



**MINUTES OF THE EQUALITIES COMMITTEE**  
**Monday 13 July 2015 at 6.00 pm**

PRESENT: Councillor Pavey (Chair), and Councillors Harrison, Kansagra, Tatler and Thomas

Also Present: Councillors Kabir

**1. Declarations of interests**

None declared.

**2. Roles and responsibilities**

Members of the Committee noted the terms of reference agreed by Full Council as part of the Council's Constitution.

Members of the Committee suggested additional wording to reflect the role of the Committee in ensuring the Council meets and even exceeds national guidelines relating to equalities issues.

RESOLVED:

- (i) that the final form of wording for the committee's terms of reference be agreed by way of correspondence with members of the committee;
- (ii) that Full Council be asked to agree the proposed revised wording at its meeting in September.

**3. Deputations**

None.

**4. Equalities Framework for Local Government : self assessment report**

Councillor Pavey introduced the item asking Christine Gilbert (Chief Executive) to introduce the self assessment report.

Christine Gilbert informed Committee Members that the council had been working towards the 'Excellent' level of the LGA's Equality Framework for Local Government for the past couple of years, as part of the Council's commitment to becoming a model of equality and diversity practice. She informed Committee Members that a group of peers had visited Brent to assess progress against the five performance areas:

- Knowing your communities
- Leadership, partnership and organisational commitment
- Involving your communities
- Responsive services and customer care
- A skilled and committed workforce.

The five members of the review team had spent three days in Brent. During their visit, they had met with a range of internal and external stakeholders, including partners, community and voluntary organisations, councillors, service users and staff.

Christine Gilbert informed Committee Members that the peer team had found that Brent was on the cusp of the 'Excellent' level but had indicated the wish to return for a shorter visit in a few months' time to confirm the position. She reported that this put Brent Council amongst the highest performing public services in the country in terms of Equalities. Nationally, only 17 councils out of 353 had secured the top rating.

Christine Gilbert informed Committee Members that the peer review team highlighted a significant number of strengths, from the commitment of Brent's leadership right across the council to the in-depth understanding of our diverse local communities. The team had singled out many examples of excellent practice from every service area. External partners, when they met the team, and service users, had felt there had been a notable improvement in Brent's equalities, transparency and community engagement over the past three years.

Committee Members noted that the team had also identified a number of areas where performance could be further improved, in particular in relation to accessibility for disabled people in the Civic Centre. The assessment team had also wanted to see Brent's good work with some of the newer communities, like the Roma community, bed in.

Committee Members noted that the review team felt that the Council could address their recommendations and achieve the 'Excellent' level in a just a few months, when a couple of people would return for a day to check the necessary progress had been made.

Councillor Pavey stated that this would also give the Council the opportunity to demonstrate the impact of the more recent equalities initiatives, including further progressing the recommendations of the HR and Equality Policy Review.

Following a discussion about the role of the Equalities Committee, Committee Members asked for a discussion paper at a future meeting about complaints to the Council on equalities issues, such as accessibility. This would include letters to departments registering concerns.

It was agreed also that the Committee, at its next meeting, would consider a discussion paper about the Equality Impact Assessment process in place in Brent.

RESOLVED:

- (i) that a report on accessibility improvements to the Civic Centre be submitted to the next meeting of the committee;
- (ii) that a report on complaints to the Council on equalities issues, such as accessibility be submitted to a future meeting of the committee;
- (iii) that a discussion paper on the Equality Impact Assessment process currently in place within the Council be presented to the next meeting of the committee.

## 5. **Equalities and HR review: action plan**

Christine Gilbert (Chief Executive) introduced the Equalities and HR Review action plan. Committee Members noted that each of the four areas for action was being overseen by a member of the Council's Corporate Management Team.

Members of the Committee noted the key activities and milestones and discussed the leadership development programmes available to staff in Brent.

It was agreed that officers would develop proposals for a leadership development programme with a weighting system to encourage participation from BAME staff in Brent.

Members of the Committee discussed the development of a revised Competency Framework and noted the Chief Executive's advice to continue with any revisions to the current one; Members agreed that Brent's newly appointed Chief Executive, Carolyn Downs, might wish to have input in a very different set.

Members of the Committee queried one of the success criteria in the action plan: Low level of tribunals and success in defending them. Members of the Committee agreed that this criteria should be removed from the action plan.

RESOLVED:

- (i) that progress on the action plan be noted;
- (ii) that 'Low level of tribunals and success in defending them' be removed as a measure of success in the action plan.

## 6. **Date of next meeting**

Members of the Committee agreed to invite each member of the Council's Corporate Management Team overseeing one of the four areas for action in the Equalities and HR Review action plan to each Committee meeting in order to update the Committee on the action plan progress against their name..

Members of the Committee invited Andy Donald, Strategic Director, Regeneration and Growth to the Equalities Committee meeting taking place in October.

RESOLVED:

that dates of Committee meetings for the current municipal year be as follows:

- 12 October 2015, 6pm
- 11 January 2016, 6pm
- 18 April 2016, 6pm

**7. Any other urgent business**

With the permission of the Chair, Councillor Sandra Kabir (Queensbury Ward) raised the issue of bus services serving the Civic Centre. Members of the Committee agreed to make representation, in conjunction with the Cabinet Member for Environment, to Transport for London on this issue.

Mildred Philips (Director, Human Resources) updated Members of the Committee on the appointment to the vacant Head of Equalities post.

The meeting closed at 7.30 pm

M PAVEY  
Chair