

---

# EQUALITIES SUB-COMMITTEE

## MINUTES

Of a Virtual/remote meeting held on Monday 15 March 2021 at 7pm until 9.06pm.

Councillors present:

Stephen Giles-Medhurst (Chair)  
Sarah Nelmes (Vice-Chair)  
Stephen Cox  
Alex Hayward

Reena Ranger  
Phil Williams  
Andrew Scarth (Substitute for Matthew Bedford)  
Raj Khuroya (Substitute for Roger Seabourne)

Also in attendance:

Councillor Joanne Clemens  
Luke Mitchell, Hertfordshire Police  
Dani Howlett-Bolton, Hate Crime officer  
Kate Bignell, YCH Services for Young People

Officers in attendance:

Rebecca Young – Acting Head of Community Partnerships  
Shivani Dave – Partnerships Manager  
Gordon Glenn, Performance and Projects Manager  
Terry Baldwin, Executive Head of Human resources  
Mike Simpson, Committee Services

---

### ESC 17/20 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies received from Councillors Matthew Bedford and Roger Seabourne with Councillors Andrew Scarth and Raj Khuroya as the appointed substitute Members.

### ESC 18/20 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of the Equalities Sub-Committee held on 30 November 2020 were agreed to be an accurate account and would be signed by the Chair when it was possible to do so.

### ESC 19/20 NOTICE OF OTHER BUSINESS

The Chair advised that the following items of business had not been available five 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 Equalities Publication 2021 and the Item 8 - Workforce Monitoring under any other business although the Chair would take them together under Item 5.

## **ESC 20/20 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS**

There was none.

## **ESC 21/20 EQUALITIES PUBLICATION 2021 & WORKFORCE MONITORING**

The Performance and Projects Manager presented a concise version of the Equalities Duty Information Report, and explained that in the Equalities Act 2010 the Council had a duty to publish such data held by the Council. The report was published annually, by 31 January, with the primary aims to promote the following:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination;
- Advance Equality of Opportunity;
- Foster good relations

The Performance and Projects Manager said that the survey data of 500 people living in Three Rivers indicated that perceptions were often contradicted by facts. The Officer cited examples of the groups accessing benefits, in which 45-54 year olds were more likely than younger residents (is there more text needed here?), and contrary to media presumptions, and non-whites were no more likely to access benefits than white individuals.

A Member commented that the survey was proportional due to the much larger percentage of white residents in Three Rivers. The Performance and Projects Manager agreed, but said useful information can be gathered from the lower percentage scores.

A Member asked how the perception of crime was reconciled with actual crime. The Performance and Projects Manager said the gathered data was passed onto Heads of Service for a decision on how the issue might be addressed if deemed necessary.



Equalities Duty  
Information Report 20

The Head of Human Resources (HR) said the Council would like to gather as much data on its employees as possible but this was dependent on staff updating their own profiles, and unfortunately a lot of this information was missing. The current payroll providers ResourceLink and My View were soon to be replaced by iTrent and Web Recruit. The new system would provide the opportunity to gain much more valuable data. An anonymous survey was also to be rolled out to staff in an attempt to harvest more data but previous responses had been very low, at approximately 10%.

The available figures showed an average employee age of 50-59. Initiatives were introduced to attract a younger people, one of which being the 'academy' by which staff may develop their careers by moving on from the Customer Service Centre (CSC) and may be supported with opportunities to acquire professional and academic qualifications.

HR is also providing extensive mental health support and wellbeing initiatives, and would use the staff survey data to provide more appropriate training and organisational development for all staff.

A Member asked how low was a 'very low' responses to the anonymous staff survey, to which the Head of HR replied that it was less than 10%. The Member asked whether staff could be incentivised to complete the survey. The Head of HR said staff needed to be reassured that the collection of data was for all the right reasons, and emphasising to staff the reasons for the collection of the data.

**Post meeting note** – the Head of HR had checked the survey results after the meeting and found that the total number of responses was just over 20% with 73 members of staff responding. While higher than reported at the meeting, it was still low compared to other staff surveys where a response rate of over 50% from staff was received.

A Member asked why the Council was failing to achieve better results from its surveys of staff, and was it targeting the wrong groups, resulting in disenfranchised employees? The Head of HR replied that data collection and surveys was entirely inclusive, and such information gathering would become more comprehensive with Web Recruit.

The Chair said the use of asterisks when results were less than ten was understandable in some cases, but in other areas e.g. details of senior management should be in the public domain. The Head of HR offered to discuss with the Acting Head of Community Partnerships and the Performance and Projects Manager to reassess this policy in certain cases.

## ESC 22/20 COMMUNITY LINKS

The Partnerships Manager introduced details of Community Partnerships' key contacts and explained the structure of the strategic and charitable partners and sub-groups.

The pandemic had resulted in the development of some new relationships, including Watford and Three Rivers Trust, a voluntary group with which Community Partnerships had a good collaborative working relationship, and links with places of worship in neighbouring Districts were fostered.



Key Community  
Contacts presentation

The Hate Crime Officer spoke about KINs (Key Individual Network) and the need to gain access to key members of minority communities to act as a conduit between group members and the police, specifically those from Pagan, Mediterranean, Eastern Europe and Traveller/Romany/Gypsy backgrounds. Members were asked to consider how they might be able to help in this respect when back in their wards.

The Chair said it's possible that many residents were not aware of Three Rivers, and identify with a particular town or village.

A Member raised the issue of women's safety in the aftermath of the recent murder of Sarah Everard, and asked if this was something that could be looked at. The Partnerships Manager said the heightened vulnerability of women was something that could be looked at by the CSP on a strategic level, and although the partnership did work with various women's groups currently, more work

would be required. A Member said education would help, especially of men in terms of understanding the vulnerability of women.

A Member spoke of the work undertaken recently with a Watford-based charity '[One Vision](#)', which was keen to work with Three Rivers in view of the fluid boundaries between Watford and Three Rivers, and said a productive relationship could be nurtured.

The Police advised that 25% of new police officers in England and Wales were recruited from ethnic backgrounds and the force was keen to ensure it was representative of the community locally.

In response to a Member question, the Partnerships Manager said there was no data currently available on take-up of Covid vaccines, but obtaining data for vaccines within the BAME community was a complex issue and very difficult to extract. A Community Engagement Officer was soon to be employed, part of whose remit would be look further into why there was a reluctance by some minorities to be vaccinated.

The Police advised that communications from the police and Council re the vaccination programme needed to be carefully worded so as to avoid an overreaction and panic in the respective communities. The Chair said it was the responsibility of everyone, particularly Councillors, to challenge misconceptions and 'Fake News'. The Chair also advocated a less insular approach than pre-Covid when engaging with the local community, and added that anticipating issues was key.

The Police said that more forward thinking would be worthwhile, and thought should be given to how life will be for people in 10-15 years in terms of social pressures and living environment. The focus should be on preventative measures, with a focus on addressing negative attitudes, and for this reason the Police visited schools to speak to young children.

A Member said that care should be taken to not perpetuate stereotypes, and another Member spoke of a tendency by the public to overreact, and mentioned a case where an alleged drug den turned out to be children playing. It was the responsibility of the Council to draw up a local plan, and these examples provided something to think about. The Chair said that the Council had no say in cases where retail premises were converted to residential properties. The resultant dormitory type accommodation was often a problem for the police.

The Chair said it was a very interesting and thought-provoking presentation, with plenty of information therein for Members to take back to their own communities.

RESOLVED:

That the sub-committee noted the presentation on Community links.

## **ESC 23/20 YCH SERVICES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE**

The Youth Work Team Leader made a presentation on behalf of YCH Services for Young People. The service's primary remit was targeted intervention and early intervention, and offered support to young people by instilling resilience and equipping them for adulthood while steering vulnerable youths away from crime.

Details were provided to the sub-committee on the various projects offered, and said that although most services were delivered online during Covid, the summer term would see a return to face to face meetings but with reduced numbers.

The service's core age range was 13-17 but extended to 11-21 for those leaving care, and would go up to 24 years if the individual had a learning disability.

The Chair asked how reluctant individuals were persuaded to take part in the programme. It was advised that the team at YCH was very enthusiastic and was able to access individuals via a number of partners, and visits to schools which was an integral part of the process. Word of mouth was also a key factor.

A Member who was involved with a YCH project at West Hyde during the summer in 2019 praised the engagement levels of staff.



YCH SfYP -  
Presentation to Council

**RESOLVED:**

The sub-committee noted the presentation.

**ESC 24/20 OTHER BUSINESS**

The Acting Head of Community Partnerships introduced the Equalities sub-committee workplan. The Equalities policy is due for a full review in July 2023 with an interim update on the policy to be brought to the sub-committee in September.

The plan would look at training development needs for Members and staff on Equality, and online training was currently being reviewed. It was intended to invite a community representative to speak about raising awareness of related issues.

A Member welcomed the provision of appropriate training, and asked that transparency of training costs, and what has been provided for which Councillors, be made available to which it was replied that the request would be forwarded to the relevant team.

**POST MEETING NOTE**

A training report is presented to the Policy and Resources Committee each year in July with the last report being presented on 20 July 2020. The 2020/21 report will be presented to the Policy and Resources in July 2021 and will provide details of costs of the training that Members have undertaken.



Equalities Sub  
Committee Workplan

**RESOLVED:**

That the interim workplan be noted.

The Chair concluded the meeting by saying it had been very interesting, and the opportunity to delve deeper into the Council's responsibilities on equalities served a very useful purpose.

**CHAIR**

DRAFT