

PRESENT

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

Councillors: Lynn, Shah, and Slatter

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

Public Members: Graham Lewis, Nicky Wrigley and Ila Chandavarka

Presenting papers: Sigrid Fisher, Strategy Officer (Equalities); Trevor

Woollams, Head of Strategy and Partnerships; Marian Mair, Interim

Organisational Development Manager; Sean Risdale, Equality and Human Rights Commission.

In attendance: Anette Grinsted, HR Diversity Adviser; Deborah Simpson, Head of Human Resources

1 WELCOME, INTRODUCTION AND APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

TA welcomed all those present.

Introductions took place and Deborah Simpson was welcomed as the Council's new Head of Human Resources.

Apologies were received from Councillor Downham, Nacer Dali and Gerri Bird.

For consistency, the minutes are given in the order of the original agenda. However, the Panel decided to defer item 2 to the end of the agenda as the meeting was initially inquorate.

2 MEMBERSHIP

2.1 Members were asked to note that Ila Chandavarka has come to the end of her term of office as Public Member and a replacement needs to be recruited. Discussion followed on the skills needed for the role. BME applicants would be very welcome but the new member needs to be informed on all diversity strands and would be appointed on merit. TA suggested any knowledge gaps could be address through training. The panel also had the option to co-opt specialist advisers at any time. SF will begin the recruitment process.

2.2 The panel also noted that Public Member Nicky Wrigley and Staff Member Nacer Dali will have the option of renewing their terms of office for one more 3 year period at the November Panel meeting.

2.3 Discussions took place on attendance at formal and informal meetings, with regard to the terms of reference agreed at the last Panel meeting. Sending a substitute was discussed but considered unfair and the following

SF

was agreed: after one missed meeting, informal contact will be made, following two formal meetings (one year's membership) being missed, the Chair will contact those absent to clarify their capacity to continue in their Panel membership role. While mitigating circumstances may be considered, if factors significantly impede a member's capacity to deliver on their role, the Chair has the option to recommend to Panel Members that the person concerned step down.

TA

SF

3 MINUTES & MATTERS ARISING

The minutes of the meeting held on 12 November 2007 were agreed as a correct record.

The Panel noted the report on matters arising from SF:

Item 2 - HIV Policy: initial research has been undertaken working with Diverse and Environmental Services, and an updated draft policy is due in Spring 2008. Nicola White, Policy Officer in HR, is leading on this piece of work.

Diverse: Jackie Fernandez has been appointed as the new Chief Executive, starting April 2008

The Council's new Health & Wellbeing Framework includes a section on Disability, which incorporates our policies on disability related leave as well as sickness related to a disability, (i.e. some or all of the absence may be disregarded for the purposes of sickness monitoring). The Framework also includes guidance on our commitment to make "reasonable adjustments" for disabled staff where possible.

Item 3 - Membership and attendance – see item 2 on the agenda.
Profile: the Council's Equalities web pages, including the page on the Panel, have the email address 'equalities@cambridge.gov.uk'. Panel membership listing is updated regularly.

Comprehensive Equalities Plan – see item 7 on the agenda.

Item 4 - Way To Be Awards: Cllr Slatter and Mark Taylor, Access Officer, have suggested that the Way To Be Awards are incorporated into planning for December's International Day for Disabled People in 2008. It is hoped this will successfully engage the local disabled community, and Cllr Slatter has been making initial enquiries in this regard.

Item 7 - Agency staff: as part of the tendering exercise for a new corporate

agency worker contract, HR have developed a Specification that includes a number of performance criteria, one of which is assurance over agency workers' eligibility to work in the UK.

Item 8 – Openness of meetings and public speaking:

The Panel noted that members of the public can participate in Panel meetings in the same way as at any other council meeting as detailed in the summary attached to this agenda item; this summary will be added to the Panel's agreed terms of reference and the information made available on the Panel's webpage.

4 Discussion with Sean Risdale from Equality and Human Rights Commission – “The Equality and Human Rights Commission, how will it have an impact in the East of England?”

SR gave a brief overview of the new Commission and its holistic approach. It is a Non Departmental Government Body with a mandate to bring together the six diversity strands under one umbrella organisation. It is still in its early days and is exploring the new remit. It will have a strong regional focus, with local offices, to keep it in touch with local needs.

It has defined 4 priorities for 2008 – 09.

1. Define key equality / human rights targets.
2. Change and improve organisational performance
3. Engage and involve the public
4. Strengthen the 'Human Rights' culture.

In future, research will be a key function of the Commission.

The Commission's new Legal Directorate will develop legal policy, enforcement, litigation and case-work. Some test cases are needed to strengthen the legal status of the newer diversity strands. A Single Equality Bill will follow. This will reinforce the position of equalities legislation and will have major implications as it will seek to implement EU law that is currently in advance of British law.

Discussions followed on funding issues and priorities. Cllr Shah asked if the advice line was local or national. At present it is national but could be regional at a later date. SF asked how the new Commission will work with other agencies. SR said that this a key priority for the future as it is seen as the logical approach.

The Chair thanked SR for his thought provoking presentation.

Sean requested that he be invited back to a further Panel meeting to SF update members on the progress of EHRC.

5 ISSUES ARISING FROM BME CITIZEN'S SURVEY

TW tabled a research report from MRUK. He explained the sampling process. The main survey selection process generates a sample of 1,100 households. These households are surveyed in their own homes. This process results in low response rates from BME residents. To compensate for this, 200 BME families are surveyed in a 'booster' survey. This is not statistically robust but does give some valuable insights.

Discussion followed on the results, suggested reasons for the differences between the two surveys and the emerging themes.

NW asked what Cambridge City Council will do with this information and was informed that it is fed back to the Heads of Departments who will act on it as necessary.

A general theme that emerged was a lack of understanding or information, amongst BME groups, about what services the Cambridge City Council provides. TW thought the high mobility of BME groups might be a factor in this. Ways to reach these groups with more information were discussed.

6 HUMAN RESOURCES UPDATE AND FEEDBACK FROM STAFF SURVEY

A paper from MM was circulated with the agenda. MM reported good progress in all areas. The figure for disability in the workforce is thought to be incorrect due to under reporting.

MM introduced a leaflet giving positive images of Cambridge City Council employees from differing diversity strands. This has been sent to community groups to encourage a wider range of applicants to consider Cambridge City Council as an employer.

The staff survey highlighted lower satisfaction levels from BME groups with the outcomes of grievance proceedings.

Cllr Shah asked questions about the Dignity at Work policy and confidentiality. Discussion followed on the merit of using other staff members, as opposed to external individuals, for support. MM reported that staff were happy with internal support and could also use their union representatives if they wanted. Cllr Slatter thought advisors should be external if the staff survey was highlighting dissatisfaction with outcomes.

GL asked why the Domestic Abuse policy had been launched on International Women's Day and what sort of message this gives to male victims. Discussion followed and it was agreed that this was a valid point and would be taken into account in future.

7 EQUALITY & DIVERSITY AT CAMBRIDGE CITY COUNCIL – UPDATE AND FORWARD PLANNING

A paper from SF was circulated with the agenda.

Item 1 – On the 23rd April the first Joint Staff Group & CMT Forum will take place with all staff groups being invited to take part in face-to-face discussions with the Council's Corporate Management Team.

Item 2 – New diversity guidelines will be produced, using a template designed to follow the same format of the old jellybean book. These will then be available to download from the internet/intranet. Folders to hold the inserts have been printed and will be distributed widely and will be available to all staff.

Item 3 - A full community consultation event is being planned for June 6th, which will incorporate all three Equality Schemes and the Stonewall Index.

Item 4 – The Comprehensive Equalities Plan / Annual Equalities Review Race Equality Scheme will bring together all current Equality Schemes and plans, with sights on developing the Council's own Single Equality Scheme in line with anticipated legislative change. The Review is due to go to Strategy and Resources Scrutiny Committee in Autumn 2008.

Item 5 - Link Officers & Advocates / EqIAs. There continue to be difficulties in the capacity for Link Officers to deliver in their role, affecting both the progress of EqIAs across the Council, and the production of up to date departmental equalities information needed for various purposes. The Council's Performance Analyst is currently drafting a structure of responsibilities between Link Officers/Advocates and Heads of Services. Internal Audit will be auditing our EqIAs later this year. There may be need to refresh EqIA guidelines for internal use.

Item 6 - It has been impossible to find time to design e-learning modules as part of the L&DP, although these are much needed for both generic and also Customer Service specific equality & diversity awareness.

Item 7 - Diversity events. 'Wash ups' and/or forward planning are already underway for International Women's Day, LGBT History Month and Black History Month. It had been anticipated that the Way To Be Awards would become part of International Day for Disabled People (IDDP) celebrations. However, Cllr Slatter updated the panel with the plan to make them bi-annual, which would mean that they are unlikely to happen this year. It is hoped that they could be attached to another community event. This would

generate more interest and achieve more participation.
Ideas for consideration are welcome.

Item 8 - Support has been offered to Pink Festival, to ensure it becomes part of the annual calendar of events within Cambridge. Pink has just had a successful funding bid with Equalities and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) that will mean it can take place in 2008.

Item 9 - The next Guide to Services for Older and Disabled People is due within this financial year, and it may be worth bringing that work forward if at all possible, to release at IDDP.

8 FUTURE PANEL INFORMAL MEETINGS AND TRAINING NEEDS

It has been over a year since the Panel's last informal / training event. The panel were asked what they would like to be offered in future.

Cllr Shah suggested that a skills audit of the panel be carried out after the election, possibly July/August and a training event arranged for September SF to plug any gaps this highlights.

Panel members were encouraged to attend and participate in:
Diversity Forum – 6th June 2008
Strategy & Resources Committee meeting – September 2008

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

24th November 2008
Brownfields Community Centre