

EQUALITIES PANEL

22 June 2015
4.00 - 5.25 pm

Chair: Antoinette Jackson

Public Members: Graham Lewis, Judith Margolis and Orsola Rath Spivack

Elected Members: Councillors Abbott, Holt, O'Connell and Ratcliffe

Staff Members: Ari Henry and Jenna Varga

Officers:

Head of Human Resources: Deborah Simpson

Strategy and Partnerships Manager: David Kidston

Strategy Officer: Suzanne Goff

Access Officer: Mark Taylor

Committee Manager: Toni Birkin

FOR THE INFORMATION OF THE COUNCIL

15/5/EP Welcome, Introductions and Apologies

Apologies were received from Councillor Gerri Bird, Nicky Wrigley, Joe Obe and Jackie Hanson.

The Panel noted the resignation of Norah Al Ani and expressed their gratitude for her contributions the Equalities Panel over a number of years.

15/6/EP Declarations of Interest

No interests were declared.

15/7/EP Minutes of Previous Meeting and Matters Arising

The minutes of the meeting of the 2nd February 2015 were agreed as a correct record.

15/8/EP Diversity Forum Update - Accessibility - Mark Taylor

Mark Taylor gave an oral summary on the presentations and discussions that had taken place at the Diversity Forum earlier in the day.

The Forum had enjoyed a good attendance and a variety of disability groups were represented.

Those present had received two presentations as follows:

1. Graham Lewis from Cambridgeshire Alliance for Independent Living.
2. Mark Taylor – the City Council’s Access Officer

Both spoke about some of the accessibility problems and good practice in the City.

The Diversity Forum comments in response to the presentation had common themes:

- i. The cityscape was regarded as largely inhospitable to those with disabilities. This was agreed to be a wider issue for other groups too, such those with push chairs or older people who might be unsteady on their feet.
- ii. Poor maintenance of footpaths and road surfaces.
- iii. Lack of consideration or awareness of fellow citizens.
- iv. The increasing ability of technology to assist disabled people, such as audio visual information on buses and phone apps that provided oral directions.

The Panel thanked Mark for his concise summary. The Panel shared the Diversity Forum’s views on inconsiderate cyclists and inconvenient A boards and suggested that more could be done to raise awareness.

The Panel suggested that the Cambridge City Centre Access Study should be shared with the County Council once it had been discussed at the Community Services Scrutiny Committee.

15/9/EP Workforce Report - Deborah Simpson

The Panel received a report regarding the Workforce Report from Deborah Simpson, the Head of Human Resources. Recruitment monitoring was used to highlight potential barriers to applicants.

When the Panel had considered this report last year, further data on non-responders to equality monitoring on sexual orientation and religion or belief had been requested. Further investigation of this had shown that the Council's response rates were better than peer organisations.

In response to questions from the Panel, the Head of Human Resources and the Chief Executive confirmed the following:

- i. Information on pay bands was in the public domain.
- ii. Pay tables would be included in future reports to the Panel as it was acknowledged that pay grades alone were unhelpful to an external audience.
- iii. Staff had the choice on declaring disabilities and, whilst they were made aware that additional support could be provided following a declaration, some still chose not to do so.
- iv. Mental health related issues were under recorded in most organisations.
- v. The City Council has a low staff turn-over which impacts on the rate that changes to the staffing profiles can be achieved. However, the Council is taking action to ensure that the Council's workforce reflects the diversity of the communities it serves.

15/10/EP Single Equality Scheme Update - David Kidston.

The Strategy and Partnerships Manager, David Kidston, gave an oral update on the progress of the Single Equality Scheme. Following the feedback from the Panel in February 2016, further consultation had taken place with a number of key stakeholder groups. Direct public consultation via an online survey on the Council's website had produced a small but well informed response. The revised scheme would be considered by the Strategy and Resources Scrutiny Committee in July. In future, Annual Reports would come to the Panel for comments.

The Panel made the following comments in response to the report:

- i. Welcomed the recognition that people could fit in to more than one of the equalities strands.
- ii. Judith Margolis: The taxi scheme was sometimes abused. Some drivers were reluctant to pick up disabled passengers and did not observe the regulations.
- iii. Jenna Varga: The complaints policy is currently under review and ways of adding equalities information to the form, without making it too onerous to complete, were under consideration. This had been tried and

had failed in the past but it was hoped that improved technology would made it possible.

- iv. Suzanne Goff: Confirmed that work was on-going to standardise monitoring forms.
- v. Ari Henry: A number of consultations were currently underway to provide an evidence base on the needs of various equality strands, including women, men, people with disabilities, BAME residents and faith communities. She requested that the Panel encourage people to take part in the on-line surveys on the Council's website, particularly the survey of residents with disabilities. More information can be found using the link below:

<https://www.cambridge.gov.uk/equalities-evidence-base-consultation-2015>

15/11/EP New areas for discussion for the Equalities Panel in 2015/2016

1. Welfare reform – an update on Universal Credit and the impacts of welfare reforms to date in Cambridge.
2. Women as victims of domestic or sexual abuse.
3. Mental Health, including a report on City Council activity during World Mental Health Week and an update from the County Council on their Mental Health Strategy
4. An update on the Prevent project, which is focussing on the community cohesion aspects of the counter-terrorism agenda and is working across communities.
5. Integration and attitudes towards immigration.
6. Digital inclusion.
7. Older people's experiences of financial abuse and fraud.

The meeting ended at 5.25 pm

CHAIR