

ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

COMMITTEE	Communities, Housing and Infrastructure
DATE	25 August 2016
DIRECTOR	Pete Leonard
TITLE OF REPORT	New Disability Group for the City - Membership and Next Steps
REPORT NUMBER	CHI/16/133
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:

- Agree the nominations for membership of the new group as detailed below;
- Appoint five elected members from across the parties to the new group;
- Approve the change in the constitution to reflect the increase from 15 to 17 external members and
- Note the proposed date of the inaugural meeting of the new group.

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 met 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 new group wish to hold one in three meetings on a Saturday morning, this will incur overtime costs for the committee clerk totalling 2.5 hours every 6 months.

4. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

There will be a cost implication for training for the new members, and in particular for the roles of 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.

5. BACKGROUND/MAIN ISSUES

The Communities, Housing and Infrastructure Committee at its meeting on 27th 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 will set and follow a work plan to deliver SMART actions and positive outcomes for the communities it serves.

Phyl Myers, Project Manager (Employability and Civic Participation) of Inclusion Scotland, a national disability group, helped the membership application process with reviewing the draft application forms, encouraging membership and screening applications. Inclusion Scotland is a consortium of organisations of disabled people and disabled individuals. Through a process of structured development, Inclusion Scotland aims to draw attention to the physical, social, economic, cultural and attitudinal barriers that impact on disabled peoples' everyday lives in Scotland. The organisation aims to encourage a wide understanding of those issues throughout mainstream thought in Scotland.

In selecting candidates Inclusion Scotland based their decision on the purpose of the group, prioritising disabled people themselves to ensure that those with lived experience of the issues under discussion would be speaking for themselves. All disabled applicants who adequately responded to the questions in the application were selected, and thereafter nondisabled applicants were selected only if they demonstrated particularly strong experience of disability issues and also brought a unique contribution to the group.

In some cases candidates were not selected by Inclusion Scotland for reasons including the following:

- Did not strongly respond to the questions of the application;
- Although demonstrating a particular potential contribution, a stronger candidate had already been selected with a similar background of experience;
- Did not respond to the application as an individual, but rather as an organisation and Inclusion Scotland were seeking to select individuals with useful lived experience to contribute to the group on a personal level rather than organisational representatives.

Candidates who were not successful were provided with this feedback, and, along with late applicants, were advised that there will be future opportunities for them to be involved and have their voices heard through the subgroups which the new disability group will develop.

Following the valuable input from Inclusion Scotland and with the advice of Legal and Democratic Services, three applicants have been added to the list, who offer considerable continuity of experience, knowledge of committee structures and who are recognised as positive change agents. This is considered important among so many new members.

This means there is a list of 17 potential members for committee approval as set out below. The draft constitution stated there will be a core group comprising fifteen External Members and Aberdeen City Council shall appoint five Elected Members to sit on the group. If committee is minded to approve the 17 names, then the constitution will require to be changed.

The 17 potential members are as follows:

Anne Begg
Edward Fowler
Carol Gordon
Ron Holding
Liz Howarth
David Jones
Dorothea Law
Bryan McKenzie
Vicky McKenzie
Paul McMenemy
Katrina Michie
Karen Milne
William Rae
Mary Rasmussen
Christa Reid
Jonathan Russell
Ian Stones

The committee is asked to approve the 17 names and to appoint 5 cross-party elected members with an interest in disability issues to participate in the new group.

It is noted that although we have positively and proactively targeted younger people to join the group, there remains a gap in representation of young disabled people. This may be addressed through the establishment of a themed group of younger disabled people, who may feel more comfortable and confident in participating through a younger member's subgroup.

Similarly it has proved difficult to attract a range of people from ethnic minority backgrounds. In the case of ethnic minority representation, there may be good links to build on through the Ethnic Minority Forum, the NHS Grampian Multicultural Health and Wellbeing Forum, North East Equalities Network (supported by Grampian Regional Equality Council) and the host of individual community organisations, for example, the Nigerian Women's Association, the Polish Association

The Communities, Housing and Infrastructure Committee agreed on 20 January 2016, that selecting a name for the new group should be left as a matter for the new Group. In response to this decision, the matter will now be deferred to appear on the new Group's inaugural agenda, along with the appointment of the Chair and Vice Chair.

It is proposed to hold the inaugural meeting on Saturday 10 September at a central, accessible venue so that we set the scene with flexible meeting times and an inclusive, welcoming environment. These were key issues highlighted by the new group as part of the culture change required.

It is recognised that support may be required to provide assistance to any member who needs it,.

6. IMPACT

Improving Customer Experience:

Having 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 involved are enthusiastic and committed to this change process and welcome the change in culture which this new group will bring. There is a new Disability Access Officer starting employment within the Equalities Team on Tuesday 9 August 2016, whose remit includes providing support to the new group.

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 new group through its inclusive, welcoming agenda for change, future collaborative work and relationship building, seeks to involve a wide range of people with disabilities, with their views and experiences.

The new key group for people with disabilities will 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

Reports to Communities Housing and Infrastructure committee on the development of the new group of 27 August 2015, 20 January 2016, 15 March 2016 and news bulletin to Communities Housing and Infrastructure committee of 17 May 2016.

9. REPORT AUTHOR DETAILS

Sandra Howard,
Equalities Manager
Email: SHoward@aberdeencity.gov.uk
01224 523039