

## Moray Equalities Forum

### Minutes of the meeting 30 August 2011, Elgin Town Hall

#### Present:

John McConnachie (Chair), Irena Paterson, Cathy Coverly, Judith Franklin, Joy Crowley, George Grubb, Don Toonen

The chair welcomed everyone present.

The minutes of the previous meeting (28 June 2011) were approved. Those present also agreed with the main points identified as part of the forum's vision for the future:

- Equalities affect everyone and is not for "other" people only
- The forum wants to become the first point of contact for consultations
- The forum can contribute to awareness raising and training on equal opportunities for public bodies.

#### Public sector equality duty update

- The consultation on the legislation on the new public sector equality duty in Scotland will start on Wednesday 31 August. Information can be found on [www.scotland.gov.uk/Consultations/Current](http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Consultations/Current).
- The Scottish Social Attitude Survey 2011 has been published. The report shows that there has been an improvement in general compared with 2002 but also that intolerance is deeply ingrained in some areas. The news release can be found on <http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/scotland/scottish-news/>, and a copy of the report can be found on <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2011/08/11112523/0>.
- The Equality and Human Rights Commission Scotland's report *Sex and Power 2011*, is an index of women in positions of power and influence across the public and private sector. It reveals that while women are graduating from university in increasing numbers and achieve better degree results than men, and despite level pegging with men in their twenties, they are not entering management ranks at the same rate, and many remain trapped in the layer below senior management. The report can be found on <http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/scotland/scottish-news/press-releases-2011/scottish-women-missing-in-action-ehrc-report-indicates-a-lack-of-women-in-top-jobs/>.
- The Equality and Human Rights Commission is making recommendations to the European Court of Human Rights which is hearing 4 cases in relation to the way UK courts are dealing with religious discrimination. The outcome should give clarity about the interpretation of human rights laws when it comes to the expression of religion or belief. The Commission is proposing

the introduction of the concept of “reasonable accommodation” in relation to religion, similar to that of “reasonable adjustments” in relation to disability.

## **Follow up vision for Moray Equalities Forum**

### **a) Consultations**

Don advised the forum members that the Moray Council’s website has been redesigned. The front page has a “current consultations” box which keeps people updated.

There followed a discussion about the effectiveness of public consultations. Members felt that it is often difficult to understand the proposals and supporting documents. The forum recommended:

- Easy read documents summarising the proposals in no more than 1 or 2 pages.
- Have an online customer satisfaction survey at the end of the consultation to gauge the extent to which people are satisfied with the council service in question. It was suggested to keep it to just one or two questions.

It was acknowledged that with regards to public consultations local authorities are often in a no-win situation. If they give people all the relevant information they may be accused of information overload. If they give succinct information they may be accused of withholding information.

### **b) Training**

Don thanked all of those who responded to his request for information regarding training material.

Forum members are asked to give feedback on the training outline for customer facing staff. The forum recommended

- Training should be participative with a facilitator rather than a trainer who stands and talks for half a day. Judith offered to facilitate at future training events.
- Participants should be allowed to demonstrate their knowledge and skills at these events.
- Training should encourage participants to gain practical experience from the viewpoint of a disabled person.

The Moray council has developed an introductory module about the Equalities Act 2010. This is currently out for consultation with senior managers within the council. Once it has been approved Don will distribute a copy to the forum members.

### **c) Joint event: Holocaust Memorial Day**

Forum members are in favour of using Holocaust Memorial Day (27 January 2012) as an occasion to organise a joint event but recognise that the timescale is quite tight. Don will distribute an action plan with timetable by 9 September and the forum can then decide how realistic the timeframe is. Suggestions/thoughts for the event are:

- Involve schools, for example those involved in the visit to Auschwitz in September. Don will contact education to discuss the viability.
- Involve Out of Darkness theatre group, if budget allows.
- The day should look beyond WWII.
- Contact local employers and rotary clubs for support.
- Invite councillors

### **AOCB**

Irena mentioned that the STUC is organising a rally in Glasgow on 1 October against the welfare reform proposals.

Joy mentioned there will be a disability sports taster day on 17 September. Details can be found on [http://www.moray.gov.uk/moray\\_event/event\\_75400.html](http://www.moray.gov.uk/moray_event/event_75400.html) or from brochures that can be picked up at council access points and libraries.

### **Next meeting**

The next meeting will take place on Tuesday 25 October at 11:00. The venue will be confirmed later.