

EQUALITIES PANEL

5 June 2006
4.00pm to 6.05pm

PRESENT

Independent Chair: Andy Yacoub, Diversity Manager, Suffolk County Council

Councillors: Hughes, Lynn, Slatter

Staff Members: Graham Watts, Norah Al-Ani

Public Members: Graham Lewis

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

In attendance: Antoinette Jackson, Head of Strategy & Partnerships (HoSP), a representative of the Council's LGBT Group for Item 3, Martin Doyle of Cambridgeshire County Council Registry

1 WELCOME TO NEW MEMBERS/APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

The Chair introduced himself and then invited members to introduce themselves to Councillor Miriam Lynn, a new member of the Panel, appointed on 25 May. Cllr Elizabeth Hughes had been re-appointed after a year's absence, Cllr Victoria Bruce had also been appointed.

Apologies were received from Gerri Bird, Nicky Wrigley, Cllr Bruce, Bridget Keady, Ila Chandavarkar and Nacer Dali.

2 MINUTES & MATTERS ARISING

The minutes of the meeting held on 14 November 2005 were approved.

Re Item 3: (i) Holocaust Memorial Day – Norah Al-Ani reported that two schools had been involved in events to mark this Day. The Panel noted that the 2007 programme would be broader to include other groups persecuted at that time. (ii) Travellers Group: Antionette Jackson had provided Councillor Downham with the list of members on this Group.

Re Item 5: Choice Based Lettings – noted that this was not due to roll out until late 2008 and the Panel would receive a report back after the system had been in place for a period. SF

Re Item 6: (i) Chair of Strategy Scrutiny – AJ advised that the Chair of the Strategy Scrutiny Committee does not have to a member of the Panel. (ii) Mission Statement - to be circulated to the Panel. SF

FEEDBACK FROM THE INFORMAL MEETING: 28 APRIL

The following update on actions since the meeting:

2 – Knowledge and skills audit of Panel members

Bridget Keady (BK) had sent everyone the Asylum Seekers and Refugee research. The Chair had asked if the information could be passed to others but the Police did not agree that this should be done because some of the information was confidential, so a revised document for wider distribution

would be made available to pass on. BK to send the information to the new Cllrs on the Panel. BK

SF to provide the Panel with Newcastle City Council's flexible working scheme. SF

SF to consider further when the next knowledge and skills audit of the Panel should be undertaken.

3 – Diversity Review SF

The email group (equality@cambridge.gov.uk) had been corrected and the Panel, except for new councillors appointed in May had their email addresses added to the email group. New Councillors to be added to the group. BK

Panel to be sent the Report to Strategy Scrutiny Committee (10 July)

SF

3 SEXUAL ORIENTATION & 2011 CENSUS

The Chair advised the Panel that officers from across the region had met with Office for National Statistics (ONS) to discuss the inclusion of hard to reach groups. Pilot questions were to be tested in certain regions next year, but sexual orientation was not to be included.

A representative of the Council's LGBT Group was present at the meeting, and fed back that the Group's views were

- It is likely that one family member completes the census and therefore sexuality may not be accurately represented.
- Sexuality was too complex to be surveyed by census.
- While the ONS document (March 2006) gave strong arguments for information to be gathered on sexuality, the challenge was how to do this

The Panel felt that if ONS did not include a question in the next census on sexual orientation, there was a need to find alternative ways of capturing this data. In the absence of any appropriate alternative it may be that including a question in the census is the only viable option for now. The Panel thought that a response should be sent to the ONS and the representative of LGBT undertook to draft a letter for circulation and comment.

The Panel thanked the LGBT Group for its contributions to this debate and the representative for attending. It was agreed that the Group representative would draft a response to ONS and forward this to SF who would circulate it to Panel members for comment before sending it off on behalf of the Panel.

LGBT
Group
rep

Presentation on Civil Partnerships.

Martin Doyle, from Cambridgeshire County Council Registry Service talked about civil partnerships in the County.

The information on how the service was developing and being used regionally was welcomed by the Panel, as were issues raised about staff training needs in relation to this new legislation. The Panel expressed a commitment to ensuring within Cambridge City Council that all staff are offered training and support to adapt to such legislation positively both in terms of service delivery/customer care, and organisational culture.

4 DRAFT EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY REVIEW 2006

Regarding the Programme attached, Cllr Slatter asked for Mark Taylor's name be added to 4c), and for the document to include reference to Shopmobility Service. SF

There was discussion on difficulty getting appropriate representative candidates for political parties on the City Council. Although the City Council produced a leaflet for those interested in standing for election, the view was that it was a matter for the political parties (locally and nationally). AJ suggested that the Director of Central Services could be invited to a future meeting to discuss this issue.

Cllr Slatter mentioned the date had been set for the Way to Be Awards – 23rd November at the Corn Exchange. All to note

Panel to advise SF on any events/items listed that they wish to involved with. All to note

The Panel supported the actions to address in the future as listed in the report.

5 DIVERSITY IN EMPLOYMENT - PROGRESS REPORT

In response to a question from Graham Lewis, Jackie Condon advised the Panel that it was the intention to keep the HR Diversity post funded to March 2007. A Best Value Review of the Council's Human Resources Service was being undertaken. Diversity issues would be addressed as part of that Review, due to report to Customer Services & Resources Scrutiny Committee on 14th November.

The Panel requested a summary of the data collected from the staff sexual orientation survey undertaken in autumn 2005 be distributed JC

HR to inform Panel of how Council responds to transgender issues and whether information was available on the intranet. JC

6 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Monday 27th November 2006, 4-6pm.

Browns Field Community Centre