indian Community Forum
Hugh Bennett	Assistant Chief Executive, Bromsgrove District Council
Mary Collett	Worcestershire Association of Service Users
Kevin Dicks	Chief Executive Bromsgrove District Council, Acting Chief Executive Redditch Borough Council
Claire Felton	Head of Legal, Equalities and Democratic Serviced, Bromsgrove District Council
Jeff Edwards	Bromsgrove Older People's Forum
Joanne Floyd	Bromsgrove District Housing Trust
Patricia Hackett	Mencap
Tracey Hodges	Day Services Manager, Padstone Day Centre
Joan King	The Gender Trust
Wayne Knighton	Bromsgrove Resident
Marcia Notice	Bromsgrove District Housing Trust
Sue Mould	Electoral Services Manager, Bromsgrove District Council
Eileen Mulhall	Worcestershire Association of Service Users
Councillor Stephen Peters	Diversity Champion, Bromsgrove District Council
Trevor Rigg	Bromsgrove Black History Society and Forum Chair
Fiona Scott	Equality Officer, Bromsgrove District Council
Joe Scott	Bromsgrove Resident and Forum Vice-Chair
Rauf Shah	Oakley Road Residents Association
Jim D Smith	North Worcestershire Disability Information and Advice Line
Phil Street	Executive Director, Projects and Partnerships
John Tempest	Worcestershire Mental Health Network
Iain Trethewy	North Worcestershire Disability Information and Advice Line

Julie Wright	Bromsgrove Police Station
Nicola Wright	Human Resources and Organisational Development, Bromsgrove District Council

Apologies	
Mr B K Chaudhari	Bromsgrove Indian Community Forum
Nuala Dalton	Worcestershire Lifestyles
Sonia Hambidge	Bromsgrove Citizens Advice Bureau
Nigel Godwin	Bromsgrove Resident
Sally Langley	Bromsgrove and Redditch Advocacy Group
Tony Lowry	Bromsgrove District Housing Trust
Logan Mailvaganam	Worcestershire Mental Health Partnership
Elaine Mortimore	Bromsgrove Youth Homelessness Forum
Sharon Murphy	Benefits Welfare Officer, Bromsgrove District Council
Peter Oteng	Worcestershire Racial Equality Council
Keith Sherman	Chief Office, Bromsgrove and District Age Concern
Ann Sowton	Bromsgrove and Redditch Network
Jo Wright	Bromsgrove Resident

1. Introductions and apologies

Item 7 on the Agenda (Local Housing Allowance) would be deferred until the next meeting as Sharon Murphy was not able to attend tonight's meeting.

2. Minutes of the meeting – 12th June 2008

A revised version of the minutes was sent out this week because the name of Nigel Godwin had been left off the attendance for the meeting held on 12th June.

The minutes of the meeting held on 12th June 2008 were agreed as a true and accurate record.

3. Matters arising(i)

From meeting held on 14th February 2008

3. 3(a) Electronic Reference Panel – **Fiona** reported that due to lack of easy access to the current Equalities website a different kind of software is being considered along the lines of “bloggers” websites.

This will be much easier to use and anyone accessing the site can put on their own comments and view others. However only people who are registered as users will be able to do this. All comments will go through **Fiona** for moderation in order to prevent offensive or inappropriate comments appearing on the website. This is likely to be ready for October or November.

Trevor asked that an IT person be provided to demonstrate this.

3. 3(b) Consultation Conference – the report has now been published.

Trevor asked for people to read the report to put forward their comments at the next meeting of the Forum. **Fiona** explained that there were a few amendments that would be made when the report is reprinted.

At the end of the report, there is no detail of the Open Forum because no-one was available to take notes. This will be rectified at the next conference which hopefully will be recorded possibly on tape.

Jim Smith asked if the report could be made available through the Council's website. **Fiona** will arrange this as soon as possible. **Jim** also commented that it was very well written.

Trevor stated that a lot of hard work had been put into the report and thanked everyone for their work.

3. 4(b) Taxi driver training – **Fiona** to confirm for the next meeting how many people have registered for the training.

Matters arising (ii)

From meeting held on 12th June 2008

These will be dealt with under items on the main agenda.

4. Items from the Forum Chairman

(i) Terms of Reference – Review

There was some additional wording at the end of the Terms of Reference to refer to the election of a Chairman and Vice Chairman.

It was agreed that the new additional wording would read "**The Forum will be chaired by a Community member and an election will take place on an annual basis. The Forum will also elect a Vice Chair.**"

Rauf Shah commented that the Forum is developing nicely and that that everyone seems happy with things.

(ii) Vote of thanks

The Forum agreed that a vote of thanks should be conveyed to **Rosemary Cole** who had attended all the meetings of the Forum since 2006 and had written the minutes of these meetings.

5. Items from the Chief Executive – Kevin Dicks

(i) Items from the floor

Joe Scott asked if there had been any difficulties for Kevin with the arrangement for him to act as Chief Executive for Redditch Borough Council as well as being in post for Bromsgrove District Council.

Kevin replied that there hadn't been any difficulties so far and he seems to have more time for the role when he is at Redditch. He is trying to focus two days a week at each council – Monday and Tuesday for Bromsgrove and Wednesday and Thursday at Redditch. Friday he will be wherever he is needed.

Kevin re-iterated that this is being supervised by the Government Monitoring Board. Bromsgrove still needs to improve but we are doing well.

Eileen Mulhall asked whether things were very different at Redditch? **Kevin** said that it wasn't particularly so, but he hadn't met any of the community leaders yet.

Trevor enquired whether Bromsgrove will suffer any detriment while Kevin is at Redditch. **Kevin** said that he has faith that the staff in Bromsgrove can cope in his absence.

Kevin then went on to explain that Bromsgrove has started to review its Vision, Values and Objectives. We have carried out consultation with the community and with Councillors. Subject to Full Council approval, Customer Service will be dropped as a priority, but retained as one of the Council's four Values as this should be embedded into the day to day running of services and should not be seen as an extra item.

As a result of feedback from the community and from staff, there has been a debate over whether housing should be a priority, because the Council has a limited ability to influence the housing market; however, Cabinet and senior managers felt that it is important to send a message to our partners and regional government that housing remains a key priority, as the future housing allocations for the District will effectively determine the nature of the District over the next 25 years.

Hugh Bennett added the clean streets and recycling priority had also been changed, to clean streets and environment, to include recycling, but also flood mitigation and reducing carbon emissions.

Wayne Knighton asked if **Kevin** had noticed any differences with car parking issues in Redditch compared to Bromsgrove.

Wayne also asked about Shopmobility in Redditch which, he believed is funded by Scottish Widows. **Kevin** will try to find out more details.

6. Items from Assistant Chief Executive – Hugh Bennett

(i) Community Transport

The consultation is now finished. There have been 50 responses, the vast majority in favour. The regular Customer Panel was included in this consultation exercise and they also supported the proposal for a community transport service.

Hugh has written to both the WRVS and Dial a Ride and asked them to provide outline business cases for what they could provide for various prices. **Hugh** will now work with Louise Berry, WRVS and Dial a Ride on developing a business case and budget bid, which will be submitted to the Council's Corporate Management Team for consideration on the 30th September. Assuming funding for the scheme is agreed by Full Council in January 2009, **Hugh** is expecting a scheme to be up and running by April 2009. The details are still to be worked out by **Hugh** and his team, but there is sufficient time for these details to be worked out.

Jim Smith stated that the County Council are involved in the provision of Community Transport and **Hugh** agreed that it was a "tangled web", but that County had been supportive and an officer from the County Council sits on his project team.

(ii) Community budget bids

The bidding form has been sent to all Forum members.

Last year money was allocated for Black History Month, the Diwali event and the Padstone drama event. **Hugh** said that it was a good scheme, a comment which was supported by the Chairman, as it enabled the community to develop their ideas for equality and a sense of community with financial support from the Council. The Forum has a special meeting 18th September to consider all the submitted bids.

All bids are to be sent to **Hugh** who will present the bids with the Council's views as to which bids are likely to be accepted. **Hugh** hopes that this year's bidding round will be as successful as last year. **Hugh** reminded the Forum, that it is the decision of the Forum (and not his), as to which bids it would like to go forward to be considered by Councillors.

(iii) Health Improvement Manager

Jeff Edwards said that at the last meeting we were trying to get someone from the Primary Care Trust to attend. **Emma Barton** has taken up post as the Health Improvement Practitioner and she is based at Bromsgrove District Council working with people and making activity referrals.

Emma's contact details are

Emma Barton Telephone 01527 881311

Jim Smith said that in the Wyre Forest District, changes have been made under the new Primary Care Trust and a public health consultant has been specially allocated.

Hugh stated that Bromsgrove District Council is seeking to do the same thing.

Wayne Knighton asked how anyone would contact the Primary Care Trust if they wanted to? Would it be through Emma?

Trevor suggested that Emma be invited to a future meeting of the Forum to introduce herself – agreed. **Fiona** to arrange.

Trevor stated that he will continue to emphasize the lack of involvement of the Primary Care Trust until this is resolved.

Joe Scott asked for clarification on “activity referral? **Hugh** explained that this would be a GP referral.

7. Local Housing Allowance – deferred to next meeting

8. Electoral Services and Local Democracy

Sue Mould introduced herself – she is the Electoral Services Manager for Bromsgrove. Sue came from Redditch Borough Council and when arriving at Bromsgrove she joined a service that had not had a manager for two years. She is trying to promote Electoral services throughout Bromsgrove District using various contact networks such as the Forum. She went to the meeting of the Disabled Users Group last week and is visiting residential homes. She is going to visit Padstone Day centre and give a talk to the day service users.

Sue set up a display of materials that are available from the Electoral Commission. Materials are available in Large Print and Braille. If anyone needs assistance they can be assisted to vote. The criteria are that they have to be able to understand what they are voting for.

The Annual Canvass is currently underway. Every elector is written to in order to confirm that details held are correct. Replies can be phoned through, sent by text message or via the internet or, people just sign the form and send it back. Personal canvassers go back a maximum of 5 times if the form has not been returned and if this is not successful the person's details will be removed from the electoral roll as it will be assumed that they have moved

The County Council elections take place every 4 years and European elections every 5 years. They are both due in 2009 and may be combined to take place in June 2009.

There are three ways to vote.

in person
by postal vote which is open to anyone
appoint a proxy to vote on your behalf

Our polling stations had a review last year and they have to be reviewed every five years but Sue has decided to an annual review. Polling stations have to be within a specific electoral area and **Sue** is open to suggestions for better facilities than those currently in use. In those areas where nothing is available we have to set up a portable building.

Eileen Mulhall stated that some people don't understand what people are voting for – **Sue** said that there are people at the Polling Stations who can help anyone if they need anything explaining to them.

9. Additional Item

Phil Street highlighted the Bromsgrove Town Centre regeneration project and the current consultation questionnaire. We are inviting the views of the public and encouraging people to submit their ideas. The questionnaire is available in Large Print and Braille and they are available from all council contacts points for anyone who wants to take part. The deadline for replies is the **18th September**.

Trevor asked that the information received through the consultation to be reported on at the next meeting of this Forum.

10. Equality Officer Report - Fiona Scott

(i) Conference Report - 12th April 2008

Fiona has distributed Conference Report with a few exceptions – it still has to go out to the schools in the Bromsgrove District and the Local Strategic Partnership.

(ii) The Disabled Users Group

The Group met on Friday 8th August. Their agenda included

- The Bromsgrove District Housing Trust review of Aids and Adaptations
- Disabled Facilities Grants
- Local Housing Allowance
- Sports Development for Disabled People
- Electoral Services

The Bromsgrove District Housing Trust item also covered the current changes to the Sheltered Housing schemes in Bromsgrove and this will be a further full item at the next meeting with a speaker from the County Council.

The discussion on Aids and Adaptations and Disabled Facilities Grants was welcomed and there was a consensus that the work is of a high quality and very helpful to people who need them. The down side is the length of time it takes to provide additional facilities to people but this is to be improved by the recruitment of a further Occupational Therapist. Future agenda items for the Disabled Users Group include

- The development of Bromsgrove Railway Station
- The review of the Blue Badge Scheme
- Bromsgrove District Housing Trust and changes to sheltered housing
- Access to sports and leisure services

Jeff Edwards asked if the information to be put forward to the Disabled User's Group will be available to the rest of the Equality and Diversity Forum. It was agreed that the minutes of the Disabled Users Group will from now onwards be circulated to the Equality and Diversity Forum.

Wayne commented that, for him, the process is good as he gets all the information regardless of duplication. Those receiving the minutes of meetings by email have the choice to read or delete.

Jim Smith raised a question as to the exclusiveness of the Disabled Users Group as they have agreed not to recruit any more new members for the time being. Some issues, for example, the move away from sheltered housing are of interest to a much wider range of people.

Fiona explained that Bromsgrove District Council has adopted a more informal approach than the legally based guidance suggests and as a result have already got quite a large

Disabled Users Group. There could be much larger numbers of people who would like to join but if the group became any larger it would be difficult to manage.

A national organisation, **Acas** recently advertised for six disabled people who would between them, represent most types of impairment whereas the Bromsgrove Group has 20-25 members at the moment.

(iii) Bromsgrove Black History Society

This year's plans include

Blue Sky puppet theatre for school children
Music events at the Artrix

The London Community Gospel Choir
Ruby Turner
Geno Washington
Jeffrey Daniels

Bromsgrove District Housing Trust are organising a Black History day and are hoping to engage a Dub Poet, Yasus Afari.
West Mercia police are organising a Black History quiz for schools.

Bromsgrove District Council are organising a dress down day for staff in conjunction with a display and exhibition about the Gambian Exchange project with talks from the organisers of the Exchange.

Bromsgrove library are hosting a family event with Calypso singing and they will be providing a "rummage bin" with relevant books and other materials.

The next meeting is on 8th Sept where the Society will finalise this year's publicity materials, leaflets, posters and press advertising. The Society is also producing a general recruitment leaflet for use all year round.

(iv) Diwali

There is a small working group of Bromsgrove District Council officers and members of the Bromsgrove Indian Community Forum who have now met several times to plan the Diwali activity. There will be an event to celebrate Diwali on the 26th October 2008.

The event will take place in the Spadesbourne Suite starting in the afternoon with lantern making workshops for older school age children. The lanterns will then be used in the Christmas lights street parade later this year.

Those attending the afternoon workshop will get an automatic invitation to the evening event which will consist of a brief ceremony and explanation of the meaning of Diwali followed by a celebration with authentic Indian food and music. Children attending will receive a small gift of chocolates and sweets and if the weather is suitable there will be a small display of fireworks outside.

All members of the Equality and Diversity Forum will receive an invitation.

Sat Aggarwal explained the meaning of Diwali. Diwali is the Hindu festival of lights and is the most popular of all the festivals from South Asia. The event is celebrated across religious and cultural groups in India and is more cultural than religious. The festival celebrates the victory of good over evil, light over darkness and knowledge over ignorance although the actual legends that go with the festival are different in different parts of India.

In Britain, as in India, the festival is a time for thorough spring cleaning the home and for wearing new clothes and most importantly, decorating buildings with fancy lights. The British City of Leicester is noted for its Diwali celebrations.

11. Future Agenda Items

Local Housing Allowance – Sharon Murphy, Benefits Welfare Officer

Emma Barton – Health Improvement Manager

Being Different Together, Community Mapping Report – there will be a written summary of findings.

Review of the Inclusive Equalities Scheme – there will be a report of what we have achieved and what is still to be done.

Trevor asked Tony Love to address an item on “How safe is Bromsgrove?” at a future meeting.

Meeting closed at 8.10 pm.

Signed

**Trevor Rigg
Chair**

Time, date and place of next meeting

Thursday 18th September 2008 – to hear Community Bids

Refreshments from 5.30 onwards in the Conference Room

Forum meeting 6.30 to 7.30 in the Committee Room

Following meeting

Thursday 16th October 2008

Refreshments from 5.30 onwards in the Council Chamber

Forum meeting 6.30 to 8.00 in the Committee Room



**Bromsgrove District Council
Equality and Diversity Forum**

Terms of Reference

To be a critical friend to Bromsgrove District Council to work towards equality and diversity in this District

- **working in partnership to identify and address issues of inequality in the District**
- **be a stable, long term working group involved in the review, revision and implementation of the Inclusive Equalities Scheme**
- **establish working groups to support all six strands of diversity and the activities in relation to these strands**
 - **race**
 - **disability**
 - **gender including trans-gender**
 - **sexual orientation**
 - **religion and belief**
 - **age**
- **establish and maintain systems for monitoring responses to the recommendations of the Equality and Diversity Forum in the delivery of all services by the Council and its partners**

The Forum will be chaired by a Community member and an election will take place on an annual basis.

The Forum will also elect a Vice Chair.