

ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

COMMITTEE	Communities, Housing and Infrastructure
DATE	20 January 2016
DIRECTOR	Pete Leonard
TITLE OF REPORT	A New Group for People with Disabilities in the City.
REPORT NUMBER	CHI/15/339
CHECKLIST COMPLETED	Yes

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

This report updates members on the progress made in establishing a new group to deal with issues around disability in the city.

2. RECOMMENDATION(S)

The committee is asked to

- I. Note the conclusions reached by the Stakeholders' Group which appear as Appendix 1 with sections on Aim, Vision, Values, Remit, Accountability, Membership, Leadership, Support to the group, Ways of Working, Sub-group, Links with Wider Community and Development needs.
- II. Instruct officers to prepare a draft constitution for the new group, taking into account the feedback from the last meeting of the Stakeholders' Group (as set out at Appendix 1):
- III. Approve that the Stakeholders' Group meet for a final occasion to discuss the draft constitution, election process and arrangements for the inaugural meeting of the new group.
- IV. Instruct officers to report to a future Committee in order to seek approval of the draft constitution, proposed election process and inaugural meeting arrangements of the new group.
- V. Agree a name for the new group from the most popular 4 choices from the community engagement exercise.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The funding for catering, sign language interpreting and venue costs, in a similar way to the costs of the Disability Advisory Group, will be made from the budget allocated to disability equality within the Communities and Housing budget. As a council sub-group, the group will be clerked by committee clerks. The proposal from the Stakeholders' Group to hold one in three meetings of the new group on a Saturday morning, will incur overtime costs for the committee clerk for 2.5 hours every 6 months.

4. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

It is noted that there is a suggestion from the community to establish a post of Disability Equality/ Access Officer. The staffing support for the Equalities Team is to be reviewed and consideration will be given to that as part of the review.

There will be a cost implication for training for the new Chair and Vice-chair which will be met from the Equalities Team project budget. In the case of external venues being used for future meetings, the priority would be to source council buildings in local neighbourhoods.

Input from Legal Services will also be required in the drafting of the new group's constitution, since this is a sub group reporting to a council committee.

5. BACKGROUND/MAIN ISSUES

The Communities, Housing and Infrastructure Committee at its meeting on 27 August 2015 agreed to the dissolution of the Disability Advisory Group, and approved Model 2, with the new group remaining part of the council's committee structure with a change in culture, structure and processes to become more accessible and welcoming. This new group would set and follow a work plan to deliver SMART actions and positive outcomes for the communities it serves.

The committee instructed officers to progress the implementation of the approved model in conjunction with appropriate stakeholders, to include the drafting of a new constitution incorporating the values, remit, roles and changes to ways of working, using the feedback from the engagement exercise.

The note of the externally facilitated meeting of 18 November 2015 at Appendix 1 reflects the work and the agreements reached by the Stakeholder's Group to date.

There are several suggestions from the Stakeholders' Group on a potential name for a new group. The most popular four choices (since there was a tie for third place) from the consultees are:

Ability and Access Partnership

Ability and Access Alliance

Diverse Abilities and Equity Forum and
Disability Advisory Group (keep the existing title)

The committee is asked to consider and agree a name for the new group from these four most popular choices.

6. IMPACT

Improving Customer Experience –

The proposal to have a new and effective group, contributing to a more robust equality impact assessment process will help us to plan and design our services around current and future customer needs as much as possible, building in customer need at the beginning of our processes rather than bolting on at the end.

Improving Staff Experience –

This proposal offers the opportunity for staff to re-engage positively and constructively with people with disabilities and to reach a broader, more representative range of people. The staff, who are involved, are enthusiastic and committed to this change process and welcome the change in culture which this new group may bring.

Improving our use of Resources –

The council will benefit from the new group being open, transparent and accountable and being more outcomes focussed. The new group will develop its own work plan to deliver SMART actions and be able to demonstrate its impact. The new group should act as a contact point for consultation and take an active role in the equality impact assessment process, therefore improving the Council's use of resources.

Corporate –

This report fits within the Council's Equalities Outcomes which have been developed in line with the Council's vision; *Aberdeen - the Smarter City*. We will ensure all citizens are encouraged and supported appropriately to make their full contribution. In order to address this, we will challenge inequalities wherever they exist and bring our communities closer together.

The Equality Outcomes, since they are all about improving services and access to services for the citizens of Aberdeen, offer positive opportunities for joint working with partner organisations on projects/

activities - a new and fit-for-purpose group for people with disabilities can be a positive way of demonstrating this.

This proposal as part of the Council's commitment to equalities fits with the underlying principle of equalities across all the thematic groups within Community Planning.

Public –

This report is highly relevant to ensuring that the council meets the General Equality Duty.

The earlier EHRIA at Appendix 4 of the report of 27 August 2015 Indicates that the proposal for the future will contribute positively to all three parts of the General Duty; to eliminate discrimination, to advance equality of opportunity and to foster good relations.

The EHRIA demonstrates a positive impact, particularly on people with disabilities, older people and families with young children. A pro-active partnership group acting as a "critical friend" can act as a catalyst for positive change. If access improves for people with disabilities, then it improves too for older people and parents/ carers pushing prams and buggies.

7. MANAGEMENT OF RISK

Delivering on the published Equalities Outcomes will help public authorities comply with their legal duties under:

- a. Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 (the public sector equality duty), and
- b. The Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties) (Scotland) Regulations 2012

This proposal, and the work around its development, seeks to address the negative feedback received and negative perceptions about the previous DAG, and how it has been operating. The proposal aims to turn these around by involving a wider range of people with disabilities, their views and experiences, and also of organisations representing people with disabilities who currently feel excluded and unrepresented.

The new key group for people with disabilities can bring added value to the council as it can act as a credible sounding board for council plans and policies and signal their impact on people with disabilities in the city.

8. BACKGROUND PAPERS

Notes from Wendy Davies ODSC Facilitator meeting of 18 November 2015

“Disability Advisory Group – the Future” report to Communities Housing and Infrastructure on 27 August 2015

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9. REPORT AUTHOR DETAILS

Sandra Howard, Equalities Manager, showard@aberdeencity.gov.uk
01224 523039