

## Communities Scrutiny Meeting 28/07/2015

The meeting started two minutes late with only five councillors present plus Cllr Rawlins as Chair.

The first item concerned the new Protected Characteristics: Communities of Interest Report 2016-2018. The report is a standard refreshing of the existing policy. Cllr Ahmed Ali made a few unfocused comments as to how Trans people would be included in the report. This wasn't convincingly answered by reporting officer Kemp. The Chair said that it was important to give enough time to engage with groups but also seemed keen that the existing time scales were met. (MS: to me there seems to be an in-built conflict between giving adequate time to collect the views of people and the need to keep to predetermined timescales).

The meeting then moved onto a report from the Strategic Director concerning refreshing the Equalities Objectives. Much of the discussion revolved around general equalities issues and was not focused on the report at hand. There was much talk about how to engage different groups, but in practice this too often sounded like meeting with representatives of groups rather than an attempt to engage the people concerned directly.

The meeting then moved onto discuss the Mayors for Peace initiative. The Mayors for Peace Group is a body of Mayors who work towards a world free of nuclear weapons. The group was founded by Mayor of Hiroshima. There was much broad discussion on the activities of the group. Nearly all the speakers said that they were unaware of it until they became more involved with the Council. The Officer in charge of the scheme informed the meeting that 4,000 copies of a new booklet which outlines a Peace History Tour of the City had been printed and needed to be distributed. (MS: While the scheme seems laudable it does seem quite odd that so many copies of a booklet be printed without a plan on how to distribute them.)

The final substantive item concerned an update on the All-Age Disability Strategy. The item was looked at section by section by the Committee. Cllr Cooley questioned where autism fitted into the policy. The Officer stated that it was covered in the Learning Disability section. There seemed to be a fairly fuzzy understanding of what devolution of this area would mean. There also appeared to be a poor understanding of how integrated health and social care would work.

There was discussion of particular areas of the service mainly asking how they worked in practice. It was noted that it is hard to identify who are carers; the reporting officer said that sporadic school attendance was one way to identify possible young carers. It was noted that there was a stigma around being a carer and that often carers didn't self-identify as such. The Chair said that her children were a good example of this as although they had done tasks for her they wouldn't identify themselves as being carers.

There was some discussion of how disabled people not currently receiving specialist Council services would be included in discussions around making Manchester disabled-friendly. It was noted by the Chair that many disabled people would never join a group based around disability and that any approach which focused too heavily on these groups would have limited success in reaching out to people.

The group agreed that it was important to try to keep this on the agenda and to deliver the ambitious targets in the report.

I would like to note that Cllr Rawlins is one of the better committee chairs and did a good job at both managing the meeting and injecting enthusiasm into the meeting which without her would have had even less energy. I think that those present did display good intentions in regard to equalities but the low attendance figures suggest that this enthusiasm is not shared by all the Council. While the Council boasts of its commitment to equality, in my opinion it too often believes that this can be achieved by meeting with representative groups rather with individual engagement.

The above is an abridged impression of the meeting. For more detail please contact me at: [mschreibke@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:mschreibke@hotmail.co.uk)

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