

**EQUALITIES PANEL**2 July 2024  
4.00 - 6.00 pm**Present:****Chair:** Sam Scharf, Director of Communities**Councillor members:** Cllr Bird; Cllr Flaubert; Cllr Porrer; Cllr Smart; Cllr Wade**Public member:** Raheela Rehman**Officer member:** Naomi Armstrong**Other officers in attendance:** Helen Crowther; Lynsey Fulcher; Victoria Jameson**Other councillors in attendance:** Cllr Bennett**FOR THE INFORMATION OF THE COUNCIL****24/9/EP Welcome, Introductions and Apologies**

Apologies were received from public member Orsola Spivak, and staff members Alistair Wilson, Ariadne Henry, and Lesley-Ann George.

**24/10/EP Declarations of Interest**

No declarations of interest were declared.

**24/11/EP Minutes of Previous Meeting and Matters Arising**

The minutes of the meeting held on 3 October 2023 were noted to be an accurate record of the conversation subject to noting related to content page 4 where Cllr Porrer “mentioned that the council could work more closely with Anglia Ruskin University around shaping skills and learning opportunities” that Cllr Porrer works for the university.

Helen Crowther mentioned that the Community Wealth Building Strategy (an item at the previous meeting) was approved at committee. Sam Scharf shared it might be helpful for the Community Wealth Building Strategy and work around promoting community power to be brought forward as Panel items at the next meeting.

Sam Scharf drew attention to Vicky Haywood’s written update in the background papers to this meeting on the Youth Strategy (an item at the previous meeting). Cllr Wade said that the work described in the update was a great start and that it is good to see its capturing seldom heard voices. Sam

Scarf said that the Youth Strategy could come back to the Panel once the Youth Assembly has been held. Cllr Bennett raised that Cllr Tong is a Green Party Youth Lead and very active in this role.

## **24/12/EP Public Questions**

There were no public questions.

## **24/13/EP Disabled People's Manifesto and Cambridge City Council's support for disabled people**

Helen Crother (Equality and Anti-Poverty Officer) undertook a presentation introducing the Disabled People's Manifesto and Cambridge City Council's support for disabled residents under the four themes of the manifesto. She explained:

- At Full Council on 23 May a motion on Disability Rights included the commitment to refer the Disabled People's Manifesto to the Council's Equalities Panel for scrutiny and debate and reporting back to the Environment and Community Scrutiny Committee on their discussions.
- The Deaf and disabled people's organisations that developed the manifesto did so to influence the next government, so some of the recommendations would be for national government to implement, rather than local authorities.
- The four themes of the manifesto:
  - Representation & Voice: Removal of barriers to participate in political and public life.
  - Rights: Full rights set out in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.
  - Independence: The right to live independently with choice and control over the support given.
  - Inclusion: Plans for every aspect of life to address specific needs of disabled people from the outset.
- Some key issues experienced by disabled people which have shaped the manifesto:
  - A higher risk of poverty
  - Barriers from voting
  - Lack of funding for voluntary and community sector organisations supporting them
  - Hate crime
  - Issues relating to benefits
  - Extra costs associated with living with their disability
  - Poor accessibility of public spaces and workplaces

- Higher unemployment & economic inactivity
- Educational disparity
- Examples of work Cambridge City Council undertakes to support residents relating to the four themes of the manifesto:
  - In relation to representation and voice, the council uses expert advice on reasonable adjustments that can be made at polling stations from its Access Officer. It also provides community grants to organisations supporting disabled people.
  - In relation to the theme of rights, the council undertakes Equality Impact Assessments to consider the impact of its decisions on groups protected by the Equality Act (like disabled people) and around income and poverty. It works with the Community Safety Partnership to help tackle hate crime experienced by disabled people and other groups.
  - In relation to the theme independence, Cambridge City Council has funded an outreach advice service from Disability Huntingdonshire within Cambridge City providing expert on benefit entitlement. It also provides Discretionary Housing Payments to people on Housing Benefit struggling financially that especially benefits disabled people due to their extra living costs. Moreover, the council provides Disabled Facilities Grants of up to £30,000 for adaptations for disabled people living in private rented housing or who own their homes, and has an annual budget of £800,000 to make adaptations for disabled people in the council's own housing stock.
  - In relation to the theme of inclusion, the council is completing Changing Places toilets at Cherry Hinton Hall and Drummer Street. It also provides the Taxicard service and supports Dial-a-Ride to support disabled people get into the city and the Shopmobility service enabling people to hire wheelchairs/mobility scooters once in the city. Also, The Greater Cambridge Shared Planning Service employs an Access Officer to give advice on disability access at all stages of any planning application. The Access Officer also gives advice on the Equality Act 2010 rights of and duties to disabled people relating to access (and more broadly) to the council itself, local businesses, and residents/visitors.

Panel members were asked to feedback on what more the council might do to support disabled people relating to the four themes of the manifesto.

- A panel member suggested getting The Department for Work and Pensions to present at a Panel meeting to share what they do to support for disabled people given issues relating to benefits.

- Cllr Bird raised awareness of an issue that taxis sometimes refuse to pick up disabled people with wheelchairs or mobility scooters. Also, in relation to voting, disabled people are less likely to have passports or driving licences that are now required to be allowed to vote.
- Cllr Bennett asked whether the issue of taxi bookings apps not including details on the sort of wheelchair they are being asked to transport has been resolved. Some wheelchairs fold up and at other end have heavy mobility scooters, and it is helpful for taxi drivers to know what to expect so that the correct type of vehicle picks up disabled passengers.
- Cllr Wade said that the council does not always communicate the positive things it does enough. On the theme of giving disabled people's organisations more voice, which is raised in the Disabled People's Manifesto, she said there is a need to bear in mind that people can be isolated due to their disability and not connected to any organisation. Cllr Wade suggested that the council could find a forum for disabled people to share lived experiences.
- Cllr Bennett shared that she was keen to bring this item to the Panel, having raised the Disability Rights UK 2024 council motion, in part to get information out on the council's offer to disabled people. She asked if councillors could be supported more to learn about this offer, and said that councillors do not have a understanding of the social care model or an understanding of different disabilities.
- Cllr Smart said that the way people become a councillor tends to be through their political party. He suggested that the council could have a greater role in sharing with political parties what is expected of them to increase diverse representation of councillors.
- Cllr Bird asked if we might share more information in Cambridge Matters, a magazine that goes out to all Cambridge residents, on disabled people's organisations available to support people and on initiatives like the Taxicard scheme.
- Cllr Bennett raised awareness of the LGA Disability group open for attendance from staff and councillors from councils, and that been running disability leadership training with funding to do a third session.
- Sam Scharf said that the council might be able to give the Equalities Panel powers to call up equality impact assessments (EqIAs) for their review to make a greater impact on promoting equality, diversity and inclusion across the council's work.
- Cllr Porrer shared concerns about how much scrutiny EqIAs get and whether they are overly positive by not identifying who is negatively impacted.

- A Panel member shared that EqlAs often are about changes being implemented that have a positive impact on residents, as this reflects the council's role in serving or supporting residents. This group could help make sure EqlAs are produced at the right time to make the greatest impact in shaping a strategy, policy, plan or procedure.
- Cllr Bennett said it is hard for disabled people to exert their rights if they are not aware of them, so it is important to get the message out on how the council supports disabled people. She said that councillors can act as intermediaries to get information out to residents too. She suggested that in its communications the council needs to pay attention to people's different adjustments they might need e.g. where people use screen readers.
- Cllr Flaubert asked if it would be helpful to have a single point of contact at the council for discrimination complaints. Cllr Flaubert shared that Citizens Advice had recently advised one of their clients to complain about not feeling listened to due to their disability through her. Sam Scharf said that people should be encouraged to use formal complaint channels where complaints get systematically addressed.
- Naomi Armstrong, in her capacity as Benefits Manager at Cambridge City Council, shared that the council tops up the allowance it gets from national government set aside for Discretionary Housing Payments. Cambridge City Council is flexible in responding to patterns around local need at any given time – for instance the council provided bigger allowances when fuel poverty was highest.
- Cllr Porrer asked about the impact of the migration to Universal Credit on disabled people relating to how it is paid in arrears, and how carers of people with disabilities are supported.
- In response to Cllr Porrer, Naomi Armstrong shared that Universal Credit (UC) is paid monthly and at the end of each month in arrears, and given that there is an assessment period of 3 days people can wait for nearly 5 weeks to get their first payment. As people migrate to UC, Housing Benefit can be paid for an extra two weeks. The Benefits Team is liaising with Cambridgeshire County Council on how people can be assisted as best as possible to access the Household Support Fund. Most people get 3 months' notice to transition to UC. The Department for Work and Pensions estimates that 4% of each cohort fails to apply and the council does not find out who has failed until after the three-month period ends. City Homes visit tenants who have failed to migrate to UC to try to support them in their claim and get it backdated by one month. Cambridge City Council does not have resource to do home visits across the city, but its homelessness provision service and Citizens Advice (whom the council funds) are proactive in offering support.

- Sam Scharf pointed out that for the Disabled Facilities Grants for adaptations for disabled people living in the private sector and with home ownership, the council underspends in the city so some of its allocation goes back to Huntingdonshire. He asked if the council might better raise awareness of Disabled Facilities Grants in this context. Cllr Bennett said there was low awareness of this support amongst councillors and that offering financial help can be a difficult conversation as many disabled people want to be independent. Sam Scharf pointed out that Disabled Facilities Grants are means tested and often a contribution from a householder would be needed but the Home Improvement Agency does not just offer financial support but can call on trusted providers to identify needs (as they work with Occupational Therapists) and to get work done.
- Cllr Porrer said that herself and Cllr Smart raise awareness of Changing Places toilets at planning committees to try to influence developers to provide these.
- Cllr Bird said that a lot of people do not realise they can use their Taxicard on Dial-a-Ride. She asked if we do work identifying taxi drivers who accept jobs for people in wheelchairs, and also if we check how many Taxicard vouchers are handed back and refunded.
- Cllr Smart said he is not keen on council motions being raised for the council to tell itself what to do. He asked whether the Panel should go out to disability groups to ask them what more we might do to support disabled people. Cllr Smart also asked how useful the Disabled People's Manifesto is, as there are a lot of disability rights groups, and if the manifesto is useful to the council itself.
- Cllr Bennett said that the manifesto was published earlier than Disability Rights UK anticipated in time for the general election, and it is in development.
- Cllr Bennett shared that the Local Government Association is developing a knowledge hub sharing case studies of what other councils are doing to support disabled people that might be useful for Cambridge City Council to learn from.

Helen Crowther responded to the Panel members' feedback and questions:

- For Cllr Bennett's question on taxis, Helen said she will follow up on this and find out more
- Helen said that the council needs to more fully explore implications of the Panel calling up EqlAs. She added that EqlAs tend to be produced quite close to a decision being made that makes it hard to bring them to the Panel at a point when this would be timely to have the most impact.
- In response to Cllr Bird's query on if the council checks which taxi drivers do not accept jobs for people in wheelchairs, Helen said that the Taxi

Licencing Team speaks to those individuals not accepting these jobs to remind them of the law and to share consequences for disabled people of them not taking on jobs. The team also looks to see if any legal action can be taken. Helen said she would check about Taxicard vouchers handed in and refunded and get back to Panel members with this information.

- In response to Cllr Smart's query on how useful to manifesto is, Helen said it has been a useful means to structure discussion around what the Council does and if the council can offer greater support to disabled people around the manifesto's different themes.

The chair of the meeting, Sam Scharf reflected from the discussion that Panel members felt that Cambridge City Council does a large amount of work to support disabled people. He said that the Panel members had expressed that they felt more could be done widely communicate what the council does to support disabled people, so there are actions to follow up relating to communications, publicity and training.

## **24/14/EP Equality in Employment report 2023/24**

Vickie Jameson (Recruitment Manager) presented key findings from the Equality in Employment 2023/24 report on the profile of Cambridge City Council's workforce. The full report provides a snapshot of the workforce as at 31 March 2024 and covers the workforce profile, recruitment, learning & development, starters, leavers, promotions, employment, pay bands and flexible working.

Key information shared in the presentation included:

- The activities that had taken place over the past year to promote equality, diversity, inclusion and belonging. Some of these mentioned were marking key events in the Equality, Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging calendar, launching new Values and Behaviours for staff, continuing Disability Confident accreditation, reviewing the performance review process, reviewing the recruitment process and the imminent introduction of flexible Bank Holidays.
- Current workforce is at 859 employees, an increase from the previous year. Additionally, there have been 2233 applications, 190 offers of employment made, 112 leavers and 1309 course places attended.
- In relation to age, the 45 to 64 age groups are the most represented at the council, with the average age at 47. The council aims to undertake more proactive work to encourage young people to join the organisation – including attendance at careers fairs, providing work experience

opportunities, developing succession planning and career development, and the promotion of digital badging.

- 40% of the workforce have over 10 years' service and 37% have under 5 years' service.
- 6.63% of the workforce declared they had a disability, down from 7.37% (4 individuals). The People Team suspects, looking at sickness patterns and the age of the workforce, that staff often do not want to share they have a disability. 3.14% of staff have elected not to disclose this information. The council wants to improve on this. It is increasing its target of disabled people in the workforce to 15% as a proportion of the workforce reflective of the most recent census data which indicates 28.6% of economically active individuals have declared a disability.
- 10.3% of the workforce are from an ethnic minority, up from 9.09%. This means the council has exceeded its target of 10%. The council is looking to increase its target for next year to 20%, reflecting the most recent census data which indicates 23.3% of economically active individuals are from an ethnic minority background.
- There is a 49/ 51 split of female/ male in the workforce, which remains consistent with previous years. There is representation of female/ male across all pay bands. 22% of the workforce work part time, 67% of these being female. 81% of the male workforce work full time.
- 13.6% of staff have not declared their religion, this remains the same from the previous year. 41.5% of staff have no religion. 37.3% of staff identify as Christian, a decrease from the previous year.
- 5.59% of staff declare themselves as LGBTQ, a slight increase from last year. 77% of the workforce declare themselves as heterosexual, a decrease from last year. Individuals who prefer not to disclose their sexual orientation is 17.3%, a slight decrease from last year.
- There were 31 internal promotions. 32.2% of promotions were through more than one pay band. 12.9% of promotions were staff who declare themselves as from an ethnic minority background. 3.2% of promotions were staff who declare themselves to have a disability.
- There are 19 individuals on the Apprenticeship scheme; 10.5% of whom are from an ethnic minority background and 5.2% have declared a disability.
- In relation to recruitment, the number of applicants, shortlisted applicants and successful candidates declaring themselves as from an ethnic minority background and the number identifying themselves as disabled has increased.
- 19 flexible working requests made and more requests from female than male staff.



- Actions planned for 2024/25 and beyond to promote equality, diversity, inclusion and belonging in the council's workforce include:
  - Increasing targets for representation of disabled and ethnic minority staff members and encouraging staff (and candidates) to share their equality data for monitoring purposes.
  - Reviewing our reporting categories to make them more relevant and meaningful.
  - Undertaking an all-staff survey.
  - Reviewing and enhancing our employee benefits package.
  - Exploring requirements for the UNISON Anti-Racism Charter, Care Leaver Covenant and Homelessness Covenant and what involvement may look like for the organisation.
  - Planning actions to ensure that the Equality and Diversity aspects of the People & Culture Strategy are prioritised and we create a culture that is truly inclusive.

Lynsey Fulcher (Head of People) presented information on the gender and ethnicity pay gaps, and introduced the People and Culture Strategy:

- For the gender pay gap the council is legally required to report on this for the year prior to the current year. The mean pay gap is 0.95% and the median pay gap is 6.81% (in favour of men). For every £1 men earn, women earn 93 pence.
- One means the council is tackling the gender pay gap includes by introducing a new appraisal process will help us to ensure all employees regularly discuss progression and development and managers will be better at spotting talent. The council is also increasing and promoting flexible working practices, helping with retention and enabling all employees to continue to progress without compromising their work life balance.
- The mean ethnicity pay gap is 0.65% and the median pay gap is in favour of ethnic minority people at -4.96%. This year is the first time the council has monitored this.
- The People and Culture Strategy has been approved at committee. It is the link between the council's organisational and corporate priorities and its people. It links to the organisation's values and aligns HR activity to the needs of the organisation. Promoting Equality, Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging is a thread throughout every element of the strategy. The strategy is written jumping ahead to 2027 from perspective of what realising the council's ambitions will look like and how it will feel for an employee to work at the council. Now that the strategy has been approved an implementation plan will be developed.

Lynsey said that she would ensure that the People & Culture Strategy is circulated to the Panel.

The Panel asked questions and provided feedback on Lynsey and Vickie's presentations:

- Cllr Porrer said that it would be helpful to understand if there is a difference between length of service between part time and full-time staff, and also understand patterns relating to parental leave (including second parent leave). In relation to apprenticeships, Cllr Porrer said that it would be beneficial for the council to provide apprenticeships to people aged 16 and above who are unlikely to go into higher education.
- Another panel member said that it is reassuring that there has been an increase in ethnic minority representation within the council's workforce.
- Cllr Wade said it would be positive to increase the number of apprenticeships offered because this would support the Community Wealth Building Strategy. Relating to how disabled people are potentially not sharing they are disabled, Cllr Wade said that many people might not share they have disabilities until after a probation period at work as they do not wish to be labelled. The council needs to build trust in reporting. Cllr Wade also asked if councillors might be expected to meet the same values and behaviours developed for staff.
- Sam Scharf asked if the council might monitor profile of councillors as well as staff. Cllr Bird shared that she has been a councillor since 2011 and has never been asked about her personal characteristics.
- Cllr Porrer said that as pay for councillors is low it might be the case that people from diverse backgrounds would struggle to become councillors.
- Cllr Smart asked if the council itself could do more to influence political parties to increase diversity of candidates. Cllr Smart also shared it would be helpful to increase the proportion of young people working for the council, and to measure staff happiness (including outside work, as this impacts on people's experience of work). He asked about whether it was appropriate to use terminology of ethnic minority or people of colour.
- Sam Scharff said that despite some improvements around workforce diversity, the proportion of different groups working for the council is relatively low compared to that of the general population and the council needs to hold itself to account for improving its performance relating to this.

Cllr Flaubert said that to save on time she would send her questions directly to Vickie and Lynsey following the meeting.

In response to the comments and questions from Panel members:

- Vickie Jameson said that she would look into collecting and monitoring councillor profile data for the future.
- Helen Crowther said it would be best to ask staff for terminology they would prefer around ethnicity in relation to whether ethnic minority group, people of colour or another term should be used. There are differing views on terminology.

**24/15/EP Any Other Business**

None.

**24/16/EP Date of Next Meeting**

7 January 2025.

The meeting ended at 6.00 pm

**CHAIR**