

**REPORT UNDER RULE 2(VI) OF THE COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULES**

**Report by Councillor Naomi Tweddle, Chair of Equality and Diversity Advisory Panel**

**Introduction**

This is my first report to Council as Chair of Equality and Diversity Advisory Panel, previously named Equality and Diversity Group. The report covers the period from November 2016 to March 2018. I have been chair of the panel since September 2017, prior to which Councillor Clayton-Hewson was chair.

I would like to thank Cllr Gill Clayton-Hewson for her excellent chairmanship of the panel and her commitment to the work of the group. I would also like to thank the other members of the Equality and Diversity Advisory Panel for their support of both myself and Gill.

The Equality and Diversity Advisory Panel is an informal advisory working group rather than a committee; the new name better reflects this. The membership of the group comprises of councillors and officers and is an important part of council functions. It gives members an opportunity to discuss equality and diversity with the relevant officers and to gives members the chance to share their views.

**Summary of Main Work of the Group**

The Equality Act 2010 Public Sector Equality Duty requires public sector organisations to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act.
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

The Equality and Diversity group is mainly interested in the first two parts of the duty, with the third part coming under Councillor Rosanne Kirk's portfolio.

The group has met three times since the last report to council. These meetings were in September 2015, February 2016 and September 2016, and we discussed the following:

- Progress on Equality Action Plans (all meetings)

- Applicants for City of Lincoln Council Job Vacancies by those from Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) Groups (Feb 2017)
- Equality Journal 2016-17 (Sep 2017)
- Review of the Council's Equality and Diversity Policy (Sep 2017)
- Adoption of the IHRA Working Definition of Anti-Semitism (Sep 2017)
- Gender Pay Gap (Mar 2018)
- Applicants for City of Lincoln Council Job Vacancies (Mar 2018)
- Equality and Diversity Training (Mar 2018)
- Equality and Diversity Group Terms of Reference (Mar 2018)
- Lincoln Social Responsibility Charter (Mar 2018)
- Equality Monitoring Form and Guidance (Mar 2018)
- Celebrating 100 years of Women getting the Vote/National Democracy (Mar 2018)

The [Annual Equality Journal](#) gives details of the work done during the financial year 2016/17 and members might like to take a look at this on the website for further information.

We continue to focus the agenda of the meetings on working towards the equality and diversity work on working towards the council's five equality objectives. The five objectives for 2016-20 are:

- Objective 1: Our services are more accessible and do not discriminate on any unjustifiable grounds
- Objective 2: Local communities and stakeholders are empowered to influence the way our services are provided to them
- Objective 3: Equality is at the heart of decision making at all levels within the council
- Objective 4: Our workforce at all levels reflects the makeup of the local community
- Objective 5: Equalities, social inclusion and community cohesion have all improved with our communities

Some key activities which have been undertaken are set out below.

The last report to council mentioned the appointment of a Community Cohesion Officer, Magdalena Bednarczyk, on a fixed term contract to March 2017. During her appointment, Magdalena did a great deal of good work in the community to help bring different communities together around the City. This has provided strong foundations for ongoing work by our partners and the community. Further details of this were provided in Cllr Rosanne Kirk's portfolio holder report earlier this year.

In November 2017 we held a Disability Forum meeting which brought together a group of disabled people. These people either attended as individuals or as representatives of groups and discussed how best the council ensure that the voices of disabled people are heard.

All those who attended agreed that they could be contacted by the council in order to gather the views of disabled people. They also agreed to sign up to the People's Partnership which was set up to provide a voice for people that have different protected characteristics under the Equality Act.

Development of the new bus station has been a major project for the council during the past year and this has included a brand new Changing Places disabled toilet facility. This facility provides a state of the art facility for dedicated use by disabled people and is accessed with a card. This is given on application to the council or it can be accessed by asking the council staff on site.

Officers explained in the recent Equality and Diversity group meeting that the council decided to not use the radar key system as this system is easily abused. The card system is a newly designed system and ensures that only disabled people can access the state of the art facility.

Work has been undertaken, through the panel, to ensure our recruitment processes are fair and do not inadvertently discriminate. This has included analysis of recruitment data and discussion at both of the recent meetings of the Equality and Diversity Advisory Panel.

New regulations regarding data protection come into force in May 2018 and as part of the preparation for this we have updated our equality monitoring form and guidance. In practical terms, this means officers need to be even more careful to ensure personal data is not unintentionally divulged to third parties and is only collected if it is necessary. There is also a preference that such data should be kept anonymously so that individuals cannot be identified.

### **Concluding Comments**

I would like to finish my report by looking forward to the year ahead.

A comprehensive action plan has been developed, drawing together all the equality actions identified in service plans. It is important that we continue to strive to ensure that the work of the council always is always mindful of equality and diversity and that we don't inadvertently discriminate. This is particularly pertinent when we are changing services or working on projects.