

POLICY AND PROJECT ADVISORY BOARD

Meeting held remotely on Tuesday, 25th August, 2020 at 7.00 pm.

Voting Members

Cllr J.B. Canty (Chairman)
Cllr P.I.C. Crerar (Vice-Chairman)

Cllr Sophia Choudhary
Cllr P.J. Cullum
Cllr Prabesh KC
Cllr Nadia Martin
Cllr T.W. Mitchell
Cllr Sophie Porter
Cllr M.J. Roberts
Cllr B.A. Thomas

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Cllr C.J. Stewart.

1. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 15th July, 2020 were approved and would be signed by the Chairman at a later date.

2. BLACK LIVES MATTER

The Chairman reminded Members that this special Board meeting had been arranged to consider the scope and next steps to be followed by the Council in light of the Motion agreed by the Council at its meeting on 25th June, 2020 to support the establishment of an all-party review led by the Policy and Project Advisory Board to include black, Asian and minority ethnic members of the community, to review processes, policies and organisational attitudes regarding racism.

In accordance with the guidelines for public participation at meetings, the following three members of the public made representations which were duly considered by the Board:

- Ms Julia Longrigg, who highlighted the need for a 'grass roots model' which included a mechanism to capture feedback from Rushmoor residents on their experiences of Council services. The suggestion was that Ward Councillors would meet on an ongoing basis with members of black and ethnic minority communities to listen to and capture the specific issues being experienced by residents in their Wards and pass this ground-level evidence of the impact of the Council's ways of working up to the decision makers within the Council.

- Revd Malcolm Cummins, Pastor at the New Testament Church of God in Aldershot, which had a significant Afro-Caribbean community. He highlighted areas where direct racial abuse was being suffered by this community in Rushmoor and encouraged the Council to listen to these experiences and to confront the issues in order to build a better and fairer Rushmoor.
- Mr Jib Belbase, former Chair of the Greater Rushmoor Nepali Community organisation, spoke about the education and training the Nepali community had put in place, with the support of the Council, in order to better integrate with the communities they lived in. The Nepali community had developed a close working arrangement with the Council which was mutually beneficial but he recognised that there was still work to do.

In discussion, there was broad agreement to the principle of a proposed 'grass roots model' with wide engagement process.

Before asking the Head of Democracy and Community to give his presentation, the Chairman reminded the Board that the key items to be agreed were the outcome measures and actions that would set the direction of this work over the Municipal Year 2020/21.

Andrew Colver, Head of Democracy and Community, then gave his presentation which covered:

- Data relating to Rushmoor which included the 2011 census and other information, a 2020 school census of ethnic groups and information from Citizens' Advice, Supporting Families and the Police / Community Safety Team;
- Rushmoor Council's policies and guidance and how they dealt with ethnicity and diversity, and reported incidents. These included the equalities and diversity policies and dignity at work.
- Process to review Rushmoor's policies and processes around Equality, Diversity and Inclusion were fit for purpose.

Mr Colver then presented four draft outcomes for consideration, which had been discussed with the Chairman. The outcomes included outline tasks as follows:

- Rushmoor's policies and processes around equality, diversity and inclusion are reviewed and are fit for purpose:
 - Understanding current provisions, guidance and best practice;
 - Examining the policies to ensure they reflect the above;
 - Complete the review of the Equalities Policy and processes;
 - Reflect the provisions in the emerging People Strategy;
 - Independent assessment from within the public sector eg LGA
- The Council improves training for staff and Members around equality, diversity and inclusion:
 - Development of an updated module for the Rushmoor Learning Pool
 - Inclusion of specific information in Member and staff induction programmes

- Member training – LGA online course
 - Guidance notes for officers to be prepared on meeting the equalities provisions
 - Raising awareness through messaging on the Council’s intranet
- The Council to introduce new arrangements for supporting community projects and processes to promote integration:
 - Specific provisions included in emerging deprivation/supporting communities plans;
 - Engage with ethnic minority community groups through the Council’s cohesion work;
 - Work with faith groups to support engagement activities
- The Council to improve its understanding of BAME communities in Rushmoor and this insight to be used to inform its strategies and policies:
 - Review and update the Council’s database of BAME groupings;
 - Hold a networking event with BAME groupings to ascertain information about needs, capacity and barriers;
 - Work with partner organisations eg HCC/CCG to establish a picture of BAME residents to support the deprivation/supporting communities work;
 - Work with partner organisations, including faith groups, to target support work with BAME communities.

In discussion, there was broad support for an independent peer review to ensure that, internally, best practice was being followed. It was noted that the Head of HR was in the process of developing a People Strategy for a diverse and equal work force, and that issues such as ‘fair recruitment’ would form part of that work.

The Head of Democracy and Community highlighted that there could be resource implications that could delay some of the work or impact on other priorities.

The Board agreed:

1. the draft outcomes and associated tasks, as set out in the presentation and above;
2. the Progress Group would support the development of the work, reporting back to the Board as necessary;
3. the principle of carrying out a LGA peer review as soon as possible;
4. to request clarification of the Cabinet’s involvement;
5. the initial work to be completed and recommendations prepared by the end of the 2020/21 Municipal Year.

The meeting closed at 9.00 pm.

CLLR J.B. CANTY (CHAIRMAN)
