

EQUALITIES SUB-COMMITTEE

MINUTES

Of a Virtual/remote meeting held on Monday 30 November 2020 at 7pm to 9.15pm.

Councillors present:

Stephen Giles-Medhurst (Chair)	Phil Williams
Sarah Nelmes (Vice-Chair)	Alex Hayward
Matthew Bedford	Reena Ranger
Roger Seabourne	Stephen Cox
Steve Drury	

Also in attendance:

Councillors Sara Bedford, Chris Lloyd, Andrew Scarth, Alison Scarth and Joanna Clemens

Officers in attendance:

Rebecca Young – Acting Head of Community Partnerships
Shivani Dave – Partnerships Manager
Sarah Haythorpe, Principal Committee Manager

ESC 10/20 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

No apologies received

ESC 11/20 MINUTES

To confirm as a correct record the Minutes of the Equalities Sub-Committee held on 24 August 2020.

ESC 12/20 NOTICE OF OTHER BUSINESS

The Chair advised that the following items of business had not been available 5 clear working days before the meeting but were of sufficient urgency in order for Officers to be able to progress the work in time for the next meeting:

Item 5 Prejudice and Discrimination Consultation Results
Item 6 Equalities Sub-Committee Work Plan
Item 7 Motions under Procedure Rule 11

ESC 13/20 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

Councillor Roger Seabourne declared a non-prejudicial interest in agenda item 7 Motion 2 and left the meeting during the consideration of this motion.

ESC 14/20 PREJUDICE AND DISCRIMINATION CONSULTATION RESULTS

Three Rivers Community Safety Partnership set an objective to investigate the experiences of our communities, to understand how people had been affected by prejudice and discrimination, the impact this had on an individual and the resulting community needs. The insight gleaned would guide work with partners, to tackle discrimination and prejudice. This survey looked particularly at the 9 protected characteristics, but was also interested to understand any challenges or experiences of any other marginalised group. This report provided a summary of the survey, outcomes and recommendations.

Members raised the following points on the report:

Was there a breakdown of age and the Ward of the respondents?

Officers advised that there was a breakdown by Ward on page 31 of the consultation document and age on page 26. If required by the sub-committee Officers could try to provide a breakdown by Ward as a post meeting note but this would be dependent upon the provision of the respondents postcodes.

It had been noted that there had been no response from the Sikh community and also that the consultation had taken place during unprecedented times. Would it be reviewed to give a more general and fair representation after the pandemic? They would continue with the engagement with people from different communities. There had however been a response of 1% from the Sikh Community.

Was the consultation all multiple choice or comment boxes?

The Partnerships Manager advised that the demographics were multiple choice so tick boxes for age ranges. Questions were broken down into various themes, micro-aggressions, discrimination and hate crime, and within each was a box for comments. They were asked if they would like to be contacted in relation to their responses in the questionnaire so they could provide contact details.

Under the sexual orientation the response showed 1% replied queer and 84% heterosexual / straight so clarification was required as to what language had been used for the questionnaire. The Partnerships Manager advised that as the LGBTQ community had been using the Q it had been included in communications. They would check what questions went out in the survey and provide a written response. A Member advised that some people do use the words 'Straight' and 'Queer' to self-identify.

POST MEETING NOTE:

Within the survey the following language was used:

Asexual
Bi/bisexual
Gay man or boy
Gay woman, girl/lesbian
Heterosexual/straight
Queer

Demographics show it was the 45 plus age group that responded at a higher incidents. Could that be the case or was it an age related thing that needed education?

Officers felt they were not reaching the demographics fully to be able to answer. It had been shared with local schools and youth groups but did not get the same

level of response as the older age groups. They would look to engage with a wider age range in the future.

Was there any data on where incidences had taken place?

Some people did provide this information but not all. The Community Safety Partnership were aware and tackling some incidences. Members of the public were encouraged to contact the police about any offensive material. A Member advised that racial or religious hate crimes had taken place across the District, a predominance in the South of the District but this was suspected to be anecdotal.

When would this body of evidence be referred to and when would a new body of evidence be looked at to include more interaction with the Equalities Sub Committee speaking to people?

Officers could not give a timeframe now on when they would engage with Community Leaders, other representatives and residents and review where to go from there. This would be added to the Equalities Sub Committee Work Programme.

The Partnerships Manager gave details of the recommendations as follows:

To undertake to increase communication with our communities through the Community Safety Partnership – to maintain a better understanding of what their concerns and experiences of discrimination are. The Partnerships Manager had worked closely with the Hate Crime Officer within the police who would attend the next Equalities Sub Committee meeting to give a presentation on progress.

To continue to gather information and views from community leaders and residents to inform the Community Safety Hate Crime Action Plan and the Equalities Sub- Committee.

That a refresh and relaunch of an awareness campaign of reporting hate crime and developing a cohesive community take place. There were several third party hate crime reporting centres across the district, including Three Rivers House, the CAB offices and the Intensive Family Support Team, Otley Way Family Centre. The Committee were shown the Hate Crime Page on the website <https://www.threerivers.gov.uk/egcl-page/hate-crime>.

Develop a video campaign to share the people's experiences of discrimination to raise awareness of the different ways in which it can occur with YCH. (This could support the awareness campaign in 17.4). Young people from YCH had developed a serious youth violence video for Three Rivers launched early 2020.

To continue to promote awareness of trauma and support available. The Officer showed the Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) page on the website. <https://www.threerivers.gov.uk/egcl-page/adverse-childhood-experiences-aces>

The Chair moved the recommendations set out in the report.

On being put to the sub-committee, the recommendation in the report was declared CARRIED by the Chair, the voting being agreed by general assent.

RECOMMEND:

1. To undertake to increase communication with our communities through the Community Safety Partnership – to maintain a better understanding of what their concerns and experiences of discrimination are.
2. To continue to gather information and views from community leaders and residents to inform the Community Safety Hate Crime Action Plan and the Equalities Sub- Committee.

3. That a refresh and relaunch of an awareness campaign of reporting hate crime and developing a cohesive community take place.
4. Develop a video campaign to share the people's experiences of discrimination to raise awareness of the different ways in which it can occur with YCH. (This could support the awareness campaign in 17.4)
5. To continue to promote awareness of trauma and support available.

ESC 15/20 EQUALITIES SUB-COMMITTEE WORKPLAN 2021

The sub-committee received an updated work plan for consideration. The Chair advised that they were looking at 8 or 9 February 2021 for the next Equalities sub-committee meeting. This would be confirmed.

POST MEETING NOTE: the next meeting will be held on Tuesday 9 February 2021 at 7pm

The following points were raised:

How would Officers go about identifying Community Leaders? The Acting Head of Community Partnerships said the police would be invited to attend the February meeting. The list of potential Community Leaders would be shared and Members of the sub-committee would be able to give feedback and suggestions of others to be invited. The Chair said Members could contact Officers with suggestions prior to the meeting with details of suggested invitees and the reasons for the invites.

A Member asked for clarification of a Community Leader as it was felt this should be as broad a spectrum as possible and a great diversity of voices was required.

A Member wanted assurance that speakers invited to the meeting would not be limited to three minutes. The Chair confirmed that there would be no limits to the time invited speakers would speak for.

A Member asked for the sub-committee to be advised of the cost of any training provided to them.

POST MEETING NOTE

An annual training report is provided to the Policy and Resources Committee in July every year and details are provided in the report of all training undertaken by Members and the costs of that training.

RESOLVED:

The Committee received, considered and commented on the updated work plan.

ESC 16/20 MOTIONS UNDER PROCEDURE RULE 11

At the Council meeting on 20 October 2020 it was agreed that the following motions would be referred to the Equalities sub-committee. The following motions were taken individually in the order provided. All the proposers and seconders of the motions had been invited to the meeting to present their motion under new Rule 11(11).

Motion 1 - Councillor Sara Bedford, seconded by Councillor Phil Williams moved under Notice duly given as follows:

Supporting Trans and non-binary people

Council notes that Trans people face significant disadvantage in society. One in four Trans people report being discriminated against in work, over a third avoid expressing their gender through physical appearance in fear of being assaulted or harassed, and almost 50% of Trans people have attempted suicide at some point in their lives. (see https://www.stonewall.org.uk/sites/default/files/trans_stats.pdf)

1. Council believes that:
 - a) Trans men are men, Trans women are women, and that non-binary genders are valid.
 - b) Trans people deserve respect and autonomy
 - c) Transphobia has a hugely detrimental impact on the mental health and well-being of trans individuals
 - d) It is our duty as community leaders who seek to create an open and tolerant society to speak out against transphobia and make clear it will not be tolerated.

2. Council therefore resolves to:
 - a) Ensure that all Council services, both directly provided and through partners, are fully accessible to all, regardless of their sexuality or gender identity.
 - b) Work to provide at least one gender neutral toilet where possible in every public building owned or operated by the Council, and encourage partners to do likewise.
 - c) Ensure that the Council's constitution, policies, forms, and all internal and external communications are gender neutral.
 - d) Create a network of informal LGBT allies across officers and councillors to support all members of the LGBT communities.

On being put to the Committee the motion was declared CARRIED by the Chair the voting being 7 For, 0 Against and 2 Abstentions.

RESOLVED:

This Council notes that Trans people face significant disadvantage in society. One in four Trans people report being discriminated against in work, over a third avoid expressing their gender through physical appearance in fear of being assaulted or harassed, and almost 50% of Trans people have attempted suicide at some point in their lives. (see https://www.stonewall.org.uk/sites/default/files/trans_stats.pdf)

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- c) Ensure that the Council's constitution, policies, forms, and all internal and external communications are gender neutral.
- d) Create a network of informal LGBT allies across officers and councillors to support all members of the LGBT communities.

Councillor Roger Seabourne left the meeting.

Motion 2 - Councillor Stephen Giles-Medhurst proposed seconded by Councillor Chris Lloyd moved under Notice duly given as follows:

Not every Disability is Visible

This Council notes that:

The charity Crohn's and Colitis UK is encouraging venues providing accessible public toilets to install new signage. This is to help stop stigma and discrimination towards people with invisible illnesses such as Crohn's Disease and ulcerative colitis.

There have been instances nationally where such individuals using an accessible toilet have been accused by others of being ineligible to use them.

These signs have two standing figures and a wheelchair user with the words Accessible Toilet and the logo. Not every disability is visible. The Government has decided recently that large accessible toilets for severely disabled people known as Changing Places will be made compulsory for large new buildings, such as shopping centres supermarkets, sports and arts venues, in England from 2021.

Council resolves to:

Ensure that accessible toilets on Council premises bear these signs.

Ask town and district centre retailers and leisure outlets to do likewise with their accessible public toilets.

Seek advice from the charity Crohn's and Colitis UK on the information and training we should provide to Council Staff members. This is so they understand these illnesses and to prevent potential embarrassment for those who suffer with them.

Ensure that any Changing Places toilets in our buildings are properly signposted for visitors.

Ensure that the any legal requirement to provide new Changing Place toilets is included within any of the Council's future plans.

In accordance with the Council's virtual meeting protocol which sits alongside the Council's Constitution a Member of the public spoke in support of the motion.

The Chair moved an amendment, duly seconded, to take advice on publicising this in a suitable way.

On being put to the Committee the amended motion was declared CARRIED by the Chair the voting being unanimous.

RESOLVED:

This Council noted that:

The charity Crohn's and Colitis UK is encouraging venues providing accessible public toilets to install new signage. This is to help stop

stigma and discrimination towards people with invisible illnesses such as Crohn's Disease and ulcerative colitis.

There have been instances nationally where such individuals using an accessible toilet have been accused by others of being ineligible to use them.

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Council resolved to:

Ensure that accessible toilets on Council premises bear these signs.

Ask town and district centre retailers and leisure outlets to do likewise with their accessible public toilets.

Seek advice from the charity Crohn's and Colitis UK on the information and training we should provide to Council Staff members. This is so they understand these illnesses and to prevent potential embarrassment for those who suffer with them.

Ensure that any Changing Places toilets in our buildings are properly signposted for visitors.

Ensure that the any legal requirement to provide new Changing Place toilets is included within any of the Council's future plans.

Take advice on publicising this in a suitable way.

Councillor Roger Seabourne re-joined the meeting.

Motion 3 - Councillor Stephen Giles-Medhurst seconded by Councillor Sarah Nelmes moved under Notice duly given as follows:

This Council is appalled by the evidence of racism and discrimination that have blighted the lives of so many in the UK and concerned by the evidence of the disproportionate impact the COVID-19 pandemic is having on BAME communities.

The Council during Black History Month and at time where Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) communities globally are expressing their anger and frustration with institutional racism which disproportionately affects them, takes this opportunity to restate our condemnation of racism, discrimination and hatred in all its forms.

This Council reaffirms its underlying our values of equality and inclusion. Recent events have highlighted once again the sad truth that discrimination and racism still looms large, particularly against members of the black community both abroad and at home in the UK.

Council restates its determination to condemn racism where we see it but also to develop and maintain a proactive anti-racist approach across the council. Part of this is acknowledging the hard truth that there are inequalities within our organisation and our communities. These inequalities can only begin to be fixed by speaking to and understanding members of our workforce and our residents who have been disadvantaged because of their ethnicity.

Council acknowledges that, alongside the threat of overt racism, there exists deeply ingrained and often unconscious discrimination across all levels of society. As a

council representing a diverse community, we have an important role to play in dismantling biases and systemic oppression.

As an organisation we endeavour to make Three Rivers and Hertfordshire a safe and inclusive place of opportunity for all of our residents. Three Rivers District Council remains committed to doing our part to achieve this and play our part in the hard task of removing racism and discrimination from our society.

Council therefore:

- 1) Endorses this approach, calling out racism as an evil that has no place in the Council's workplaces;
- 2) Supports the holding of a Q&A event for the Council's BAME staff with senior leaders to understand their concerns and required actions;
- 3) Affirms its commitment to condemn racism, discrimination and hatred in all its forms.

On being put to the sub-committee the motion was declared CARRIED by the Chair the voting being unanimous.

RESOLVED:

This Council is appalled by the evidence of racism and discrimination that have blighted the lives of so many in the UK and concerned by the evidence of the disproportionate impact the COVID-19 pandemic is having on BAME communities.

The Council during Black History Month and at time where Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) communities globally are expressing their anger and frustration with institutional racism which disproportionately affects them, takes this opportunity to restate our condemnation of racism, discrimination and hatred in all its forms.

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- 2) Supports the holding of a Q&A event for the Council's BAME staff with senior leaders to understand their concerns and required actions;
- 3) Affirms its commitment to condemn racism, discrimination and hatred in all its forms.

The Chief Executive confirmed that at this current time no decision was required on the motions to the Policy and Resources Committee/Council so Officers could start to work on the details in the motions.

On being put to the sub-committee the motion was declared CARRIED by the Chair the voting being unanimous.

RESOLVED:

That Members discussed all the motions and decided whether these motions are taken forward with more detailed costings, as well as legal and equalities implications being considered; and

Members considered all the motions and agreed their intentions as applicable to the Council and any actions arising that might require officer actions, further reports, costings, legal and equalities implications.

CHAIR