

NORTHAMPTON BOROUGH COUNCIL
LESBIAN, GAY AND BISEXUAL PEOPLE'S FORUM

Wednesday, 20 April 2005

PRESENT:

Tom (co chair)	in the Chair
S.Silver	NBC
L.Ambrose	NBC
Anjonar Roy	co chair of Race Equality Forum
B.Dorman	Connexions
P.Crofts	UCN
Sgt P.Colhoun	Nptonshire Police
Andrew	NLGBA

Also present individuals from the Alliance

1. APOLOGIES

There were none.

2. MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON 9 MARCH 2005

Minutes of the meeting held on 9 March 2005, copies of which had been circulated, were agreed.

3. MATTERS ARISING NOT ALREADY ON THE AGENDA

(A) LINGS FORUM - UPDATE

With regard to an update regarding Lings Forum Cinema L Ambrose advised that she was awaiting a response from Councillors Hill and J Lill and would report back to the next meeting accordingly.

(B) MINUTES AND AGENDAS ON INTERNET

It was noted that the minutes and agenda of this Forum were now on the Internet.

4. MEDIGOLD UPDATE

Andrew tabled a note giving an update on the situation with regard to Medigold. He referred to the discussion at the last meeting reminding that there had been no clarity with regard to the issue of confidentiality from Medigold and that he had undertaken to look at best practice elsewhere. He subsequently contacted UNISON, the T H Trust and the D R Commission. The responses from each were outlined in the note tabled. In response to the query the Terence Higgins Trust had responded by saying that they were lobbying to make such a question on an insurance form illegal and were also asking the question why an employer would need that information. With regard to UNISON they had advised that since 2002 it had been a UNISON policy that pre-job screening for HIV in areas where public safety was an issue should be accompanied by a guarantee that the test would be taken on a voluntary basis and that the procedure ensured that there would be no

detriment in terms of employment status for those testing positive. Furthermore they made the comment that it was possible that even asking the question on a pre-employment questionnaire could be discriminatory. The Disability Rights Commission commented that the fact such a question was asked might subsequently be used as evidence of discrimination. Also short listing on the basis of an applicant's responses to a medical questionnaire may be discriminatory if the employer had not ascertained the likely effects of a disability or medical condition on the applicant's ability to do the job or whether reasonable adjustments would overcome any disadvantage it caused. They further commented that even where there were medical requirements which must be met it was good practice for employers not to require job applicants to answer a medical questionnaire until after a conditional job offer had been made. In terms of further developments on the issue it was understood that at the occupational health meeting between Consortium employers and Medigold on 18 April after a full debate there was final agreement to withdraw the question about testing. It was to be replaced by a block question around, "Have you ever suffered from ..." to include HIV etc. The wording of the question was being consulted and agreed around the consortium. However this still did raise a number of questions such as, "What was the rationale for all potential employees being asked about their HIV status?" Medigold have been asked for a statement on this. Also if such disclosure was given to Medigold who else would get to know and under what circumstances and how was confidentiality maintained. As a way forward on this issue it was being recommended that this Forum write to the Chief Executive of Northampton Borough Copuncil asking these questions and seeking a clear rationale for needing to know the HIV status of its employees. Tom expressed the view that there also needed to be assurance that there would be no reference from Medigold to the General Practitioners. P Crofts commented that in his view it was strange that these questions were being asked and that it was sending out negative messages about HIV and AIDS.. As such it was agreed that this issue would be kept on the agenda for further discussion at the next meeting and that in the mean time a letter would be formulated to send to the Town's two MPs once the General Election had taken place in case there were any changes to the Town's MP's.

5. APPROACHES TO HOMOPHOBIC BULLYING AND GAY AWARENESS IN NORTHAMPTON'S SHCHOOLS AND COLLEGES

P Crofts from UCN and B Dorman from Connexions were present to speak on this item. B Dorman introduced the item advising that she was here to talk about her work with the Northamptonshire LGB Alliance on homophobic bullying in schools. She stated that the guidelines now needed to be written up from the research that had been carried out but that funding had now run out. The steering group had looked at many different ways so that it could move the project forward but at present the education authorities had not come up with any ideas. As such the steering group had expressed the view that they needed to make this a priority when bids for funding were put forward in the Autumn for the next budget year. S Silver commented that it was at the stage now where the project had got to the point where the research had been done and it was now needing to be moved forward. Reference was made to the pilot in the three schools within the County and it was necessary to ensure that those three schools were fully supported. B Dorman commented that as part of her work with the Alliance she would be going out to the

schools to carry out sexuality awareness training. It was worth noting that 75% of teachers had indicated that they had been witness to homophobic bullying. Reference was then made to the baseline research and P Crofts commented that it might be useful to link this research in with an academic institution and he offered to carry out some further research. It was agreed that he and S Silver would liaise with a view to linking in other groups together with the UCN. It was noted that I McCormick was carrying out some research on sexuality issues and could be someone to approach in this respect.

6. FORUM NEWSLETTER AND PUBLICITY

L Ambrose referred to the discussion on this issue at the last meeting and to the fact that it had been agreed that the item be placed on the agenda of this meeting for further discussion. Issues that needed to be considered were things such as content, frequency, whether the group would like to hold an open day, etc. Various ways of promoting publicity for the Forum were discussed ie making publicity available at public events such as the Balloon Festival. It was suggested that maybe L Ambrose, Andrew and S Silver liaise to discuss the issue further as a way of promoting publicity and attracting new members onto the Forum and report further to the next meeting. In addition displays in the Spencer Percival area of The Guildhall and a possible display and other involvement at the University College Northampton were suggested, perhaps around the time of their Equalities Week

7. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

It was noted that the draft article by Tom as the Co-Chair of this Forum had now been prepared for publication in the next issue of Northampton Now. Tom advised that he had a copy of this to approve before it went to print and he read out the content for approval by the Forum. This was duly approved.

Lindsey and Sean introduced some publicity materials aimed at tackling anti social behaviour as part of the Northampton Together Campaign. It was noted that members could obtain copies should they want them for their organisations.

8. ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION AT NEXT MEETING

It was agreed that the following items would be placed on the agenda for discussion at the next meeting, Medigold update, Newsletter update. In addition it was agreed that there would be further discussion on homophobic bullying and gay awareness in schools and colleges in Northampton. It was suggested that representatives from the County Council regarding schools be invited to the meeting as well as representatives from Northampton College, Moulton College and the UCN.

It was also suggested that ethnicity and gay issues could be an item for discussion at a future meeting. It was suggested that the forum might consider inviting someone from another area eg Leicester to consider successful working in other parts of the country and how they might be applied in Northampton.

9. DATE OF NEXT MEETING - 1 JUNE 2005

The meeting concluded at 7:45 pm.