

Equality Forum Proposals

DPAC

Following the recent review of the Advisory Committees we propose to make changes to support a looser but more representative structure and to boost a more strategic input to planned consultation. We intend to replace the Advisory Committee with a Disabled People's Equality Forum to guide the Council on disability equality issues and to advise on the best ways of consulting with target groups. The Forum will also be proactive in raising agenda items for future meetings.

- 1.1 The purpose of the Equality Forums will be to advise the Council on equality issues and give feedback on proposed consultation with target groups. The consultation will be linked to the Council's Consultation Plan. The Forums will continue to give advice, but will also be expected to help the Council to communicate and consult with other people or groups from the target population. This role is similar to that provided by the Older People's and Young People's Forums and will help to make the Council better at consulting with equality groups.

The Disability Equality Forum will set up specific focus or project groups to scrutinise specific areas, so that full involvement of disabled people can take place on issues such as the Corporate Equality Plan.

- 1.2 To achieve this, consideration needs to be given to...

- Membership
- Role of the Chair
- Frequency
- Agenda
- Communication

1.3 Membership

- 1.3.1 Representation will need to be from organisations of disabled people as well as advocates for disabled people. Organisations for disabled people and carers groups can attend in an advisory capacity at the discretion of the Forum. Organisations can be based in Derby or have members who live in Derby. To facilitate the consultation process, the Forum also needs to include

representation from young disabled people, mental health survivors and people with learning difficulties.

1.3.2 The Forum will seek to have representation from all sectors of the community, in terms of age, ethnicity, gender and sexuality.

1.3.3 The Council will determine its representatives annually and will appoint on a politically proportionate basis.

1.4 Chair

1.4.1 The Council will appoint a Councillor as Champion to chair the Forum and the Forum will elect a member from the organisations of disabled people or advocates with voting rights as vice chair annually.

1.4.2 The role of the chair will be to champion the cause of the Forum, by providing strategic and political support, on behalf of the Forum, in making representation to Council Officers and Council Cabinet on issues affecting the Forum.

1.4.3 The chair will seek resolution on all items presented and will request feedback and outcome on all agenda items.

1.4.4 Other political parties will elect a Councillor to champion the cause of the Forum.

1.4.5 The role of the vice chair will be to champion the cause of the Forum by providing strategic support, in making representation to Council Officers and Council Cabinet on issues affecting the Forum.

1.5 Frequency

1.6.1 The Forum will aim to meet at least every two months.

1.6 Agenda

1.6.1 Community representatives have the right to put items of general community interest on the agenda and to present these to the Forum. The Director of Corporate Services should be notified of agenda items before the agenda is produced.

1.6.2 Agendas will be smaller to allow ample discussion on items. We will also include a summary of key issues and questions relating to reports and presentations to be received by the Forum, to focus the discussions.

1.6.3 The Director of Corporate Services will send out agendas at least 20 clear working days before the date of the meeting.

1.7 Communication

1.7.1 The Forum will help the Council communicate and consult with Forum members and the wider target community.

1.7.2 To respond to points raised in the review, the Council will try to simplify documents, give more time for reading and preparing a response. The Council will also explore and use various communication methods preferred by Forum members.

1.7.3 Forum members will be expected to take part in sharing information with the group who they represent. The Council will consider ways that it can help Forum members to achieve this.

1.7.4 The communication methods will include formal presentations, the use of information technology as well as paper documents, reports, agendas and other accessible formats. We will not use complex Council terminology, and we will use plain English.

1.7.5 Forum members and Council officers will meet annually to agree a work programme with objectives. The work programme will be reviewed at the end of the year to decide whether the objectives have been met and what further actions are required.

2. What happens next?

2.1 To see how the Forums are working, Council officers and Forum members intend to review the Forum after 12 months.

2.2 Responses to this discussion paper will be taken to Cabinet along with the responses from other Advisory Committees.

2.3 We will monitor these changes to see how effective they are as the ultimate aim of the review is to improve consultation and communication with equality groups.