

## Committee on Equality of Opportunity EOC-04-99(min)

### MINUTES

**Date:** 11 November 1999

**Time:** 9.30

**Venue:** Committee Room 1, National Assembly Building

**Attendance: Members**

Jane Hutt (Chair)	Vale of Glamorgan
Christine Chapman	Cynon Valley
Glyn Davies	Mid & West Wales
Richard Edwards	Preseli Pembrokeshire
Edwina Hart	Gower
Helen Mary Jones	Llanelli
David Melding	South Wales Central
Kirsty Williams	Brecon & Radnor
Gareth Jones	Conwy
Janet Ryder	North Wales

**Advisers to the Committee**

Kate Bennett	Equal Opportunities Commission
Howard John	Disability Wales
Judge Ray Singh	Commission for Racial Equality
Cherry Short	Commission for Racial Equality

Judith Jones

Commission for Racial Equality

**Officials**

Kate Cassidy

Public Administration, Equality and Public Appointments Division

Charles Willie

Andrew George

Clerk

Julie Bragg

Deputy Clerk

Apologies were received from Carwyn Jones.

**Agenda Item 1: Chair's Report**

**Paper: EOC-04-99(p.1)**

1.1 The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting, particularly the new member of the Committee, Gareth Jones. Mr Jones had replaced Jocelyn Davies so that the Pre-16 Education Committee could be represented on the Committee on Equality of Opportunity. The Chair thanked Jocelyn Davies for her contribution to the work of the Committee.

1.2 The Chair wanted to highlight two items in her Report. She would be seeking a meeting with the Presiding Officer to discuss the outcome of Item 6 on the agenda along with equal opportunities briefing for Assembly Members and public access to information. Also, following the discussion on the MacPherson Report into the murder of Stephen Lawrence at the last meeting, she had written to Rosemary Butler, the Assembly Secretary for Education and Children, about progress with implementing the education recommendations of the Report. A copy of the letter had been provided to Members of the Committee for information.

1.3 Several points were raised by Members about items in the report:

- It was felt that the results of the childcare questionnaire did not necessarily mean that there was not a need for childcare provision. Assembly staff had not been included in the survey and there might be current and future needs which the survey did not identify. Mrs Hart said that the possibility of joint provision with other employers in the Bay was being investigated.
- Training in equal opportunities was felt to be a priority, especially for those who would be involved in public appointments (officials and Members). The Chair confirmed that a paper on equal opportunities and Assembly Sponsored Public Bodies would be provided for the next meeting of the Committee. Charles Willie informed members that the Assembly's independent advisers on public appointments would be receiving equal opportunities training as part of a training package being delivered on 24 November.
- In discussion, the Chair confirmed that the appointment of the Welsh Commissioner for Disability Rights would be subject to the approval of the

Assembly.

- In response to a suggestion that the Assembly might have a "Disability Day" on which disability would become the focus of all the Assembly's proceedings, Members felt that disability was too important to be consigned to a single-issue "ghetto". The Committee's strategy for mainstreaming and the plenary debate on the Committee's annual report would provide the means for the Assembly to consider and highlight all aspects of equal opportunities.

## **Agenda item 2: Minutes of previous meetings**

### **Papers: EOC-02-99(min) and EOC-03-99(min)**

2.1 The minutes of both meetings were agreed subject to one amendment to the minutes of EOC-03-99. In paragraph 3.3, the reference to discussion of the 'Voices' magazine would be strengthened to state that: "Producing the report of such an exercise in this "women's magazine" format was felt to be inappropriate and did not provide the reader with sufficient information."

## **Agenda Item 3: Progress Report on Work Programme**

3.1 Charles Willie reported that 39 of the 51 interviews with Heads of Assembly Divisions had now taken place. The programme was on course to be completed by the end of November and a draft report produced for January 2000. The interviews had already led to an encouraging increase in the number of officials contacting the Equality Policy Unit for information and advice. On 12 November the Unit would be meeting Group Directors in the Assembly to discuss the next stages in the equality audit.

3.2 The Committee expressed concern that, whilst the audit was very valuable and was yielding results, the Equality Unit would not have sufficient resources to undertake the work arising from it. It was recognised that the Unit had regular meetings with the Advisers to the Committee and they could be a useful source of advice and guidance. Equality 'experts' in other areas of the Assembly might also be able to contribute their knowledge and experience.

## **Agenda Item 4: The Leadership Challenge - Presentation by Commissioners Judge Ray Singh and Cherry Short, and Judith Jones, Commission for Racial Equality**

4.1 The representatives of the Commission for Racial Equality outlined the purpose and aims of the Leadership Challenge programme. The Challenge had arisen from a recognition that, despite the existence of the Race Relations Act for over 20 years, racial inequality was still embedded in society. The programme invites those in positions of influence, at the top of companies and institutions, to take a lead in promoting racial equality. The Welsh Office had signed up to the programme in October 1998 and both the First Secretary and the Permanent Secretary had confirmed that the Assembly would continue to be a signatory. This effectively committed every Assembly Member and official to take positive action to promote racial equality.

4.2 The Leadership Challenge has three strands:

- Public Profile - Leaders are encouraged to take personal responsibility for ensuring that they and their organisations are at the forefront of best

practice.

- Commitment to Action - Building racial equality measures and strategies into their organisations' decision-making and planning processes, and steering the development of programmes of practical action, with performance measures and milestones.
- Celebrating Achievement - Leaders are encouraged to use their position to raise the profile of racial equality issues and to highlight the successes achieved.

The Challenge aims to show how black and ethnic minority people have experienced discrimination in the past and to demonstrate that it makes good business sense to make the best use of the talents and skills of all members of society. The Assembly's involvement in the Challenge was important because it was in a position to set an example to other organisations.

4.3 Discussion focussed on the details of how the Leadership Challenge was implemented and how individuals could become involved in the programme. Signatories to the Challenge were asked to prepare a detailed action plan in consultation with officers from the CRE. Plans gave responsibility for actions to particular individuals and their performance in achieving these actions was monitored in, for example, their personal annual appraisals or in contracts with sub-contractors. The CRE checks on progress periodically and makes suggestions if matters have not progressed as planned.

4.4 Discussion of how the policies of the Assembly could better address the issue of racial equality focussed on health and education. For example, it was felt that the history curriculum did not provide sufficient information about the history of black and ethnic minority people in the UK; and the National Curriculum as a whole, which was being revised from September 2000, did not fully reflect black and ethnic minority issues. One element of the new curriculum, personal and social education, would not be implemented until 2001 and there might be scope to raise the profile of race issues in the development of that particular programme. Gareth Jones undertook to take these messages back to the Pre-16 Education Committee.

4.5 Another point raised in discussion was the representation of black and ethnic minorities among Assembly staff. There seemed to be far greater representation among the contracted night time security staff than among the permanent staff of the Assembly. The Leadership Challenge would embolden people to ask questions about issues such as this.

4.6 The CRE would be holding an event to review the Leadership Challenge in Wales on 7 December. All Assembly Members had been invited. A brochure was being produced to show the progress that those participating in the Challenge had made to date. The First Secretary and the Permanent Secretary would be speaking about progress made in the Assembly.

### **Agenda item 5: Global Cultural Diversity Congress 2000 - Presentation by Dianne Morley and Lorraine Hutchings, Global Cultural Diversity Congress 2000 organisers**

5.1 Lorraine Hutchings, Event Manager, and Sarah Chilton, Programme Manager, gave a presentation about the aims and scope of the Global Cultural Diversity Congress 2000 which was being held in Cardiff between 20 and 22 March 2000. The event was the second in what they hoped would become a series of congresses, the first having been held in Sydney in 1995. The organisers of the first event, the Australian Multi-Cultural Foundation, would be co-hosting the 2000 event together with the CRE and the National Assembly.

5.2 The purpose of the Congress was to stimulate international debate about practical solutions to diversity and racial equality. Each day of the event would

have a theme: elimination of racial discrimination; leadership; and unity and difference. The organisers hoped that the Prime Minister would open the congress and that Nelson Mandela would be a keynote speaker. 2000 delegates from all over the world had been invited in a letter from the First Secretary. To date, 1400 delegates had pre-registered from five continents and 40 countries including representatives from the Australian, Canadian and Chinese Governments. There would be 100 workshops of up to 30 delegates. At each workshop a trained facilitator would be present to enable delegates to achieve a set work plan.. There would also be 12 think tanks to which Chief Executives and Government Ministers would be invited.

5.3 Cardiff had been chosen as the UK venue for the event because its bid was made in the spirit of partnership between the local authority and community groups throughout the city. Cardiff also had the advantage of having a new system of government in the Assembly and also had experience of issues of cultural identity and language. It was hoped to incorporate other activities around the main programme of the event, such as study visits of racial equality projects, cultural tours and tourist visits throughout Wales. The Welsh Language Board had been involved in planning for the Congress and would be providing support.

5.4 George Craig, the Assembly's Senior Director for Social Policy and Local Government Affairs, was a member of the International Strategic Steering Committee for the event. The Commission for Racial Equality was helping to organise the event and was hosting an officer working full-time on it. The United Nations are also involved in the event by being represented on the Steering Committee and by subsidising the attendance of some delegates from poorer countries. Some richer countries and business delegates were also being invited to subsidise poorer countries by contributing to an equity fund.

5.5 In discussion, it was suggested that the Congress should take account of other equality issues. There was also a plea to the organisers to make sure that the publicity and activities associated with the event were spread throughout Wales. The Chair thanked the organisers for their presentation and offered the goodwill and support of the Committee. She emphasised the importance of the event for Wales and was confident that the Assembly would be able to offer practical support in kind as well as suggesting others who could help.

## **Agenda item 6: Equality of Opportunity in the Conduct of Assembly Business**

### **Paper: EOC-04-99(p.2)**

6.1 The Chair introduced the paper which contained extracts of current guidance to Assembly Members on conduct and relevant extracts from the National Assembly Advisory Group's (NAAG) Report. Discussion focussed on those recommendations made in the NAAG Report which were not intended for Standing Orders. Two main issues were raised: access for disabled people, particularly in relation to the new Assembly building; and access to information for disabled people and black and ethnic minority communities.

6.2 Members felt that it would send a disastrous message if the new building was not accessible to everyone. The architects had undertaken to consult Disability Wales about their developing plans for the new building but this did not appear to be happening. The Chair informed the Committee that the Finance Secretary had been active on this subject and said she would ask her to report back to the Committee.

6.3 On the question of access to information, Members felt that a commitment to provide information was only the first step in the process. Different groups in society needed to know how they could communicate with the Assembly. Consultation and feedback were key if black and ethnic minority and disabled people were to be able to participate in the decision-making process and make their opinions heard.

6.4 The Chair agreed to communicate the Committee's views in her discussions with the Presiding Officer and the Business Secretary. It was suggested that

the party business managers should be made aware of the Committee's proceedings so that all the political parties could be aware of the equality strategy which was being pursued. The Chair proposed that the minutes should be copied to the business managers in order to achieve this.

6.5 The meeting closed at 12.15 pm.