

Present:	Councillor Karen Lee (<i>in the Chair</i>)
Councillors:	Chris Burke, Brent Charlesworth and John Metcalfe
Apologies for Absence:	Councillors Jane Clark, Ric Metcalfe and Alister Williams

34. Confirmation of Minutes - 7 December 2011

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 7 December 2011 be confirmed.

35. Declarations of Interest

Councillor Chris Burke declared a personal interest in Minute No. 35.
Reason: He was a member of the Single Equality Council in Lincolnshire.

36. Human Rights and the Human Rights Act 1998

The Equality and Diversity Officer:

- a. presented a report on human rights in the United Kingdom, noting the relatively limited impact of the Human Rights Act 1998 on the workplace to date, while also stressing the need for awareness, with particular regard to decision making.
- b. drew a distinction between the Human Rights Act and the Equality Act 2010, noting that the Equality Act had a greater impact upon day-to-day service delivery.
- c. noted that the Group had previously received updates on the Human Rights Act. This item acted as an opportunity to remind members of the Act's importance.
- d. outlined the history of human rights.
- e. discussed the nature of inviolable rights contrasted against those which could be limited in certain circumstances.
- f. gave examples of cases in which local authorities had changed decisions after giving greater consideration to human rights.
- g. noted the forthcoming review of the Council's Equality and Diversity Policy, in which she intended to incorporate greater reference to human rights.
- h. distributed a guidance note on the Council's decision-making process which had been compiled by the Legal and Democratic Services Manager.
- i. invited members' questions and comments.

Members:

- noted the balance between what the Council would like to do and what it could afford to do.
- acknowledged the importance of giving proper consideration to human rights in order to make effective decisions. In order to effectively communicate this to other members, it was requested that guidance on human rights be incorporated into the report on the Equality Objectives which would be received by the Executive and Council in March 2012.
- discussed the outcome of a previous decision in which rights to free parking had been removed from blue badge holders, and the manner in which a greater awareness of human rights could have affected this.
- noted the Government's intentions to carry out a review of the Human Rights Act.
- requested that guidance on human rights be forwarded to all councillors by email.

RESOLVED that:

1. the report be noted.
2. officers be requested to incorporate guidance on human rights in the forthcoming report to the Executive and Council on the Equality Objectives.
3. officers be requested to email guidance on human rights to all members.

37. **Equality and Diversity E-Learning Programme**

The Equality and Diversity Officer:

- a. presented a report on the manner in which e-learning could be used to support training on equality and diversity.
- b. advised that she carried out training corporately for officers and members, emphasising the supplementary role that e-learning could fulfil in providing easy-to-access, quick, and convenient training.
- c. demonstrated the Learning Pool, to which the Council had a subscription entitling members and officers to make use of a variety of courses over the internet.
- d. showed examples of questions which were posed as part of the e-learning module on equality and diversity, and discussed the appropriate responses.
- e. encouraged members to take part in e-learning, and invited their questions and comments.

Members:

- discussed the training offered to new members, and questioned the current status of mandatory training.

- suggested that all members ought to complete training in Equality and Diversity, particularly given the ease of access and the cost of the e-learning option.
- proposed that the system be further promoted for use by members.
- questioned whether certificates were provided for those who completed e-learning courses.

The Democratic Services Officer:

- confirmed that the Council's Constitution specified areas of mandatory training for councillors, including equality and diversity, and provided training events for each area annually, in addition to access through e-learning.
- noted that councillors taking part in regulatory committees, such as the Planning Committee, were compelled to take part in training before participating fully in decision making. Enforcing other areas of mandatory training was carried out primarily through nominated representatives from political groups.
- advised that the e-learning system had been promoted regularly to all members since its launch, although uptake had been limited. The promotion of e-learning to all members would form a part of the member development plan for the coming municipal year.
- responded that certificates for completing e-learning modules were not provided automatically but could be arranged if requested.

RESOLVED that:

1. the report be noted.
2. further promotion of the e-learning system be carried out in association with member development during May 2012.

38. Draft Equality Objectives Update

The Equality and Diversity Officer:

- a. presented a report summarising progress made with the formulation of the Council's Equality Objectives.
- b. noted that the Council was currently engaged in a 'listening process' during which submissions on the proposed objectives were invited and considered.
- c. explained that the supporting documentation had been completed in accordance with revised guidance from the Equality and Human Rights Commission.
- d. stated that the draft objectives had been circulated to community groups, representatives of the protected characteristics, and other stakeholders; no responses had yet been received.
- e. outlined the programme for the consideration and determination of the Equality Objectives through the Executive and Council.

f. invited members' questions and comments.

Members:

- noted that the lack of response could be construed as a tacit endorsement.
- questioned whether any feedback had been received from Just Lincolnshire.
- noted Councillor Burke's recent attendance at the launch of an exhibition relating to the Hajj, titled a 'journey to the heart of Islam'.

The Equality and Diversity Officer responded that no feedback had been received from Just Lincolnshire, which was a key contact for consultation. The former chief executive had recently left his role, and the organisation's focus was potentially on other areas.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

39. **Work Programme Update**

The Equality and Diversity Officer:

- a. presented a report on the current work programme.
- b. noted that the meeting arranged for 18 April 2012 was the last of the municipal year, and would provide an opportunity for a review of the past year and a consideration of the year ahead.
- c. stated that the Equality and Diversity Policy would be considered at the next meeting.
- d. invited members' questions and comments.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.