
EQUALITIES SUB-COMMITTEE

MINUTES

Of a virtual/remote meeting held on Thursday 9 June 2022 at 7pm until 8.36pm.

Councillors present:

Stephen Giles-Medhurst	Abbas Merali
Stephen Cox (until 7.30pm)	Sarah Nelmes
Debbie Morris (sub for Cllr Rue Grewal)	Anne Winter (Arrived late)
Andrea Fraser	
Raj Khuroya	

Also in attendance:

Tomasz Glinski, Refugee Council

Officers in attendance:

Terry Baldwin, Executive Chief of Learning and Development
Shivani Dave, Partnerships Manager
Gordon Glenn, Performance and Projects Manager
Ryan Beaumont, Community Liaison Officer
Sarah Haythorpe, Principal Committee Manager
Mike Simpson, Committee and Web Officer

ESC 01/22 ELECTION OF CHAIR FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT YEAR 2022-23

Councillor Sarah Nelmes proposed that Councillor Stephen Giles-Medhurst as Chair of the Sub-Committee, seconded by Councillor Raj Khuroya.

RESOLVED:

That Councillor Stephen Giles-Medhurst be Chair of the Equalities sub-committee for the Local Government Year 2022/23

ESC 02/22 ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIR FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT YEAR 2022-23

Councillor Sarah Nelmes proposed Councillor Anne Winter *in absentia*, as Vice-Chair of the sub-committee, seconded by Councillor Stephen Giles-Medhurst.

RESOLVED:

That Councillor Anne Winter be Vice-Chair of the Equalities sub-committee for the Local Government Year 2022/23.

ESC 03/22 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND INTRODUCTIONS

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Rue Grewal with Councillor Debbie Morris the substitute Member.

The Chair asked Members and Officers to introduce themselves.

ESC 04/22 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of the Equalities sub-committee held on 28 September 2021 were agreed as an accurate account and would be signed by the Chair at the first opportunity.

ESC 05/22 NOTICE OF OTHER BUSINESS

The Chair ruled that the following items of business had not been available 5 clear working days before the meeting but had agreed they were of sufficient urgency to taken at the meeting for the following reasons:

Item 8a – Refugees – so that Members were up to date with information and to allow Officers to continue with their work

Item 8b – Work plan of the sub-committee to enable officers to plan ahead to the next meeting in the autumn and allow the sub-committee to add any items to their work plan

Item 8c – Training and Development to ensure that Members were up to date with the officer training and development and to enable any amendments/changes to be made.

ESC 06/22 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

There were none received.

ESC 07/22 REFUGEES

A presentation was provided to the sub-committee by Tomasz Glinski of the Refugee Council, on the support given to Afghani, Syrian and Ukrainian refugees within Three Rivers.

It was noted that the Refugee Council operates across the county and the country, with more than 50 people from Ukraine receiving support to be able to settle in Three Rivers. The Refugee Council would be supporting people from between three and five years, depending on the programme, after which it was hoped they would be independent.

The remit of the Refugee Council was to assist with learning English, finding accommodation, opening a bank account, schooling, finding employment and settling into life in a different culture.

A Member asked how the Council could accelerate employment and training opportunities for refugees as there is clearly much potential talent amongst the

people. Tomasz Glinski said on average it takes seven years for a refugee to integrate, some longer than others. Many had skills that were not recognised in the UK, but the Refugee Council was instigating a number of employment initiatives.

The Chair asked whether the public transport system in SW Herts was a problem for refugees in that the services were poor and infrequent, and was there potential for the refugees to drive themselves. Tomasz Glinski replied that individuals could drive on an international licence for a year after which a UK driving test had to be taken. Problems had occurred as a result of public transport inadequacies such as refugees missing appointments, specifically English classes. Tomasz also advised that the Refugee Council were running mobile English classes.

The presentation was continued by Ryan Beaumont, Community Liaison Officer, which covered the work being done by Three Rivers as a District to support the work of the Refugee Council.

The key points covered were:

- The role of the Community Liaison Officer was explained
- There were currently three Syrian families, one Afghan family living in the District
- 57 Ukrainian refugees had arrived in the District
- There had been many positive outcomes for the refugees following their move to the District and some barriers that they had to overcome

The Chair said that it would be useful if the presentation could be circulated to the whole of the Council to advise of the good work that had been done. The Chair also wanted to know if all members of the Afghan families were able to learn the language and wondered if the Ukrainian families were a bit disjointed, in that there was possibly one member of the family was still in the Ukraine. Ryan Beaumont responded that 90% of families who had completed the courses now spoke English fluently, in particular children who were using the language at school every day. The Community Liaison Officer could not currently comment on the Ukraine families in terms of members still remaining in Ukraine but this would be something we would have more details on in the future.

A Member asked for a better understanding of the Ukrainian families and out of the 57, how many households did that number represent and what Wards were they residing in? The Community Liaison Officer responded that no details were available at present but he could find out the information and come back to the sub-committee with an answer.

A Member was concerned about the challenges of the refugees having access to a mosque as there was not one in the District and some refugees had struggled to get to a mosque. It was advised that the mosques could be contacted directly as they could provide transport to those who were not able to get there themselves. The Member also asked about the sponsors of the Ukrainian families and if more support and promotion was needed. The Community Liaison Officer advised that any promotion would be great but there had been a fantastic response to the call for sponsors of the Ukrainian families.

Tomasz Glinski asked if any Ukrainian sponsors had contacted the Council requiring support. It was advised that they had been working closely with Herts Mind and other groups to provide support for hosts and guests.

The Chair was concerned that if the hosts did have any issues they should be able to raise them and get support as if the system was to breakdown that would cause a significant impact to the housing situation. The Community Liaison Officer advised that support was available and the Housing department would be in contact with hosts should they need assistance.

RESOLVED:

That the presentation be noted.

ESC 08/22 EQUALITY OBJECTIVES REVIEW

The Partnership Manager followed up on the presentation provided at the last sub committee by the Performance and Projects Manager and presented information to the sub-committee on the new Equality Objectives. The key points being:

- These had been developed in conjunction with residents feedback and partner agencies as well as other agencies
- Survey would be published if the proposed objectives were agreed at subcommittee prior to taking to P&R committee in July.

The proposed new objectives were:

- To promote Equality Of Opportunity In Employment & Training
- To work to improve equality and access to services for all residents.
- To strengthen our knowledge and understanding of all Three Rivers communities.
- To engage the community in order to celebrate diversity, promote inclusion and enhance community life.

The sub-committee were asked for feedback or agreement to the objectives before consultation would take place.

The Chair asked for clarification on how the consultation would be undertaken. The Partnership Manager advised that a survey had been created including some questions about each of the objectives. It would be publicised online, through social media and the partnerships bulletin. Community Engagement Officers could assist persons who are not able to do it online or require assistance in completing the survey.

A Member who was new to the Council asked for some more information about the Community Engagement Officers and the type of work they do which was provided. The Member then asked if there were other ways to engage with people who would not be able to fill out a survey online. It was explained that due to the short time frame social media promotion and completion of the survey online was required. However, the Community Engagement Officers would reach out to people who may find it difficult to complete the online survey and provide any support required. There was also a messaging service available

which residents can call for support. Residents wished to they could also come into the Council's offices where the Customer Services Officers could assist them to fill out the form.

A Member raised several points/comments.

- They wanted to comment on the new objectives as they felt these were similar to last years and would like to see if they could be improved.
- They wanted a list of Council supported events to be provided that demonstrated the Councils commitment to equality. The Performance and Projects Manager advised this would be done.
- A local resident had raised concerns with regards to accessing the refuse and recycling collection calendar online and was unable to get a large print calendar as they had received one in previous years. This was resolved after a couple of attempts, but this may be an area that needed to be revisited.
- Accessibility to Council meetings, there had been problems with the lift which meant some Members were unable to attend Committee meetings. This had now been resolved but was due to delays in obtaining the parts from abroad to repair the lift.
- Livestreaming update – it was hoped that this would be resolved in June/July.
- What was being done by Three Rivers to support Pride as June was Pride month? The Herts Pride event was being sponsored by the Council, and the pride flag had also been raised at Three Rivers House, and would be raised again in advance of the Herts Pride event.

A Member asked if the four objectives had goals and key performance indicators (KPI's) set against them. The Performance and Projects Manager advised that they did not set KPI's for the objectives because they needed to be specific and measured. Instead the Council takes an holistic approach and the team would work with other Council services to see how they could meet the equality objectives.

The Chair agreed and thought perhaps some of the objectives could be measureable. The Performance and Projects Manager agreed to consider this and report back at the next sub-committee meeting.

The Leader of the Council wanted to add that all reports that came through the Committees had equalities details included as part of the report.

RECOMMEND:

That Members:

- Agreed the proposed Equality Objectives.
- Agreed to public and partner consultation on the proposed objectives in advance of recommendation of the objectives to Policy and Resources.

The sub-committee received an update on training needs and opportunities for staff on Equalities and Diversity

The Executive Head of HR, Terry Baldwin, presented an update on Equality and Diversity training for staff, with the key points being:

- e-learning module in diversity and inclusion
- Support the e-learning with some virtual and face to face training
- Engaged with two providers – KPMG & Centre for Inclusive Leadership
- Decision will be made soon with a view to roll out quarter 4 - 2022

The Chair asked about the difference between course providers and this was explained by the Executive Head of HR. KPMG would provide a training package where all Officers would attend the same course with the main themes including: moving from unconscious bias to conscious inclusion and the impact of unconscious bias on decision making. The Centre for Inclusive Leadership provider would give three courses using the same themes but aimed at different audiences (leaders, managers and employees). The main themes with this provider would be: Diversity is not inclusion and we are on an inclusion maturity journey.

A Member asked if this training would be available to Councillors online. The Executive Head of HR responded that this was something that could be added to the Councillors iLearn online training modules.

A Member asked about the price differences between the two course providers. It was advised that one course was double the cost of the other. Therefore they would need to be reviewed in order to make a decision. Councillors could be provided with a details outside of the meeting. Before committing to either course further testimonials would be considered and other Local Authorities opinions would be sought.

RESOLVED:

That the presentation be noted.

ESC 10/22 WORK PLAN OF THE SUB-COMMITTEE

The sub-committee received their work plan which included details on the scheduling of items of business.

It was agreed that the item on a presentation from the organisation GATE Herts would be deferred to the September meeting.

The item on Equalities Audit report to be removed from the work plan.

RESOLVED:

That the Workplan be agreed subject to the amendments above.

ESC 11/21 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

The Leader of the Council wished to raise the issue of the Armed Forces Covenant and it was agreed that the link would be sent round to Members for the website.

CHAIR

DRAFT