

# **BRIGHTON & HOVE CITY COUNCIL**

## **EQUALITIES FORUM**

**4.00 PM, MONDAY, 6 MARCH 2006**

## **HOVE TOWN HALL**

## **MINUTES**

### Present

Councillor Elgood (Chair), Councillors Burgess, Framroze, McCaffery, Meadows, K Norman, Pidgeon (OS), Mrs Theobald, Wrighton.

Community Representatives & Representatives of other organisations: Dr and Mrs Davoodi (Disabled Access Advisory Group), Bert Williams (Brighton & Hove Black History), PJ Aldred (Pride), Anne-Marie Hines (Mosaic), Bonnie Evans-Hills (Interfaith Contact Group), Arthur Law (Spectrum)

Brighton & Hove City Council: Alex Bailey (Director Strategy & Governance), Maggie Squire (Head of Performance and Equalities), John Irvine (LGBT Community Safety Officer), Fergus Crowe (Children Families and Schools), Gillian Cunliffe (Children Families and Schools), Carmel Millar (Head of Human Resources), Elizabeth Culbert (Senior Lawyer), Sue Westwood (Traffic Information Officer)

Apologies were received from: Councillor Barnett, Imam Sajid, Julie O'Hara, Joan Moorhouse, Neil Ansell, and The Women's Centre

### **PART ONE**

### **ACTION**

#### **43A Declarations of Substitutes**

- 43.1 Councillor Norman substituted for Councillor Young.  
Bonnie Evans-Hills attended to represent the Interfaith Contact Group.

#### **43B Declarations of Interest**

- 43.2 There were none.

**43C Exclusion of Press and Public**

43.3 The Committee considered whether the press and public should be excluded from the meeting during the consideration of any items contained in the agenda, having regard to the nature of the business to be transacted and the nature of the proceedings and the likelihood as to whether, if members of the press and public were present, there would be disclosure to them of confidential or exempt information as defined in Section 100A(3) or 100 1 of the Local Government Act 1972.

43.4 **RESOLVED** - That the press and public not be excluded from the meeting during consideration of any items on the agenda.

**44. CHAIR'S COMMUNICATIONS**

44.1 The Chair invited members to attend a Mayoral Reception on 3 May at 6.30 pm at Brighton Town Hall. This would include an session discussing Equalities issues with Councillor Simon Burgess, the new Leader of the Council.

44.2 The Chair congratulated Councillor Pidgeon on his successful campaign to help blind and partially-sighted bus-users. The council's Traffic Information Officer, Susan Westwood, informed members that the DAAG had now decided on the best equipment to inform blind and partially-sighted people when their bus was approaching a stop and when to get off. DAAG had agreed that the council should take part in a pilot project with the RNIB using the REACT 3 key fob, which would allow for a voice announcement to be relayed on the handset rather than a voice announcement at the bus stop. Ordering and installing the product would take 6-12 months. Councillor Pidgeon thanked councillors for voting to approve the scheme at the Budget Council meeting. He recommended that the users should not have to pay for the key fobs and the Forum supported this. Councillor McCaffery reminded the Forum that a Scrutiny Working Group was currently considering deaf, blind and deaf-blind issues.

44.3 Three leaflets were circulated: "Welcoming Traveller Pupils", "Promoting Race Equality" and "Promoting Equality: a Summary of Findings and Good Practice from Children Families and Schools Equalities Impact Assessments". Fergus Crow from CFS stated that the first two leaflets were aimed at Schools, while the third reflected the work of the directorate during the period 2002-5. The Forum requested that he make a full presentation at a future meeting. Arthur Law requested that this should include full information on how schools record bullying incidents. Councillor McCaffery expressed concern that, although traveller children often did well in summer exams, this was not currently recorded in the departmental statistics. She asked

Fergus Crow  
and  
Gillian  
Cunliffe

officers to look into this.

44.4 The Chair stated that the Travellers Group had held its second meeting on 2 February. All Forum members were invited to attend a training session on Travellers Issues at Kings House on 9 March.

44.5 The Chair advised that the Equalities Policy Review Group had met several times and would be in a position to draft its recommendations shortly.

44.6 Carmel Millar, the interim Head of Human Resources, was introduced to the Forum.

#### **45a MINUTES**

45.1 Dr Davoodi thanked the Chair for sending him a response regarding the Jubilee Library.

45.2 The Forum congratulated Councillor Burgess on being appointed Leader of the Council.

45.3 **RESOLVED** - That the minutes of the meeting held on 30 January 2006 be approved and signed by the Chair.

#### **45b FEEDBACK ISSUES FROM LAST MEETING**

45.4 The Forum noted the list of feedback issues from the previous meeting.

45.5 Councillor Burgess referred to the item on beach access and suggested that officers should look at the arrangements Eastbourne had made. Dr Davoodi expressed regret that Brighton & Hove Council no longer employed an officer with specific responsibility for disabled access. Sue Drummond

45.6 The Head of Performance & Equalities had ascertained that the planners did not currently undertake equalities monitoring with regard to the granting of planning permission. Councillor Wrighton agreed to contact the Head of Performance & Equalities regarding the local authority which had undertaken such research. Georgia Wrighton

#### **46. PUBLIC QUESTIONS**

46.1 There were no questions from members of the public.

#### **47. COMMUNITY REPRESENTATIVES ISSUES AND QUESTIONS**

47.1 Dr Davoodi had prepared a briefing note on the demonstration of the Atkins Transport System Real Time equipment given to the

DAAG meeting on 21 February. It was agreed that a copy should be forwarded to the council's Traffic Information Officer. The Chair requested that the Forum should monitor the progress of the pilot scheme.

Maggie  
Squire

#### **48. THE EQUALITY BILL**

48.1 The Forum considered a report of the Director of Strategy & Governance setting out the key provisions of the Equality Bill. Members noted that the Bill proposed the creation of a single Commission for Equalities and Human Rights (CEHR) as well as extending discrimination law to create a number of new powers and duties relevant to local authorities (see minute book).

48.2 Liz Culbert, Senior Lawyer, advised that the Bill had now become the Equality Act 2006. She made a presentation on the main considerations and responded to members' questions. Arthur Law was concerned that the Act did not include transgender people and the Chair undertook to contact the local MPs with a view to addressing this omission.

Paul Elgood

48.3 The Head of Performance & Equalities reported back on a consultation event on the new Gender Equality legislation that the Equalities Manager had attended on 2 March. Stakeholder events were being held to find out the issues to be addressed and Brighton & Hove Council would need to design its services accordingly and undertake Gender Impact Assessments. This Scheme would include transgender people.

48.4 **RESOLVED** – (1) That the Forum notes the proposals set out in the Equality Bill.

(2) That the Forum instructs officers to bring a report to a future meeting setting out the action required by the council to implement the new duties.

Liz Culbert  
and

(3) That the Forum instructs officers to consider awareness raising for members, staff and partner organisations on the new duties.

Maggie  
Squire

#### **49. THE DISABILITY DISCRIMINATION ACT 2005**

49.1 The Forum considered a report of the Director of Strategy & Governance setting out the key provisions of the Disability Discrimination Act 2005, focusing on the new general and specific disability equality duties applicable to local authorities from 5 December 2006 (see minute book).

49.2 Liz Culbert, Senior Lawyer, made a presentation explaining how the 2005 Act amends the 1995 Act, including changes to the definition

of disability. She confirmed that the council would need to be proactive in promoting disabled people in future.

49.3 She responded to members' questions. Dr Davoodi stated that many organisations and establishments had a limited understanding of making "reasonable adjustments" for disabled people. A key issue was training staff to be sensitive to the many different needs disabled people have. Councillor Wrighton recommended that the council should provide an information service to local businesses. Ms Culbert confirmed that the council would also need to publicise the availability of adjustments it could provide so that disabled people knew they could ask for them. However, she advised that the Act was not helpful in providing a list of "reasonable adjustments".

49.4 Arthur Law stressed the need to change public perceptions of disability, particularly where mental health disability was concerned.

49.5 **RESOLVED** – (1) That the Forum notes the provisions of the Disability Discrimination Act 2005.

(2) That the Forum instructs officers to bring a report to a future meeting setting out the action proposed to implement and resource the new duties

Liz Culbert/  
Maggie  
Squire

## **50 TOURISM & DISABILITY ACCESS**

50.1 This item was deferred until the next meeting as the Head of Tourism was unable to be present.

## **51. PROGRESS ON EQUALITIES: ANNUAL REPORT**

51.1 The Forum considered a report of the Director of Strategy & Governance giving a summary of the work of the Forum during 2005-06 and outlining its future work programme (see minute book).

51.2 The Chair thanked Forum members and the officers involved in the meetings for helping to progress equalities work in Brighton & Hove.

51.3 Councillor K Norman referred to the discussion about the possibility of discrimination in refusing planning applications (see paragraph 45.6 above, also paragraph 39.6 of 30 January minutes) and asked whether the council should be monitoring other aspects of its service delivery. The Director of Strategy & Governance confirmed that this was not being done at present. He stated that it might prove difficult to monitor who was using council services in some circumstances and that data would need to be collected sensitively and used intelligently. The Chair requested the Head of Performance & Equalities to report back on this to a future meeting.

Maggie  
Squire

51.4 Councillor Burgess thanked Councillor Elgood for his hard work in chairing the Forum and its working groups.

51.5 **RESOLVED** – (1) That the Forum notes the achievements of the Equalities Forum over the last year.

(2) That the Forum agrees the outline work programme for the coming year as set out in the report.

(3) That the report be referred to the Policy & Resources Committee in order to keep the Committee informed of the achievements of the Forum.

Estelle  
Woodcock

The meeting concluded at 5.30 pm.

Signed

Chair

Dated this

day of

2006