



Proposals to change the three Equality Advisory Committees

RECOMMENDATION

1. To recommend Council to approve the transformation of Advisory Committees into Equality Forums.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 2.1 The three equalities Advisory Committees have been under review since October 2005. The review process included desk research, two focus group meetings with Advisory Committee members, a Members' seminar and special meetings of the Advisory Committees to consider the proposals. It is proposed to change the three Advisory Committees to three Equality Forums.
- 2.2 There are three reasons for the proposal...
 - to draw the Committees in line with consultation better practice, considering the methods currently used by both the Young Peoples' Forum - YPF and the Seniors' Forum. They are both successful in engaging with their respective communities
 - to engage in better consultation with people from the respective equality target groups and not only Advisory Committee members
 - to learn from and respond to the concerns raised during the review process.
- 2.3 It is essential that we move the point at which we engage in consultation with equality target groups up front in the consultation process, so that more people from each of the target groups are given the opportunity to be actively involved in consultation.
- 2.4 The overall proposal is to modernise the Committees by removing the Council's committee style of operating and bringing about a more flexible working style. This will involve deconstituting them and reforming them as equalities forums. The new forums would remain strategic, providing advice and raising issues, and in addition to this they would provide quality assurance, checking on proposed consultation with their interest group.

- 2.5 The proposal is to remove the committee style reports and replace them with summarised documents with key discussion points and questions to encourage representatives to come along prepared to engage in focused discussions at the meetings.
- 2.6 Items for discussion will be sent out 20 working days in advance of the meeting to enable forum members to discuss them with their 'constituencies' and more thought will be given to providing support for these community discussions.
- 2.7 The planned work programme for each forum will be linked to the Council consultation annual plan so that members are able to monitor consultation with their interest group.
- 2.8 Each of the forums will have a Councillor Champion that will champion the cause of the respective forum. This Councillor Champion will also chair the forum. The forum will also have a forum member for a vice-chair.
- 2.9 Changes specific to the Disabled People's Advisory Committee will be the inclusion of representation from an organisation concerned with mental health, an organisation concerned with learning difficulties and an organisation concerned with disabled young people.
- 2.10 Changes specific to the Minority Ethnic Communities Advisory Committee are that current representatives will be encouraged to have representation of young people and women from their organisations. No community will be represented by less than two people to encourage diversity in representation. A small number of organisations that represent a cross section of black and minority ethnic communities will also be invited to be part of the Forum. With these changes we will remove the need for community Advisors.
- 2.11 Changes specific to the Women's Advisory Committee will be the change to a Gender Forum including men's organisations, in line with the Gender Duty requiring the proactive promotion of equality. The Forum membership will be from organisations and not individuals, as is the current position.
- 2.12 A review of the proposed changes will be carried out a year after implementation.

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Background papers:	Notes of consultation
List of appendices:	Appendix 1 – Implications Appendix 2 – Summary of consultations

IMPLICATIONS

Financial

- 1.1 The costs of administering the Forums will continue to be provided by Constitutional Services.

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.
- 2.4 The Local Government Act 1999 requires the Council to consult its citizens on its general direction and on issues relating to specific services. The Council must also show how the results have been used to improve services.

Personnel

- 3.1 The Consultation Support Team will continue to manage the Forums.

Equalities impact

- 4.1 The proposals outlined in this report will benefit the three equality target groups in the city in the way we consult with them.
- 4.2 The proposed changes will make sure that the Forums are as representative of their target group as much as possible.

Corporate priorities

5.1 The proposal has the potential of coming under all the Council's current priorities to

- improve the quality of life in Derby's neighbourhoods
- encourage lifelong learning and achievement
- build healthy and independent communities
- deliver excellent services, performance and value for money.