

Northampton Borough Council

Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual People's Forum

15 May 2006

Present:

T Welsh	- Co-Chair (in the Chair)
Sgt P Colhoun	- Northants Police
Howard Crabtree	- NBC
Catherine Kimmet	- NBC
Councillor Palethorpe	- NBC (Co-Chair)
Martyn Swann	- NBC

1. Welcome and Introductions

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and invited people to introduce themselves.

2. Apologies

An apology for absence was received from A Bewers.

3. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 15 March 2006 were agreed.

4. Matters Arising

None.

5. Town Centre Update

M Swann referred to the second safety study walk, which had included representatives from this Forum and NLGBA. A draft report had been circulated and was also on the TCC Website. A number of issues had been raised on the walk, particularly regarding the dangerous nature of the environment. Operational issues around the town had also been identified and these had been passed on to Geoff Owen, who was undertaking a review of the town centre management.

NBC had commissioned a consultant masterplanner, BDP, who would work on a design, development and movement framework for the town centre and the information gathered from the study walks had been passed onto them. A public consultation would take place on the work carried out by BDP.

Tom commented that it would be useful to the other forums, as many of the issues were to do with fear of crime and there may be other parts of the town that members of the other forums feel are equally as frightening. M Swann responded that the results of the online survey did not highlight fear of crime as the main issue for people and it was therefore imperative to consult with as many groups as possible.

6. Annual Event – Civil Partnerships Update

L Ambrose advised that a Civil Partnership Fair had been suggested as the Forum's Annual event. As civil partnerships were new, it was pertinent to find out what the barriers or issues were in terms of services. As such, a survey had been devised to send out to services, which would be circulated to Tom and members of the Alliance for their comments before going out. Siân Williams, NBC Press and PR Manager and Catherine Kimmet, NBC Guildhall Manager would be involved in planning an event, hopefully to be held in The Guildhall.

7. Consultation on Discrimination and the Provision of Services

L Ambrose drew attention to the Department of Trade and Industry consultation, which sought views on how to tackle discrimination in goods, facilities and services. She advised that Andrew was very keen for the Forum to make a collective response to the consultation and, as such, she would email members for their views in order to formulate that response.

Andrew had also asked L Ambrose to raise the concern that the new legislation would mean that gay clubs and bars would not be able to market themselves as such, unless it was a private members' club, as this would be discriminatory towards heterosexual people. Tom commented that this would be a retrospective move and it was important that people were able to express physical affection in safety.

Agreed: That L Ambrose would email Forum members inviting them to comment on the consultation.

8. HIV and Pre-Employment Screening

Concerns had previously been raised about the necessity and confidentiality of questioning about HIV status on the Medigold per-employment health-screening questionnaire used by NBC. H Crabtree assured the Forum that NBC would not discriminate against anyone who was HIV positive and would ensure absolute confidentiality at all times.

H Crabtree explained that the completed questionnaires were sent to Medigold, who did not disclose the HIV status of anyone, but would advise whether a potential employee was fit to take up a role or whether adjustments needed to be made under the DDA.

Other local authorities, NHS employers and the Terence Higgins Trust had been surveyed about their pre-employment screening. With regard to the question 'have you ever suffered from HIV/AIDS, the NHS only asked this in relation to certain care roles; the Terence Higgins trust did not ask the question and of those local authorities who responded, 3 directly asked a similar question, while 3 indirectly asked.

H Crabtree advised that the question used on the pre-employment questionnaire was that used by the British Insurers Association, as this was felt to be most suitable

H Crabtree continued that there might be a better way of asking the question and this was being looked into. Similarly, current HR policies were being reviewed, including the policy on HIV, which was scheduled for completion at the end of this year. It was intended to include the Forum in the review. L Ambrose requested that the Race Equality and Disabled People's Forums also be included.

Tom queried how a person's GP would be approached and commented that this could be problematic if a person had not informed his or her doctor and could expose someone to risk of discrimination. H Crabtree advised that the Medigold approach was doctor to doctor, but he would check the exact process and let the Chair have more details. Tom also commented that disclosure of a potential NBC employees HIV status had no direct meaning, as there was no risk of infection in the type of jobs carried out. He added that there were other conditions and illnesses, such as learning or behavioural difficulties, that were not on the form but could have more of an impact on the way people carried out their jobs.

Agreed: That this Forum, along with the Race Equality and Disabled People's Forums, would be consulted on during the review of HR policies on HIV/AIDS.

9. Information Exchange

L Ambrose advised that a 'Chill n Chat' session would take place at the Alliance following this meeting. All welcome.

L Ambrose also advised that an event would take place on 10 June at the Guildhall regarding Refugee Week.

10. Any Other Business

Sgt P Colhoun updated the Forum on the Hate Crime Unit statistics. Up to the end of March 2006, 60 homophobic incidents had been recorded. This was a slight drop in the figures for the previous year but it was not felt that this was because there had been a decline in confidence to report and was therefore considered to be positive. He added that the post previously held by Steve Young had been filled.

11. Items for discussion at Next and Future Meetings

- Annual Event
- Holocaust Memorial Update
- September meeting – Medigold Update

12. Date and Venue of Next Meeting

12 July, 18:30hrs at The Guildhall