
Equalities Sub-Committee MINUTES

Of a virtual meeting held on Thursday, 10 October 2024 from 7.00 pm - 8.45 pm.

Present: Councillors

Kevin Raeburn, Vice Chair, in the Chair
Christopher Alley
Lisa Hudson
Cheryl Stungo

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Anne Winter.

2 MINUTES

The minutes of the Equalities Sub-Committee meeting held on 4 March 2024 were confirmed as a correct record and will be signed by the Chair at the earliest opportunity.

3 NOTICE OF OTHER BUSINESS

There were no items of other business.

4 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

5 GATE HERTS

Josie O'Driscoll and Joseph Baker from GATE Herts delivered a presentation on the work of a community organisation founded in 2010, which is led by individuals of Irish Traveller and Romani heritage. The organisation focuses on promoting social justice, equality, and human rights, with a strong emphasis on combating discrimination and collaborating on racial justice campaigns. The speakers highlighted the distinction between Gypsies and Irish Travellers, stressing the need for separate recognition in census data to better understand and address the specific needs of these communities, which are often lumped together under a single category. This misrepresentation leads to challenges in obtaining accurate statistics and resources for each community, exacerbated by historical discrimination that discourages individuals from identifying themselves in official documents.

The speakers also spoke about the historical presence of Gypsies and Travellers in the UK, emphasising the distinct identities of Roman Gypsies and Irish Travellers. They highlighted the persecution faced by these communities, including historical genocide and ongoing discrimination. They addressed the misconceptions surrounding their identities and the need

for better representation in educational resources. They also spoke about the challenges faced by Gypsies and Travellers in terms of health, employment, and social acceptance, revealing high levels of racial abuse and discrimination. The speakers advocate for more inclusive policies and services to support Gypsy, Roma and Traveller (GRT) families and combat negative social attitudes.

Officers highlighted the struggle regarding disclosure of ethnicity at the Council as well. They expressed interest in finding ways to support their community better. Events like Gypsy Travel History Month was suggested to raise awareness and comfort among staff regarding data collection. The speakers also noted that research shows mixed reactions to ethnic monitoring, emphasising the importance of transparency about the purpose and use of collected data, referencing historical mistrust stemming from events like the Holocaust. Overall, the conversation focused on the need for trust and understanding in data collection processes to foster participation.

The speakers highlighted the difficulties these families encounter in the education system, referencing a 2022 ONS report that identifies discrimination as a barrier. They propose solutions such as increased cultural sensitivity and flexibility in school enrolment and also acknowledged the efforts made during the pandemic to support nomadic children through distance learning and tutoring. They point out that while primary education may be manageable, challenges arise in secondary education due to lack of support and understanding from teachers, as well as a curriculum that does not reflect the experiences of Gypsy and Traveller children. The focus needs to be on fostering better communication and trust-building between schools and the families to improve educational outcomes.

Members of the sub-committee expressed their shock at the lack of assistance available for scheduling doctor's appointments, deeming it unacceptable in modern times. They highlighted the need for community education, particularly among the youth, to address fears surrounding groups of travellers. They also acknowledged the negative reputation that some groups have, which can lead to fear among the community and suggested that improving group behaviour could enhance their reputation and community acceptance.

Officers also spoke about the cultural differences among various communities and the complaints they receive, which often stem from racism. They emphasised the importance of understanding these cultural clashes and expressed a desire to collaborate with the community to review and potentially revise cemetery regulations. The aim is to allow communities to express themselves during difficult times while maintaining necessary regulations. Officers would like to establish a connection with the community for feedback and future collaboration. Action – Shivani Dave to reach out on behalf of the Council.



Gate Herts.pptx

6 MISSION EMPLOYABLE

Katharine Weston from Mission EmployAble outlined the mission and activities of the charity focused on supporting individuals with learning disabilities through education and work experience. The charity aims to integrate these individuals into their communities, providing them with opportunities to contribute and feel valued. The speaker discussed the differences between learning disabilities and learning difficulties, emphasising the comprehensive support provided through a government-recognised supported internship program. Key activities include classroom learning, work experience at a café and other partnerships, team-building exercises, and various training programs. The organisation boasts impressive employment statistics, with a high percentage of interns securing paid employment. Challenges faced by individuals with learning disabilities are highlighted, along with the misconceptions surrounding

their employability. The speaker calls for greater awareness and support from the community to enhance visibility and opportunities for these individuals.

Officers highlighted the positive contributions of TRDC staff with learning disabilities within their service, which includes roles in cemeteries, ground maintenance, and street cleansing, and expressed strong support for these individuals, acknowledging their value and the long-standing presence of some employees. They also indicated an openness to discussing future job trial opportunities, emphasising a commitment to inclusion and workforce diversity.



Mission
Employable.pptx

7 OVERVIEW OF TRDC WORKSTREAMS

The Partnerships Manager delivered a presentation on TRDC workstreams talking about the importance of belonging, equality, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) in community services, emphasising that these values should be central to all initiatives. Key activities highlighted include open dialogue sessions, community fairs, and the establishment of an inclusion working group within the council. The officer also mentioned various initiatives aimed at improving access to services, promoting disability confidence, and enhancing community engagement through events and training. The importance of understanding and celebrating diversity within the community is reiterated, alongside ongoing efforts to address health inequalities and support marginalised groups.

8 WORKPLAN

The Head of Strategy & Partnerships talked about the upcoming events and updates on the committee's work plan.

Members highlighted two critical issues affecting local communities in light of the anniversary of the tragic events of 7 October 2023. The first suggestion focused on addressing anti-Semitism, particularly online and in areas outside the local district, and proposed the creation of a report to tackle these challenges facing the Jewish community. The second point emphasised the growth of the South Asian community, specifically the Hindu population, which has seen significant increases according to recent census data. Members also expressed concerns about burglary affecting this community and suggested that the committee should explore these issues further.

Officers affirmed the committee's commitment to engaging with these communities to better understand and address their concerns.

9 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

None received.

CHAIR