

**PRESENT**

Chair: Toni Ainley - Director of City Services and Equalities Champion

Councillors: Downham, Shah, Slatter

Staff Members: Nacer Dali, Jackie Hanson, Bridget Keady, Christine Leonard

Public Members: Graham Lewis, Nicky Wrigley

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

In attendance: Antoinette Jackson, Director of Customer & Democratic Services (DCDS), Theresa Lawson

**1 WELCOME, INTRODUCTIONS & APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

AJ welcomed all.

Introductions took place due to new members joining this Panel. Toni Ainley has replaced Graham Watts and is the new Chair, and Jackie Hanson and Christine Leonard are the new Staff Management Representatives.

Apologies were received from Ila Chandavarka.

**2 MINUTES & MATTERS ARISING**

The minutes of the meeting held on 27 November 2006 were agreed as a correct record.

The Panel noted the report on matters arising from SF.

Item 2 - Non attendance to be picked up later in the meeting.

Item 4 - The Equalities web pages hosting a variety of information are live and being used. A new HIV Policy is being developed by the Council's HR Department. SF commented that Dhiverse are recruiting for a new Chief Executive.

Item 6 - Information on the Equality and Diversity Policy was sent out to all staff with payslips in January 2007 so all are aware and up to date.

Item 7 - The new Disability Policy will be launched on 3 December. BK has been approached by a member of staff in Community Services who has questioned the maximum number of 10 days sick leave. It was agreed that JF would pick this up separately outside of this forum. SF commented that this issue would also be discussed further at the next Disabled Staff Group

JF  
SF

meeting.

Item 8 - SF reported that the Council's Traveller Officer Group had not met for a while however Cllr Slatter reported that the site search was continuing.

Item 9 - Sean Risdale from the new Equalities and Human Rights Commission, based at Go East, will attend the next meeting of this group in April 2008 to talk about race and equality issues.

### **3 EQUALITIES PANEL MEMBERS' TERMS OF REFERENCE AND WAYS OF WORKING**

Sigrid Fisher introduced a report asking for views on how the panel operated.

**Item 1 - Panel's Terms of Reference:** The Terms of Reference were agreed along with the Principles and Objectives set out in the paper.

**Item 2 - Role and Conduct of Panel Members:** It was agreed that where panel members may have a conflict of interest in terms of their conduct outside this role members should say and notify TA who will note it down and if a problem was foreseen, that member would not speak at the meeting and that if a negative issue arose TA would deal with it.

While Panel members may come from a particular equalities perspective, they are not representatives for single issues or specific groups, and therefore there is a need to ensure that Panel Members are able to understand and respond to all of the 6 equality strands and human rights, and to be pro-active and helpful in order to find out information on a specific strand as required, rather than having an in-depth knowledge of all areas.

**Item 3 - Training and Information:** Training for members of the group is generally available and the offer of accessing a 'buddy' is also an option for new Panel Members. SF forwards information on training to members of the group however at the moment no training records are kept. There may be a need to introduce training records and skills sheets. BK asked whether the Equalities Advocate training could be utilised by Panel Members. These are in-house courses so more dates could be made available.

**Item 4 - Profile:** The Panel agreed to raise the profile of the Panel and its membership both internally and externally by publicising the e-mail address and information about Panel Members.

**Item 5 - Attendance at meetings:** SF had produced attendance figures for members over the last 3 years where it can be seen that, for whatever reasons, some representatives have been unable to attend. The group loses SF

momentum and representation if members don't attend on a regular basis. BK asked that attendance at informal meetings be monitored, as those are important too. TA was happy to take on this recommendation.

**Item 6 - Comprehensive Equalities Plan:** The Council adopts a CEP annually, which is monitored throughout the year by the Joint Equalities Group. It was proposed that the panel would look at this plan and consider any priority areas of work. This was agreed to be followed up at future meetings.

**Item 7 - Involvement:** Currently Panel Members are invited to attend formal and informal meetings. It is possible for Panel Members to get involved in work outside of these occasions, to contribute to the development, progress and delivery of specific projects. It was suggested that panel members should e-mail the group once an event has been attended in order to give a summary of what went on so all are aware of each others' involvements in outside events. All agreed in principle to committing to involvement.

ALL

**Item 8 - Openness of meetings and public speaking:** There is an acknowledged low level of public participation at these meetings and the Panel agreed the protocol for other meetings needs to be looked at. to bring a proposed Protocol for the group. Any changes would be included in the Terms of Reference.

AJ/  
SF

SF to tidy the draft Terms of Reference and e-mail to the group.

SF

#### 4 EQUALITIES UPDATE AND PLAN 2007-08

A paper from SF was circulated with the agenda. BK had found this paper useful as it gave the group a comprehensive run through of what's happening on the equalities front.

**3 - Disability:** Cllr Downham had attended some Disability Equalities training and commented that she thought there was better training available for staff and members now.

**Training and Information:** SF reported on projects for next year, which includes the Race Equality Scheme (Apr '08), a Diversity Forum (a workshop style approach with members of this panel having an involvement), the usual 4 Diversity Days, and Equality Impact Assessments that will need to have a strong equalities root if they are to be effective.

Cllr Slatter will be attending the 'Way To Be Awards' on 21 November and would be pleased if there was interest from the group too.

ALL

## **5 HUMAN RESOURCES UPDATE**

A paper from JF was circulated with the agenda. JF reported on the workforce profile. There is a long way to go in some areas however there had been improvements against the BME targets. Work has been commissioned with community groups representing minorities in Cambridge to see what is stopping them from applying for jobs within the Council. This may lead to a special 'recruitment fair' aimed at BME and other minority groups.

The Council now has 3 employees that have joined the Council from the Papworth Trust.

HR are working with staff groups who are willing to be support buddies to staff who are victims of harassment as part of the revised Dignity At Work scheme.

The staff survey has seen a 55% response rate which is fairly good in comparison with the average 38%. The results of the survey will be out by Christmas. It was agreed that the results would be looked at further at the next meeting where any issues could be raised.

## **6 BELONGING IN CAMBRIDGE: TOWARDS OUR RACE EQUALITY SCHEME**

Theresa Lawson attended this meeting to feedback from 'Our World In A Day', which was held as part of the Council's Black History Month and was a successful day. As part of this, BME staff were asked to put together their real life experiences of living and working in Cambridge. TL tabled two experiences for the group to read. The stories from staff were very powerful and, with the approval of the staff concerned, it was suggested these could be used as part of the Diversity Training the Council provides.

JH mentioned a training session a colleague had facilitated which had a strong message to all. She would try to find out more about it. JH

The group agreed that the national press sensationalise certain stories and figures. ND works with nominations and was keen to publish information on the intranet about claims made by various groups within the community relating to housing benefits as it is not as the media portrays. It was agreed that the legalities of the Data Protection Act should be checked out to see if this would be possible. ND

## **7 FUTURE TOPICS - INFORMAL AND FORMAL MEETINGS**

**Agency Staff:** TA raised the question of employing agency staff, for whom English isn't their first language as City Services have had difficulties with induction training when explaining about Health and Safety, which becomes very difficult. SF and Nova Roberts, Head of Customer Services are looking into a package for new migrants, which come in 12 different languages. AJ commented that work is going on Countywide around employment rights of migrant workers and what can be done jointly.

The contract for temporary staff is being looked at now and JF reported that JF an area would be added relating to migrant workers.

**Items for Next Meeting:** SF to be notified of any items for the next meeting. SF

**Membership Renewal:** Bridget Keady's Membership on the Group was renewed.

## **8 DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

Monday 21 April 2008.