

EQUALITIES PANEL

18 June 2012
4.00 - 6.05 pm

Present:

Chair: Antoinette Jackson

Public Members: Graham Lewis, Nicky Wrigley and Norah Al-Ani

Elected Members: Councillor Abbott, Councillor Bick and Councillor Brown

Staff Members: Jackie Hanson, Ari Henry, Karen Hobbs and Joe Godwin

Officers: Director of Customer and Community Services, Liz Bisset; Recreation Services Manager, Ian Ross; Head of Customer Services, Jonathan James; Head of Community Development, Trevor Woollams; Head of Human Resources, Deborah Simpson, Diversity Advisor, Paul Williams; Strategy and Partnerships Manager, David Kidson; Active Communities Support Officer: Julie Durrant; and Strategy Officer, Chris Williams.

FOR THE INFORMATION OF THE COUNCIL

12/1/EP Welcome, Introductions and Apologies

Apologies were received from Councillor Bird and public member Bintou Niangane. The Chair welcomed the new panel members.

12/2/EP Declarations of Interest

No interests were declared.

12/3/EP Minutes of Previous Meeting and Matters Arising

The minutes of the meeting of the 21st November were approved and signed as a correct record.

12/4/EP Review of Terms of Reference

Panel members noted the Terms of Reference.

12/5/EP Customer Access Strategy

The panel receive a report from the Head of Customer Services regarding the Customer Access Strategy 2012 – 2015.

Panel members asked the following questions:

1) Does the cost per transaction reflect the complexity of the task rather than the means of contact?

The cost of face to face contacts does vary according to time taken to deal with the issues. However, due to staff and buildings costs, this will always be the most expensive means of contact.

2) Do service users understand that Facebook is not a private conversation?

It is early days for this medium and the page is monitored daily. Inappropriate messages are removed. The pages will also be monitored over the weekend.

3) Do the public need to be reminded that emails can be subject to Freedom of Information requests?

Exemption would apply to emails from members for the public and such emails would be protected by data protection regulations.

4) The opportunity for a face to face meeting is limited. Is anything being done to increase the locations where this is possible?

There are currently four main contact points. Drop in sessions at the North Area Committee were trailed but abandoned due to low take up. The use of Transaction Kiosks, where members of the public can speak to staff via a web cam, were under consideration.

5) Have extended opening hours been considered?

Extended hours and Saturday opening has been tried by other authorities. Take up had been low and the costs high and therefore not good value for money.

6) The push towards lean processes is not compatible with good customer service and complex individual cases.

Processes would be streamlined wherever possible. However, there is a recognition that customer needs take priority.

7) How does the CAS ensure that when a call is ended, the customer is satisfied that all the issues had been dealt with?

It is regrettable if some customers have had a less than satisfactory experience with service. Staff had been well trained. All calls are recorded and complaints would be followed up.

12/6/EP Policy update: The Public Sector Equality Duty One Year On

The Panel received an oral update from Strategy Officer regarding the direction of government equalities policy and implementation of the Equality Duty.

Panel members raised the following points:

- I. Individuals completing Equality Impact Assessments (EqIA's) needed to be competent and skilled.
- II. Peer reviews of EqIA's were seen as a useful means of quality control.
- III. The Panel expressed the opinion that a local commitment to EqIA's should be retained even if the messages received from central government suggested otherwise.
- IV. The Panel would like to be involved in the interpretation and implementation of any new central government policy. Additional meetings could be called if the dates did not fit with the existing meeting schedule.

12/7/EP Equality Impact Assessments: Olympic Torch Relay and Leisure Management Contract

The Head of Community Development introduced the EqIA for the Olympic Torch Relay and gave the Panel an overview of the event. The Big Weekend was an annual event and the addition of the Olympic Torch Relay had raised significant additional equality concerns. The document was evolving as additional information was received from other areas the torch had already visited.

Panel members made the following comments:

- I. Residents might prefer fixed times for road closures.
- II. The use of stewards for crowd safety rather than barriers was welcomed.
- III. The panel praised the quality of the EqIA and the breadth of issues considered.

The Recreation Services Manager outlined the process used to complete the EqIA for the Leisure Management Contract. The service was aware of low take up of facilities by residents of the north and East of the City. The EqIA had been used to help identify barriers to participation in sports and leisure opportunities. The existing Leisure Card had been identified as too complicated and would be replaced.

The Panel asked the following questions:

1) The EqIA raised useful issues and the Panel hoped would like these to be retained when the contract was awarded.

They would be embedded in the contract as long as they are not in contravention of procurement regulations.

2) The Muslim Women's swimming group had raised concerns over lack of female lifeguards and lack of space at King's Hedges Learner Pool which the only pool that offers sufficient privacy for them to feel comfortable about using. How is this being addressed?

Staff were working with this group to address their needs.

3) Low income families are not using the facilities. How can this be addressed?

The new contract would have provision for discounted times. Use of rooms and hire of courts or pitches could also be discounted for trial periods to allow new groups to become established.

12/8/EP Equality in Employment – End of year Update Workforce Report, April 2011 - March 2012

The Panel received a report from the Diversity Advisor regarding the End of Year Update of the Workforce Report.

The Panel made the following comments:

- I. Although staff grievance numbers are low, they appear to be predominantly female. This situation should be monitored for emerging trends.
- II. Papworth Trust funding appears to be based on Cambridgeshire addresses and not all staff may be eligible. Other organisations, such as Shaw Trust, offer alternative sources of support. The Panel asked for this to be looked into.
- III. The Panel were pleased to see increasing numbers of employees feeling comfortable about declaring issues such as their sexual orientation or

religion or belief. However, it was noted that some staff would always choose not to declare personal information.

12/9/EP Future work programme of Equalities Panel

The Panel were asked to consider items they might wish to consider on future agendas.

The Panel expressed an interest in discussing High Contact Families and Mental Health issues at future meetings. External speakers would be considered.

The meeting ended at 6.05 pm

CHAIR