

PRESENT

Councillors: Hughes, Slatter

Staff Members: Graham Watts, Norah Al-Ani, Bridget Keady

Public Members: Graham Lewis, Nicky Wrigley

Presenting papers: Sigrid Fisher, Strategy Officer (Equalities) & Jackie Condon, Head of Human Resources (HoHR)

In attendance: Antoinette Jackson, Head of Strategy & Partnerships (HoSP), Jim Stocker, Buildings Manager (item 5), Cllr Nimmo-Smith, Leader of the Council (observing)

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Gerri Bird, Cllr Bruce, and Ila Chandavarkar.

2 MEMBERSHIP

The Panel agreed option 2 as set out in the paper, ie. to agree the principle that, in the interests of continuity of knowledge and expertise, should any Panel member whose term of office has come to an end be interested in and willing to continue in their role, this should be automatic, for a maximum term of 6 years in total. After this panel members could re-apply, but through open recruitment. SF

The Panel also asked SF to undertake 'capacity checks' on members who missed two consecutive meetings, although noting that members may attend informal meetings in between. SF

CHAIRING

The Panel agreed to Graham Watts remaining Chair whilst an Independent Chair was sought. Graham would be leaving the Council in September 2007, so the arrangement was temporary. SF

The Panel placed on record its appreciation of Andy Yacoub's work as Chair over the last 18 months and asked that this be passed on. SF

3 MINUTES & MATTERS ARISING

The minutes of the meeting held on 5 June 2006 were approved.

The Panel noted the report on matters arising from SF. Item 4 - Cllr Slatter asked if the prospective candidates briefing had been better attended this year. [Subsequent to the meeting – seven members of the public attended the event in November which was up on the previous held in February 06]

Re Item 5 Diversity in Employment, JC reported back. (i) on the request for information on staff sexual orientation she had circulated the leaflet that requested this and other information from staff and some of the relevant analysed data.

NW asked how the figures compared with the City. It was noted that this had been the subject of debate on the census at the last meeting and had not been possible to establish and as no direct data is collected. Staff groups following the exercise provided feedback and any future work needs to be more explicit about what the Council wants to find out. A question on sexual orientation will appear in the next staff attitude survey (due summer 2007).

(ii) transgender information was on the intranet but not widely publicised. This will be addressed in part by preparation for the Gender Equality Scheme due in April 07.

4 DISABILITY EQUALITY SCHEME AND ACTION PLAN

The Panel was advised that the Leader, following Strategy Scrutiny Committee on 20 November, had approved the Scheme/Action Plan. The Action Plan would be a 'living' document, reviewed annually and the Panel would be involved.

Cllr Slatter asked if the officers could make public (on the web?) the list of organisations consulted during the exercise.

SF

On the Action Plan – no.16 GL advised that Diverse had funding and capacity to provide training on 'HIV and employment'. SF stated that the Council would be written to by Diverse inviting it to adopt an HIV Policy.

5 MANDELA HOUSE LIFT

NA-A introduced the report and wanted the Panel to discuss what the Council's approach should be when the lift is out of order and Mandela House became inaccessible. This was a wider issue than the technical/facilities management side.

SF

NA-A explained that meetings had to be re-arranged elsewhere and staff had worked from home. In future when the lift is out of action, should Human Resources be advised to think through the staffing implications? How does the Council continue to provide its services to the public?

GW advised that proper risk assessments should be undertaken by the Departments and be in place to address these issues. Cllr Slatter suggested that whatever is decided the protocol/risk assessment should apply to all the Council's single lift buildings.

Jim Stocker acknowledged that on the technical side, lessons were learnt and the notification (to staff) should be a priority as well as updates. He would discuss with HR and agree protocols for the future.

JS

6 COMPREHENSIVE EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY POLICY AND EQUALITIES VALUE STATEMENT

SF introduced the report, advising that the Leader, following consideration at Strategy Scrutiny Committee on 20 November, had approved the

documents. Disseminating the Policy and Statement to staff would be the next stage, with briefings and training provided. SF was also in discussion about issuing some information with payslips. The Values Statement will be issued in poster format at the same time as a revised anti-violence statement.

BK asked whether corporately the Council is getting temporary staff to sign up to Values Statement etc. In Community Services, a one page document listing the Council's Values is included as part of a temps contract.

JC said that this had not been rolled out corporately but that it would be looked into. BK to send to JC Comm Services document. This should also apply to agency contracts. JC/BK

Councillor Slatter asked about the Parking Attendants (being subject of abuse). GW stated that their employer Legion Security had shared values with the Council, in addition the employees were all members of UNISON and were supported in that way.

7 PROGRESS WITH DIVERSITY IN EMPLOYMENT

Re 3.3 – Disability related leave: GL asked about those off sick because of their disability and how this was handled. JC stated that the Council's Management of Attendance Policy was being reviewed. GL asked that managers should interpret any Attendance Policy in a sensitive way.

Re 3.4 – Anti-hate campaign: JC was trying to get Barnados involved. JC

The Panel confirmed that they wish to continue to receive these reports at future meetings. JC

The Panel noted that the HR Diversity Officer (part-time) was now a permanent position.

8 GYPSY AND TRAVELLER ISSUES

Re. para 3, the South Cambs Development Plan document, SF advised that Bristol City Council had achieved success through an Equality Impact Assessment as it was not only a land issue but a housing and race issue – interlinked. The Panel were interested in receiving further information from that example. SF

9 BNP MATERIAL IN LOCAL AREA

The Panel agreed that at its next meeting it should have a report on what options the Council could do to respond to this type of material. NA-A said that IC would have information on this. SF/BK/IC

10 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

To agree by email date and venue. Informal meeting in w/c 19 February. SF