

# THE VIEWS OF THE 'DEVON COUNTY COUNCIL LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL AND TRANS GROUP' ABOUT ITS 'TERMS OF REFERENCE'

## 1. BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE OF THIS PAPER

During summer 2004, the Corporate Management Board considered a paper compiled by DCC's Employee Relations Policy and Strategy Team entitled '*establishing a DCC LGBT Employee Network Group*'. This paper focussed upon the issues raised during the 'LGBT Employee Project Work' completed by David Watson between September and November 2003.

One of the recommendations arising from that meeting related to the LGBT Group drawing up its 'Terms of Reference' for consideration at a future meeting of the Corporate Management Board.

Therefore, at its inaugural meeting of 14 March 2005, the LGBT Group discussed this issue in depth, then reached agreement over the following issues that it would like the Corporate Management Board to consider approving: -

## 2. AGREED 'TERMS OF REFERENCE' FOR THE GROUP

*\*n. b the following agreement was firstly reached over the name of the Group:-*

**'THE DEVON COUNTY COUNCIL LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL AND TRANS GROUP'**

*(It was also agreed that this could be abbreviated as 'DCCLGBT').*

The following 'Terms of Reference' agreed by the DCCLGBT aim to reflect the themes included in the 'Terms of Reference' for DCC's existing Forums, Committees and Policy Groups. In addition, it draws upon the themes examined during the 'LGBT Employee Project Work' completed by David Watson between September and November 2003.

In doing so, the Group aims to aid greater understanding amongst Corporate Management Board as to what the Group is trying to achieve, particularly in terms of how it will benefit DCC.

### Theme 1 – The agreed 'Vision Statement' for the Group

- To help ensure that DCC fulfils its commitment to equality and diversity, in terms of its role as a 'Community Leader', service provider and as an employer, which, (as such), will help DCC to achieve its Strategic Plan vision of 'reducing inequalities'.
- Specifically to help DCC ensure that it meets its General Duty to eliminate discrimination, advance equality and foster good relations in connection with the protected characteristics of sexual orientation (LGB) and gender re-assignment

## **Theme 2 – The agreed ‘Principle Roles’ of the Group**

- (i) To promote good practice over LGBT equality issues, by supporting and advising on the content of corporate events/workshops/training aimed at raising awareness amongst DCC officers and Elected Members about LGBT issues.

***(\*\*The above point relates to DCC’s commitment to equality and diversity as a ‘Community Leader’).***

- (ii) To act as an Advocate on behalf of DCC’s staff over LGBT issues, and as one of DCC’s primary sources of information over general issues affecting LGBT employees.
- (iii) To encourage social events aimed at reducing the perceived isolation and invisibility of LGBT people in the workforce.

***(\*\*Points (ii) and (iii) above relate to DCC’s commitment to equality and diversity as an employer)***

It is suggested that this could be achieved through the following 2-way communication mechanism: -

- The LGBT Group considers an issue referred from DCC’s Equality Officer/Equality Steering Group;
  - The LGBT generates its own issues for consideration by DCC’s Equality Officer/Equality Steering Group.
  - The LGBT group generates its own issues for consideration by the Council. The group can check with the Equality Officer about the most appropriate route to raise concerns.
- (iv) To ensure that the views of Devon’s LGBT community are fully taken into account when formulating strategies and initiatives aimed at promoting ‘Social Inclusion’.

It is suggested that this could be achieved through the following communication mechanism: -

- The LGBT Group comments upon issues referred from the Council’s designated ‘Equality Champion’ amongst the Elected Members that are being considered at a forthcoming meeting of one of DCC’s Committees/Policy Groups;
- (v) To help ensure that the public can access a range of LGBT literature and community resources through such channels as the Library Service. *(This point relates to one of the issues raised in the report of the ‘LGBT Employee Project’).*

***(\*\*Points (iv) and (v) above relate to DCC’s commitment to equality and diversity as a Service Provider).***

1. **OTHER ISSUE – The ‘DCCLGBT’ Group’s agreement on how it envisages operating in practice**

Although Corporate Management Board has only asked the Group to draw up its ‘Terms of Reference’, attached as **Appendix 1** for information is a copy of the points agreed by the Group at its inaugural meeting of 14 March 2005 on how it envisages operating in practice.

These details have been included in this report to demonstrate how committed the Members of this Group are towards ensuring the success of this Forum.

In particular, the Group feels that this is reflected by the fact that it was already able to identify ‘Designated Office Holders’ at its inaugural meeting, based upon Members of the Group volunteering to assume such roles.

**POINTS AGREED BY THE 'DCCLGBT' GROUP OVER HOW IT ENVISAGES OPERATING IN PRACTICE**

(a) Membership

- Membership shall be open to all employees of DCC who identify themselves as being LGBT and have registered a request to be included in the Group.
- ***No potential member shall be unreasonably disadvantaged in regard to their membership because of access issues relating to disability, distance, the mode of communication or the need for confidentiality.***

(b) Times/venue frequency and type of meetings

- The Group shall hold at least 4 ordinary meetings each year, which may be held during office hours. (*Venues to be varied to maximise attendance*).

*(Initially, meetings are to be held outside of core times, to ensure confidentiality of LGBT employees, as requesting permission to be excused from duties would require an explanation to be made to the Manager).*

- A Special Meeting may be called at any time by the Chairperson, or by any two members of the Group upon not less than one week's notice being given to the other members of Group of the matters to be discussed. However, if the matters include an appointment of a co-opted member, then not less than 21 days notice must be given.
- There shall be an Annual General Meeting held in the month of March of each year, or as soon as practicable thereafter. The Secretary shall give at least 21 days notice of the Annual General Meeting to all the members of the Group. All members of the Group shall be entitled to attend and vote at the meeting.

(c) Time off and expenses for attendance

- Members may count a maximum of 4 x 2 hour meetings per year as work time. Further reasonable time off is at the line manager's discretion.
- Social activities may not be counted as work time.
- Claims for travel expenses may be claimed from the LGBT staff network budget.

(d) Chairperson

- Before any other business is transacted at the first Annual General Meeting, the persons present shall appoint a chairperson.
- The chairperson shall act as chair at meetings of the Group for the coming year. If the chairperson is absent from any meeting, the members

of the Group present shall choose one of their number to be chair of the meeting before any other business is transacted.

(e) Voting and quorum

- Every matter shall be determined by a majority of votes of the members of the Group present, but in the case of equality of votes, the Chairperson of the meeting shall have a second or casting vote.
- For voting purposes, the quorum of the Group shall be 8 people.

(f) Notes of meetings

- The Group shall keep notes of the proceedings, which will be suitably 'anonymised', then made available to the Group.

(g) The Group's 'Designated Office Holders'

- At the Annual General meeting of the Group, the members shall elect from amongst themselves a chairperson, a vice-chairperson, a treasurer, a secretary, a communications Facilitator, (*in terms of ensuring access to the Group's notes/press releases to all its Members via a preferred methods of communication*), and a training co-ordinator, who shall all hold office from the conclusion of that meeting.
- Such Nominations must be made by members of the Group in writing and must be in the hands of the Secretary at least 14 days before the Annual General Meeting. Should nominations exceed vacancies, election shall be by a show of hands.

***(Commitments to inclusion need to be visible to be credible, in order to avoid putting potential members off joining). Therefore, the Group recognises that it is important to endeavour to achieve a representative balance amongst the 'Designated Office Holders).***