



## **Advisory Committees Review**

### **RECOMMENDATION**

- 1.1 To note the contents of the report and provide a response to the proposals.

### **SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

- 2.1 The Advisory Committees were set up to address the requirement to consult with the three equality dimension groups of Disabled people, Minority Ethnic communities and women.
- 2.2 DPAC has 18 organisation representatives, MECAC has 35 organisation representatives and WAC has 6 organisation representatives and 10 individual members.
- 2.3 The main scope of the review was to review the effectiveness of the committees and look at how the Council's consultation process could be improved to meet the needs of members and the Consultation Support Team. The key areas addressed through the review were:
- how do other councils run similar consultation processes?
  - what works well with the current Advisory Committees?
  - what could be done to improve how the Council consults with equality dimension groups?
- 2.4 The recent Overview and Scrutiny, Community Involvement and Consultation – CIC topic review, highlighted the issues listed, about the committees that need to be addressed...
- Council Cabinet instigate a review for the purpose of better responding to the communication and consultation needs of Derby's Deaf community.
  - The Council should not revert to the earlier practice of automatically producing a wide range of public documents in specified south Asian languages. Instead, the key needs are to be:
    - Linguistically sensitive so as to promote equal access to services and information
    - Mindful that some groups are much harder to reach than others.

2.5 A questionnaire was sent out to Pointer Panel members to obtain their knowledge of, and level of interest in, the Committees. The overall responses were that of the 504 respondents 18% were aware of DPAC, 14% were aware of MECAC and 13% were aware of WAC. For further details see Appendix 2.

2.6 Members of the three Advisory Committees were invited to attend one of two focus groups in January 2006. The general responses were:

- keep the separate groups to focus on specific interests
- allow the Committee members more time, to consult their groups in order to provide a collective response
- structure the meetings to allow community items to be on the agenda
- to increase wider representation from people with learning difficulties, mental health and young people.

For further details see Appendix 3.

2.7 Councillors were invited to attend a seminar for Members to consider the Pointer Panel and Advisory Committee members' responses and to discuss the review. The general responses were:

- change the committees to Equality Forums
- change the Women's Advisory Committee to 'Gender'
- incorporate LGBT community into the consultation process
- consult with the faith communities separately
- have a more community focused and streamlined agenda
- allow the Committee members more time, to consult their members and provide a collective response.

2.8 As a result of the consultation carried out, the proposals are to de-constitute the Advisory Committees and replace them with three more modern Equality Forums for Disabled People, Minority Ethnic Communities and Gender groups. In addition to this, consultation will be carried out with existing faith groups and Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender groups as required. The Chair will champion the cause of the Forum providing strategic and political support. Forum members will receive information earlier to enable representatives more time to consult their members. The meetings will have smaller agenda. For further details see Appendix 4.

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<b>Background papers:</b>	None
<b>List of appendices:</b>	Appendix 1 – Implications Appendix 2 – Pointer Panel Summary Appendix 3 – Advisory Committee Focus Group Responses Appendix 4 – Equality Forum Proposals

<b>IMPLICATIONS</b>
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**Financial**

- 1.1 None.

**Legal**

- 2.1 The Disability Discrimination Act 2005 requires the Council as a public authority to promote disability equality. The Council when carrying out its functions must have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, and promote equal opportunities. The Council also has a legal duty to encourage participation of Disabled people in public life.
- 2.2 The Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 puts a legal obligation on all public authorities to promote racial equality and good race relations between different racial groups.
- 2.3 The Equality Bill will introduce a gender equality duty for all public authorities. From April 2007, when the duty is likely to come into force, all public bodies will be legally bound to eliminate sex discrimination and promote gender equality.

**Personnel**

- 3.1 The Forums will continue to receive administrative support from Constitutional Services. The Consultation Support Team will continue to manage and develop the Equality Forums and support the Council's consultation needs.

**Equalities impact**

- 4.1 Sometimes, we may have policies or procedures that can, quite unintentionally, disadvantage certain groups of people. The Equality Forums, as consultation tools, will enable us to identify any areas where we need to make changes to the way we do things.

**Corporate priorities**

- 5.1 The proposal comes under the Council's objective of providing healthy, safe and independent communities.
- 5.2 The proposal furthers the priority working in partnership to achieve socially cohesive communities.