

EQUALITIES PANEL

19 November 2018

4.00 - 6.00 pm

Present**Chair:** Antoinette Jackson**Public Members:** Graham Lewis, Judith Margolis, Orsola Spivak and Raheela Rehman**Elected Members:** Councillors Holt, Massey, O'Connell, Sheil and Thittala**Staff Members:** Ariadne Henry**Officers and other Councillors:**

- Executive Councillor for Communities, Cllr Anna Smith
- Head of Human Resources: Deborah Simpson
- Strategy and Partnerships Manager: David Kidston
- Equality and Anti-Poverty Officer: Helen Crowther
- Community Cohesion & Racial Harassment Officer: Tulat Raja
- Independent Living Facilitator: Mary Hyde
- Senior Administrator: Carol Skinner
- Community Development Officer (Southern Fringe): Vicky Haywood

External speaker:

Eddie Stadnik, Chief Executive of Cambridge Ethnic Community Forum

FOR THE INFORMATION OF THE COUNCIL**18/26/EP Welcome, Introductions and Apologies**

Apologies were received from:

- Staff members: Joe Obe and Lesley-Ann George
- Public members: Dr Susan Wan

18/27/EP Declarations of Interest

No interests were declared.

18/28/EP Minutes of Previous Meeting and Matters Arising

The minutes of the meeting of the 20th November were approved and signed as a correct record.

18/29/EP Support for Asylum Seekers and Refugees

The Panel received an update from Tulat Raja on the Syrian Refugee resettlement scheme:

- i. The Government committed to resettle 20,000 Syrian refugees nationally through the Syrian Refugee Resettlement Scheme. The scheme is a fully funded Home Office scheme where by LA's were invited to participate to deliver on the government pledge.
- ii. In 2015 Cambridge City Council pledged to resettle 50 Syrian refugees in three years. The Council achieved this in one-year-and-a-half. The Council were then asked to resettle a further 50 in another year-and-a-half. By the end of November 2018 the Council will have met this target.
- iii. There are 2 Arabic speaking support officers to help with the Syrian Refugee resettlement project.
- iv. Challenges that the refugees have when they arrive include knowing UK systems, including systems related to benefits, accessing public services and managing their finances. The Council funds that refugees need ongoing support to understand our processes, but also need support with mental health issues, including post-traumatic stress disorder.
- v. Other refugees and asylum seekers not part of the Syrian Refugee Resettlement Scheme need support too. The Council wanted to bridge the difference in support for refugees who are part of formal schemes and those that were not so funded a support and advice service, which is being run by CECF.

The Panel received a presentation from Eddie Stadnik from the Cambridge Ethnic Community Forum (CECF) on the support service CECF runs for asylum seekers and refugees who are not part of the formal resettlement schemes. The presentation covered the following key points:

- i. CECF historically had funding to support refugees and asylum seekers up to the end of 2014. They found that refugees and asylum seekers were still approaching them for support despite the organisation not having received funding for this.

- ii. There was a clear need for a service supporting those refugees who were not part of formal resettlement schemes. This was identified nationally in 2017 through an All-Party Parliamentary Committee that argued there is a two-tier support service for refugees who are part of formal resettlement schemes and those who were not.
- iii. In 2016 City Council commissioned CECF to undertake research to establish evidence of local need. The report that found refugees and asylum seekers not part of the national schemes needed support with learning English, access to legal aid, health issues, lack of access to financial support, finding housing, lack of familiarity with the job market and lack of information on qualifications.
- iv. The City Council has funded CECF to provide a Refugee and Asylum Seeker Support and Information Service for 2 years to provide support to refugees and asylum seekers who are not part of the formal resettlement schemes.
- v. CECF runs the advice and support service 5 days per week and has recently appointed a paid worker responsible for this. On three days (Monday, Wednesday and Friday) appointments can be made by refugees and asylum seekers.
- vi. CECF has access to a hardship fund to help refugees and asylum seekers needing funding in an emergency. For instance, the fund can be used to pay for travel costs to get access to legal aid immigration advice, which is not available in Cambridge.
- vii. CECF is working with a variety of partners to help provide the advice and support needed. Partners include the British Red Cross, Red Cross Training Service, the British Refugee Council, and Migrant Help. The service also refers/ signposts to other organisations able to provide specialist help such as Citizens Advice, Cambridge City Council, Cambridgeshire County Council and the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough NHS Foundation Trust.

The Panel also asked about the following:

- i. Clarification as to whether legal aid immigration advice is available in Cambridge
- ii. How many unaccompanied children there are in Cambridge City who are refugees and how they are supported
- iii. The sample size for the local research undertaken and how this compared with the number of refugees in the city
- iv. How CECF monitors impacts of the advice and support service
- v. Age groups of refugees

The following answers were provided by Eddie Stadnik and Tulat Raja:

- i. Legal aid immigration advice is not available in Cambridge but is available in London, Bedford or Peterborough. Solicitors sometimes provide pro-bono advice, but this would not be for a sufficient amount of time to go through an asylum application.
- ii. There are 10 unaccompanied young people in Cambridge. In addition, there are a further 90 young people who are supported by Cambridgeshire County Council's Social Services. These young people are supported in Peterborough, as it is a dispersal city with greater support provision for asylum seekers and refugees.
- iii. The local research on asylum seekers and refugees that CECF carried out used a sample size of 20 people. The total number of asylum seekers and refugees in Cambridge is not known, but it is likely to be several hundred people. It is difficult to get a full picture as to how many refugees and asylum seekers there are at any one time because they often do not want to settle. Also, failed asylum seekers do not tend to come forward for support.
- iv. Nottinghamshire did similar research on needs of asylum seekers and refugees with a sample of 1,000 and identified similar needs and problems as those identified by the Cambridge research. The number of asylum seekers and refugees in Nottingham is much larger than Cambridge because it is a 'dispersal' city.
- v. It was confirmed that refugees can be of all ages but families with children are most likely to be settled in Cambridge.
- vi. It was confirmed that CECF follow up with people they see face-to-face to monitor the impact of the support provided, but they also provide a lot of support by telephone, which is more difficult to monitor.

18/30/EP Tackling loneliness experienced by older people, people with mental health issues and in new communities

The Panel received a second presentation from Mary Hyde about how the Independent Living Service supports older people with loneliness. Mary explained:

- i. Some statistics from the Campaign to End Loneliness about the specific ways loneliness can affect older people. Mary shared a case study that demonstrated loneliness can affect anyone, even older people who were very sociable and at low risk of loneliness when younger.
- ii. That the Independent Living Service (ILS) manages 13 sheltered housing schemes for 245 tenants.
- iii. The ILS also provides a visiting support service, which aims to help prevent social isolation and to signpost people to services which help

older people to remain independent. The visiting support service has supported 212 customers in the last year

- iv. That when an older person is feeling lonely and they are not sure who to turn to the ILS can help prevent social isolation and get the support and other services they need. For instance, the ILS works closely with Cambridgeshire County Council, Care Network, the Royal British Legion, Camsight and Besom.
- v. That the ILS can provide help with a range of things to help people maintain independence, such as assisting with transport/blue badge applications, running digital groups to help people get online, and helping to increase older people's income by supporting them in accessing benefits. During 2018 the service had supported clients to access more than £98,000 in additional benefits.
- vi. Mary provided examples of two projects being run by the ILS that are tackling loneliness – the monthly support group that meets at Mansel Court and the Social Inclusion Project with the Fitzwilliam Museum.

Helen Crowther agreed to send the video on the Fitzwilliam project to members of the Panel via email.

The Panel received a second presentation from Vicky Haywood about the Council's approach to Community Development work on the Southern Fringe of the city, and how this tackles loneliness. Vicky explained:

- i. Context around the scale of population growth on the Southern Fringe.
- ii. How new communities tend to have much higher than average needs in their first few years, and there is often a time lag before the additional service and facilities are provided, which means that it can take up to ten years before the community has all the resources that it needs.
- iii. There is often an increase in isolation and loneliness in new communities ("new town blues") and social care referrals.
- iv. Equality groups especially represented in new communities include international residents, and families with young children. There is therefore often a high need for pre-school services and additional school places in new communities. Cambridge City Council's Community Development facilitates new communities to map and define their needs and to discover their strengths. The Council connects with "pioneers" – people in new communities who are keen to take an active part in kick-starting new community activity. The approach supports community-led projects and ideas, and encourages community-led governance.
- v. How the community chest project works, which is using developer contributions to provide small pots of funding up to £250 to kick-start community projects in and around the new communities. 42 projects

have been supported in Trumpington and 6 in Eddington. An international café was funded through the Community Chest and set up by a local church, and this helps tackle loneliness experienced by people from a diverse range of cultures.

- vi. How the City Council is engaged in promoting Cambridgeshire County Council's Time Credits project and promoting digital champions to help people connect with one another online.
- vii. How a community-led project on Addenbrooke's Road in Trumpington whereby a community artist and collective of residents persuaded the area's developer to allow a show-home to be turned into a temporary community space for a fixed period of year.

The following questions and points were raised by the Panel:

- i. How the pop-up community space model developed in Trumpington might be applied in other areas of the City, such as Abbey, where isolation can also be an issue and there is a lack of community facilities.
- ii. Asked for clarification on how people were referred to the ILS.
- iii. Explained that there is a project in St Ives that helped tackle isolation experienced by older men by encouraging those men to fix broken items for the community. Further expanded that there have been projects where older people are connected to young families, as a means of tackling loneliness and mixing age groups.
- iv. Explained that the Encompass Network has helped launch a meet-up group for older LGBT men who are especially likely to be lonely and struggle in most spaces to be open about their sexuality. Asked whether this group might be promoted within sheltered housing schemes.

Mary Hyde and Vicky Haywood answered the queries:

- i. People can self-refer to the ILS or be referred through a variety of partners such as the County Council or GPs.
- ii. Mary agreed to share the details of the LGBT older men's meet up group through the ILS, and offered to attend the group to explore how the ILS could help its members.

18/31/EP Comprehensive Equalities and Diversity Policy

Helen Crowther provided a presentation on recent changes to the Council's Comprehensive Equalities and Diversity Policy, which the Council had been consulting on. The Panel was asked to feedback their thoughts on impacts the changes could have for people living in, working in or visiting Cambridge and how the Council might mitigate against any negative impacts.

The key points covered in the presentation included:

- i. Changes made to the Policy that the Council had consulted on publicly in October and November 2018.
- ii. Following independent legal advice, changes were made to the wording of the Policy to ensure that it is consistent with the Equality Act 2010
- iii. Changes included replacing the term 'gender' with the term 'sex' and the term 'transgender' with 'the protected characteristic of gender reassignment'. This was because the terms 'sex' and 'gender reassignment' are defined in the Equality Act 2010, whereas 'gender' and 'transgender' are not.
- iv. Changes also included introducing the following commitment to the Policy: "We will recognise and treat people with the protected characteristic of gender reassignment according to the gender in which they present unless it is necessary, in exceptional circumstances, to use the services and employment exceptions as a proportionate means to achieve a legitimate aim in line with the Equality Act 2010."
- v. The new provision replaced two previous commitments in the Policy, which were:
 - o "We will not exclude transgender people from positions which require a gender-appropriate candidate"
 - o "Transgender people will not be excluded from gender-appropriate single sex/sex segregated facilities operated by the council"

Defining terminology used in the Equality Act and our current Comprehensive Equalities and Diversity Policy, including 'gender reassignment' and 'sex', and the services and employment exceptions. Panel members made the following comments about impacts of the Policy:

- i. Asked for clarification on what 'exceptional circumstances' would trigger the Council to consider whether to apply the services and employment exceptions.
- ii. Explained concerns that unlawful discrimination may occur by the Council if it triggered the use of exceptions where an individual were to complain about the presence of another individual who is a transgender person in a service or a facility provided by the Council.
- iii. Explained an understanding of the legal position to be that a decision to exclude transgender people from a particular service would need to be taken, and justification given, ahead of time rather than retrospectively.
- iv. Acknowledged that Council has sought legal advice in developing the revised Policy. Suggested that it might be sensible for the Council to review its approach to existing services and how it would apply the revised policy to them in practice.

- v. Explained that the Council's starting point in delivering services would be that all City Council services are open to people according to the gender they identify as.
- vi. Queried whether 'exceptional circumstances' where the exceptions might apply would be foreseeable. Explained difficulties for the Council to pre-emptively decide to apply exceptions where it has not received any complaints for the past 8 years to contribute to evidence to support such a decision. Some Panel members shared an understanding of the legal position to be that the application of exceptions needs to be considered on a case-by-case basis. They explained that exceptional circumstances would not always lead to changes of the rules of a service, but do require the Council to assess this.
- vii. Explained that the Council should respond to the needs of both women and transsexual people as best as we can, and also make sure that both groups are safe.
- viii. If the Council were to apply exceptions to a particular service, it was queried whether the Council would be able to take on a person-centred approach to identify how we can best support the needs of individuals that cannot be supported by that particular service.
- ix. Suggested that the current confusion about how the Council will apply the revised policy in practice might mean that transgender people are less likely to use services in Cambridge, which is a negative impact.

In response to the comments Cllr Anna Smith explained that:

- i. The Council's commitment to equality generally and LGBT equality has not changed. It is not the Council's intention to undertake a blanket overhaul of how it runs Council facilities and services.
- ii. In deciding whether to apply the exceptions, the Council would need to have a fair, reasonable, and proportionate response. This response would not be about changing a whole service to exclude a particular group because an individual would feel uncomfortable.

Antoinette Jackson, Chief Executive stated that:

- i. The Council has sought in-depth legal advice on changes to the Policy, including from Counsel. The Council changed the Policy to provide clarity that the exceptions could be applied where there were exceptional circumstances and this would be a proportionate and appropriate response.
- ii. Officers would reflect the Panels comments in the report to Environment and Communities Scrutiny Committee in January 2019. This would include the key point raised that the policy should be applied by the

- Council in a measured way, and that the exceptions should not be applied reactively in response to complaints about particular individuals
- iii. Panel members could email Helen Crowther any individual comments they had on the Policy by the end of the week (23rd November) if they wished, which would be included in consultation feedback.

18/32/EP Any Other Business

Ariadne Henry agreed to send updates on Community Services equalities work to Helen Crowther to be circulated to Equalities Panel members about:

- AccessAble Cambridgeshire launch
- Black History Month
- Disability History Month
- Holocaust Memorial Day
- International Women's Day
- Community development work with Gypsies and Travellers

The meeting ended at 6.00 pm

CHAIR