

Equality Forum

Thursday, 9 July 2009

Present: Councillor Greg Morgan (Chair), and Councillors David Dickinson, Catherine Hoyle, Laura Lennox, Rosie Russell and Iris Smith

Officers: Lesley-Ann Fenton (Assistant Chief Executive (Policy and Performance)), Claire Thompson (Performance, Partnership and Equality Manager), Cathryn Barrett (Democratic and Member Services Officer), Sarah Palmer (District Partnership Officer) and Jim Weightman (Graduate Management Trainee)

Also in attendance: Julia Berry (Heapey Parish Council), Cindy Bolton (Chorley & South Ribble CVS), Mike Collinson (Lancashire Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust), Jean Cronshaw (Clayton Brook Together), Mr B & Mrs Y Curwen (Walking for Health), Judy Daniels (Disability Forum), Kinga Grzeczynska (Polish Catholic Community), Alison Hansford (Withnell Parish Council / Chorley Wildcats / Chorley Play Partnership), Rita Jeffrey (Deaf Forum), Albert Jeffrey (Deaf Forum), Francis Maguire, Marilyn Porter (Crossroads), Terence Reynolds (Disability Forum), Reverend E Saville (Diocesan Race Relations and Cohesion Officer), Jeannie Stirling (Homestart), Marel Urry (Hoghton Parish Council), Mr S Van, Terry Brown, David Brown (Chorley Pensioners Association) and Carol Halton (Street Pastors)

09.EF.47 WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and introduced himself as the new Chair of the Equality Forum and that his appointment was made at the Council's annual meeting which took place on 13 May 2009. The Chair then introduced the people on the top table. People were reminded to say their name, the organisation they represent and to use the microphone when speaking.

09.EF.48 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Eileen Bee (Disability Forum), John Forrest (Villages in Partnership), Diane Grandwell (Citizens Advice Bureau), Victoria Hansford (Chorley

Youth Council), Fiona Hilton (Young People's Service), Ronnie and Maureen Kay (Deaf Forum), John Miller (Central Lancashire NHS Trust), Liz Morey (Chorley Council, Neighbourhood Co-ordinator), David Naden (Linkability), and Jeff Smith (MIND).

09.EF.49 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 23 April 2009 be confirmed as a correct record, subject to the inclusion of Judith Daniels in the attendees list and the following amendments: -

- Julia Berry had asked that the budget for the cost spent on equality improvements be an agenda item.
- Judith Daniels had asked for an audit of Council buildings.

Lesley-Ann Fenton informed the Forum that the costs associated with meeting our Equality & Diversity commitments would be included in the presentation regarding the Council's approach to equality and diversity later in the agenda.

The Forum was also informed that Liberata would do an audit of Council buildings, the findings of which will be made available to members of the Forum.

Questions raised at the Equality Forum 23rd April 2009

Dial-a-Ride is currently charging disabled customers full fare before 9.30am. Can anything be done about this?

Officers have looked in to this matter and confirm that disabled customers are able to travel for free after 9.30am. However, prior to 9.30am the national scheme applies where disabled customers are eligible for full fare. We understand West Lancs offer a concessionary fare prior to 9.30am. However, there are no plans in any of the other Transport Concession Authorities including Chorley to change from the national scheme.

Can more disabled parking bays be made outside the town hall, that are wider than the standard disabled parking bay which would be useful for wheelchair users?

Liberata have been asked by the Council to look in to creating a large disabled parking bay outside the Town Hall.

Access to Chorley Railway Station

Claire Thompson informed the Forum that after she had been liaising between the Disability Forum and Northern Rail and it is hoped a representative from Northern Rail would be attending the Disability Forum on 2 October 2009.

09.EF.50 UPDATE ON RURALITY TASK GROUP 6.40 PM

The Chair welcomed Jim Weightman, National Management Trainee at Chorley Council to the meeting, who gave a presentation on the Rurality Task Group. Key areas the group highlighted include gritting and highway safety, rural transport/accessibility and possible rural funding streams

Through its work, the Group helped: -

- find funding sources for rural businesses which will be available in the coming months.
- clarify arrangements for safety on rural roads and pathways
- learn more about what rural transport is available to help equality groups
- support Chorley Council to find ways to improve access to community transport

Jim advised that Group had been successful in what it had set out to achieve and had identified key issues that needed to be addressed. Discussions are planned to take place with keypartners i.e. LCC re the feasibility of developing a bid to the Lancashire Rural Development Fund to improve transport accessibility in rural areas

Following the presentation Jim received suggestions and observation from members of the Forum on transport accessibility.

In response to a question raised, Sarah Palmer (District Partnership Officer, Lancashire County Council) advised that she would check if a survey had been done in Chorley town centre about dropped curbs.

Lesley-Ann Fenton advised that any concerns about access to the Leeds Liverpool canal for cyclist should be directed to United Utilities.

The Chair thanked Jim for this presentation. Jim can be contacted on 01257 515341 or e-mail jim.weightman@chorley.gov.uk.

09.EF.51 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY AT CHORLEY COUNCIL 7 PM

The Chair welcomed Claire Thompson, Performance, Partnership and Equality Manager for Chorley Council who gave a presentation on how Chorley Council aims to address equality and diversity issues in its service delivery.

The Forum was advised that: -

- Over the last 10 years, there had been an increase in ethnic diversity with more languages spoken in the borough than ever before.
- Chorley has an increasing older population, which is growing quicker than anywhere else across Lancashire.
- 18.5% of the population are registered disabled or have a limiting life long illness.

Claire reported that the effects of the recession will have had a major impact on people who fall in to one of the seven equality strands, and that the Council recognised the need to constantly review its services to ensure vulnerable people are offered appropriate services.

Claire's presentation outlined:

- How the Council assesses the impact re Equality and Diversity on new or changed policies and the services we provide to ensure fair access etc.
- Examples of where we have adapted services to meet customers needs.
- The range of mechanisms we use to consult with our customers
- That Equality and Diversity is integral to how we develop and manage services to meet the needs of the customer and outlined the budgets identified with supporting Equality and Diversity i.e. Language line and translation/interpretation costs; E&D training costs for staff

and members; ad-hoc revenue and capital costs for building adaptations, website development etc.

- The requirements of the Equality Standard and the assessment process
- The requirements of the Single Equality Bill currently under debate in parliament and how we are currently meeting those requirements
- The background to and the role of the Equality Forum

Claire informed the Forum that following external assessment in April 2009 the Council was awarded level 3 of the Equality Standard, 'Achieving'. At the time the IDeA highlighted lots of good practice but it also gave three recommendations for improvements:

- Streamline the equality impact assessment process
- Improve data collection on the diverse profile of our customers
- Strengthen consultation with equality groups

We currently collect and monitor customer information through the Contact Centre and, under new legislation due to be released in the autumn (The Single Equality Bill) the Council will be collecting a wider range of information as part of its consultation with customers, to ensure services continued to meet the needs of customers. Claire invited the Forum members to give their views on how best to gather this information.

In response to Cllr Julia Berry question regarding costs associated with Equality and Diversity, Lesley-Ann Fenton advised that Equality and Diversity is seen as being part of the mainstream development of services to meet the needs of the customer and not as an add on. Consequently other than those specific budgets outlined in the presentation, time spent on equality and diversity matters or needs identified through Equality Impact assessments etc is covered by mainstream service budgets, and Cllr Berry asked for the costs of running the Equality Forum. Lesley-Ann said she would seek to understand and address Cllr Berry's request outside of the meeting.

The Chair thanked Claire for her presentation and asked the Forum to write down their suggestions on how the Equality Forum could be improved so that it better serves those people it

is meant to represent. This will inform the 12 month review of the Equality forum.

Claire can be contacted on 01257 515348 or email claire.thompson@chorley.gov.uk.

09.EF.52 NETWORKING BREAK 7.20 PM

The Forum members took a short break.

09.EF.53 OPEN FORUM TO DISCUSS ANY ISSUES FOR EACH EQUALITY STRAND 7.40 PM

(a) Age

- Frances Maguire raised concerns that the assisted bin collection service was failing some residents, as a relative had numerous problems with the service. Officers undertook to look into this matter.

Estelle Brown asked what the procedure was for arranging an assisted bin collection. There was further discussion regarding the promotion of the service. Any member of the Forum wishing to arrange an assisted bin collection could pass on their contact details to Claire Thompson who would make the necessary arrangements.

(b) Disability

- Judith Daniels raised concerns about the number of pavements which have been dropped and the edges removed. This is causing serious problems for those people who are blind or partially sighted as they are unable to determine the edge of the pavement and are walking in to the road unawares.

Claire Thompson advised the Forum that members of the Disability Forum had raised a number of issues relating to the town centre and highways and as such a Task and Finish Group would be set up to look in to access to Chorley Town Centre. Representatives of the Disability Forum and Lancashire County Council would be invited to get involved in the review.

Claire Thompson will contact the Disability Forum regarding dates for the first meeting of the Task and Finish Group.

- Alison Hansford asked what provision was being made by Chorley Council to make all holiday play provision accessible and an option for children with disabilities even severe and autistic, ADHD etc in line with aiming high programme? Officers undertook to look into this.
- Alison Hansford asked why a young person who is a wheelchair user was denied the possibility of doing her work experience with the Council due to her mobility problems as they said they were unable to accommodate her needs. The Arts Partnership accommodated her instead. Officers undertook to look into this.
- Judith Daniels asked officers to look into the reasons why Stagecoach has changed the bus for service 125 and 126 (Preston/Chorley/Bolton route) from easy access buses to ones with steps.
- Judith Daniels commented that since the traffic lights on the St Thomas's Road/Market Street had been replaced by a zebra crossing people with disabilities have found it more difficult to cross the road safely. It is also difficult to cross at the set of traffic lights on Market Street outside the Town Hall, and a request was made to introduce a pedestrian crossing facility on the traffic lights. Sarah Palmer (District Partnership Officer, Lancashire County Council) undertook to look in to this.

(c) Ethnicity

- Cindy Bolton gave a progress report on the Domestic Violence Steering Group which supports those people who have no recourse to public funds. The constitution has now been formed. The Group has widened its remit to help those people who have been subjected to honour based violence.

The Committee is a small one, and any one who is interested in joining would be welcome.

(d) Faith

- Carol Halton advised the Forum that Chorley Street Pastors were operating in Chorley Town Centre every Friday and Saturday night. The purpose of the Pastors is to help those people who find themselves in difficulties to get home safely, or get the support they need, whatever that might be.

(e) Gender

No issues were raised.

(f) Rurality

- Julia Berry asked for feedback on the strategic survey of rural businesses. Officers advised that feedback would be provided when available.
- The Forum was advised that there had only been three meetings of the Rurality Task Group and some members involved in the group felt that the group could have continued.

Lesley-Ann Fenton advised that there was a possibility for one more meeting of the Rurality Task and Finish Group in the future which would give members an update on progress made, but that the group had achieved what it had set out to and that a lot of issues can be dealt with through neighbourhood working.

(g) Sexuality

Jeannie Stirling read out a statement on behalf of John Miller, Public Health Associate (Vulnerable Groups), in his absence which updated the Forum on current activities.

- A small number of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people in Chorley and South Ribble have met a few times with a view to setting up an LGBT community group. Attendance is quite low and progress is slow as members of the group do not necessarily have a lot in common apart from being LGBT. South Ribble Council have offered some support to the group by offering a free room and buffet a

couple of times and the group hopes that similar assistance might be forthcoming from Chorley Council. For the time being John Miller is the contact for this group and can be contacted on John.Miller@centrallancashire.nhs.uk

- The LGBT youth group Pout, has relocated to South Ribble due to the previous premises no longer being available. The group will continue to serve young people from both Chorley and South Ribble boroughs.

The young people wanted to draw attention to the continuing problems of the lack of relevant LGBT sex and relationships education in most schools, and the lack of visible and positive support for LGBT young people in schools. They are also concerned with how teachers deal with LGBT issues and that schools are still not required to monitor and report homophobic incidents on the same basis as they monitor and report racist incidents, and that teachers do not have mandatory LGBT awareness training.

The group via the Forum would like to ask elected members to take a specific interest in the LGBT awareness of the schools in their ward (both secondary and primary) and encourage the schools to think how they can take active steps to show positive support towards the LGBT community and their human rights.

There is an LGBT community website at www.clangles.com with offers plenty of information, and is managed by John Miller as part of Project Oscar work at NHS Central Lancashire.

Sarah Palmer (District Partnership Officer, Lancashire County Council) undertook to look in to the issues raised relating to schools and liaise with the School Partnership team to see if any support and training is offered in schools.

The LGBT group raised concerns about public transport into Manchester, with regards to the absence of any late trains stopping at Chorley. Can the Council influence train providers to improve this?

09.EF.54 NOTICES / FEEDBACK / PUBLICITY 8.10 PM

Members of the Forum wished to express their thanks and gratitude for all the good work Councillor Hasina Khan had done to promote and support the Equality Forum during her time as Chair.

- Sunday, 26 July & Monday, 27 July 2009 – Fusion Festival between 1.30pm and 5pm at Clayton Brook Village Green.
- From 30 July – 1 August 2009 Reach Event in the Town Centre – Disability awareness event.
- Wednesday, 5 August – National Play Day, Devonshire Road recreational ground from approx 11am.
- Sunday, 9 August 2009 from 10am to 5pm – Help for Heroes Charity Fundraising Day, Clayton Brook Village Green.

Chair