

Equality Forum Proposals

MECAC

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. The Advisory Committee will be replaced with a Minority Ethnic Communities Equality Forum to guide the council by advising on consultation with target groups and raising topics for consideration.

1.1 The purpose of the Equality Forums will be to advise and give feedback on proposed consultation with target groups. The Forums will continue to make recommendations 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 Forum and will help to make the council better at consulting with equality groups.

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 This needs to be broadened to include people who are currently under-represented, specifically women and young people. Representatives will be drawn from community centres, community organisations and organisations that represent minority ethnic communities. Currently, there are twenty-three representatives of Derby's minority ethnic communities. To facilitate the consultation process, to include young people and women, communities that currently only have one representative will be allowed two representatives. This will increase the membership by six. Organisations that serve the minority ethnic communities in Derby, such as Derby Millennium Network, African Caribbean Community Forum, Hallmark Housing Association and Derby Racial Equality Council, will be encouraged to have a representative on the Forum. Organisations will be asked to find representatives to fulfil these broader criteria.

1.3.2 The Forum will seek to have representation from all sectors of the community, in terms of age, disability, 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 Champion to chair the Forum and the Forum will elect a member 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 Forums 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 will 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 Following changes the effectiveness of the process will be monitored. The council will remain attentive to new opportunities to improve communication and consultation with equality groups.