

PRESENT

Councillors: Schofield (Chair), Slatter, Hughes, Stuart.

Staff Members: Norah Al-Ani, Heather Williams, Aasia Bibi, Louise Harrington

Public Members: Graham Lewis, Gerri Bird, Redge Carpen

Presenting papers: Sigrig Fisher, Strategy Officer (Equalities) & Karen Price, Senior HR Officer.

In attendance: Antoinette Jackson, Head of Strategy & Partnerships

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

No apologies were received.

2 MINUTES

The minutes for the meeting held on 20 October 2003 were approved.

3 PUBLIC MEMBER VACANCY – UPDATE

Members were reminded that Serena Olsaretti had stood down as a Public Member. Sigrig Fisher said that interviews were being held for her replacement.

SF

4 ELECTION OF CHAIR AND VICE CHAIR OCTOBER 2004 TO OCTOBER 2005

Members were reminded that the Chair was to be rotated on an annual basis between the Councillors, Staff and Public Members of the Panel. Following a discussion it was concluded that the Panel could not predetermine the election of any particular individual as Chair until after the local elections in June.

Before the next meeting all members would be invited to make nominations for the posts of Chair and Vice Chair. SF

5 RACE EQUALITY SCHEME REVIEW 2004

Sigrig Fisher introduced the report which set out the background to the Race Equality Scheme, reviewed the progress of the implementation of the scheme and considered future action. The appendix set out objectives, responsibilities and the timeframe for achievement of the four key areas during 2004 to 2005. The report with the comments of the Panel were to be submitted to Strategy Scrutiny Committee.

Members said that:

- They would welcome further joint training (Councillors and Members of the Panel) on Race Equality.
- Some public members were concerned at an apparent lack of progress on the equal opportunities issues. The complexity of bringing a relatively large organisation like the Council to the same level of perception was noted.

- The measurement of the degree of commitment was difficult to achieve with accuracy and reflect in statistics.
- The 'elimination of racism' needed to be added to the actions to be taken, although in doing so it was essential to set achievable targets.
- The method of recruitment of staff from minority groups needed to be considered, managers needed to be encouraged to review the recruitment process.
- Data on recruitment was required with analysis of the diversity of responses to gain the view of the community.
- The four key areas needed support from senior levels of staff in the Council to progress the work on those areas. The strong commitment needed to be transferred into action.
- On employment, it was important to avoid appearing to operate a quota system and make the actions to be taken more explicit.
- New recruits to the Council should be invited by the Panel to comment on any relevant issues relating to the way they were recruited and any subsequent matters. This could also be included in the Council's induction process for all staff.
- The perception by ethnic minorities represented was that they would not be able to change any of the processes to improve staff representation.

LH/KP

Agreed that the report be submitted to Strategy Scrutiny Committee with the comments of the Panel.

6 ANALYSIS OF WORKFORCE DATA AS AT 01/03/04

The report by the Senior Human Resources Advisor provided an analysis of the workforce as at 1 March 2004 by reference to the City Paybands and the equalities categories. It highlighted issues raised by the analysis and set out proposed actions to address the issues.

Members considered the report and the analyses set out in the appendices and noted

- The low employment of people under 25, it was the perception that young people did not stay in post for as long as older employees and expected to change their workplace more frequently.
- The data supplied reflected male employees being replaced by male employees.
- The aspect of age discrimination needed to be taken into account, changes in pension legislation might necessitate managing an older workforce.

KP

An analysis of Pay Band 5 by department would provide information for consideration by the Panel.

The Panel noted the contents of the report.

6 NEW DISCRIMINATION LEGISLATION

The report drew attention to new legislation on discrimination and highlighted some of the issues raised which required the Council to make policy decisions. The legislation comprised the Employment Equality Regulations 2003 (Sexual Orientation, and Religion & Belief) and draft Age Discrimination Legislation (due 2006), a description of the scope of both these was set out in

LH

the appendices and the report.

Officers were asked to consider how managers could be trained to include compliance with the legislation in recruitment practice.

KP

Employees needed to be made aware of current legislation on discrimination as soon as possible.

Members noted the contents of the report.

7 DISABILITY DISCRIMINATION ACT 1995: IMPLEMENTATION PROGRESS REPORT

The report set out the details of progress made by the council towards implementation of the Disability Discrimination Act, a programme of works was appended which showed the status of each action.

Members commented on the progress of the works and specifically referred to the Council Chamber and Hobson House access. The Head of Strategy & Partnerships pointed out that the DDA only covered public access, that the audit and resources available had focused on that, and that the audit report for the Council Chamber had identified the 'reasonable adjustments' necessary to be compliant with the Act.

Office space was recognised as being a separate issue, and Members recommended that this continued to be reviewed.

8 DRAFT DISABILITY DISCRIMINATION BILL – SUPPORTING THE DISABLED

The report set out the implications of the draft Disability Discrimination Bill as it related to disabled councillors. It noted support provided in recent years for councillors with disabilities, additional measures under consideration and areas of support which the Council is currently unable to provide.

Members suggested that an office audit in relation to the needs of councillors for access alongside the review of Council property for public access would be helpful.

Members noted the report and the measures already in hand and taken to meet the needs of councillors with disabilities.

9 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Monday 8th November 2004, 6.00pm, Committee Room 2, the Guildhall