

**NORTHAMPTON BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**RACE EQUALITY FORUM**

You are invited to a meeting to be held at the Holding Room on Thursday,  
6 March 2008 at 6:30 pm.

**D Kennedy**  
**Chief Executive**

**AGENDA**

- 1. Welcomes and Introductions**
- 2. Apologies**
- 3. Minutes**
- 4. Matters Arising Not Already On the Agenda**
- 5. Festival of Wellbeing**  
*Jim Lillis, Northants Healthcare Trust*  
Further details available at:  
[http://www.northamptonshire.nhs.uk/nht/Features/Northamptonshire\\_Festival\\_of\\_Wellbeing/index.htm](http://www.northamptonshire.nhs.uk/nht/Features/Northamptonshire_Festival_of_Wellbeing/index.htm)  
For those not able to access the Internet, leaflets will be available at the meeting.
- 6. Community Engagement Strategy - Consultation Update**
- 7. Holocaust Memorial - 2009 Update**
- 8. Information Exchange**
  - (A) Community News**
  - (B) International Women's Day Event**  
29<sup>th</sup> March 2008 – The Guildhall – 10.00am to 1.00pm
  - (C) Money 4 Youth Update**
- 9. Items for Discussion at the Next Meeting**
- 10. Any Other Business**
- 11. Date Of Next Meeting**

**RACE EQUALITY FORUM**

**Tuesday, 8 January 2008**

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| <b>PRESENT:</b> | Councillor Scott Collins (Chair)                             |
|                 | Lindsey Ambrose NBC Area Partnership and Forums Co-ordinator |
|                 | Mervyn Felix Race Action, Northampton                        |
|                 | Anjona Roy Northants Racial Equality Council                 |
|                 | Chris Grethe Individual                                      |
|                 | Samuel and Christina Owusu-Akuffo, Divine Prayer Society     |
|                 | Pamela Crane Individual                                      |
|                 | John Rawlings Northampton Irish Support Group                |
|                 | Jim Lillis Northants Healthcare Trust                        |
|                 | DS Paul Colhoun Northants Police, Hate Crimes Unit           |
|                 | Alice Arden NBC Housing Strategy & Enabling Officer          |
|                 | Kat Westhead Bromford Floating Support Service               |
|                 | Rashmi Shah Individual                                       |
|                 | Amy-Louise White Bromford Floating Support Service           |
|                 | Ellie Burgess Bromford Floating Support Service              |

**1. WELCOMES AND INTRODUCTIONS**

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

**2. APOLOGIES**

Apologies had been received from Neelam Aggarwal, Jenny Campbell and Mr Mistry.

**3. MINUTES**

The minutes were agreed as a true record subject to the following change:

Item 10: Race Equalities Council should read *Racial* Equalities Council.

**4. MATTERS ARISING NOT ALREADY ON THE AGENDA**

***Northants Racial Equalities Council – Update***

Anjona Roy explained that the newly constituted National Equalities and Human Rights Commission encompassed the work previously undertaken by smaller groups, such as the Commission for Racial Equality (CRE), the Disability Rights Commission (DRC) and the Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC). The new commission had a broader perspective with three main priorities: the promotion of good community relations; equalities and human rights and dealing with casework. The focus of activity locally was the support of victims of discrimination and harassment and assisting individuals to access judicial procedures. Equally important was the work in challenging issues relating to policy at a local and national level.

Locally, within the Racial Equalities Council (REC) work was being done to promote and support equalities in all 6 recognised strands of need, namely, disability, age, gender, religion or belief and sexual orientation as well as race. It was recognised that that there were issues that crossed over the strands and it was important that all victims of discrimination, whatever the strand, had equal access to available support. Partnership working with organisations within the Lesbian Gay and Bisexual community and Age

Concern was starting to address this. A Roy had e-mailed L Ambrose a document about equalities impact, outcome, change and monitoring and a subsequent paper was to be circulated to Forum members.

**Action: L Ambrose e-mail the document to members of the Forum.**

A Roy was pleased to announce that East Midlands Racial Equalities Council (EMREC) had secured funding for a regional conference to be held at the WNDC offices on 18<sup>th</sup> March. Several high-profile key speakers had already been booked to talk about racial equality in relation to regeneration and how opportunities could be provided in Northampton to maximise equalities and human rights.

Comment was made about the closing of community centres and the impact this was having on local areas. It was hoped that, as part of the neighbourhood renewal agenda, communities could be rebuilt to make a welcoming environment for all. R Shah was concerned about how the new Commission arrangements would work and that the separate, specific commissions might be weakened. It was felt, though, that a joint approach across the strands would be beneficial and there already existed a number of organisations with joint membership across a range of minority groups.

P Crane raised the issue of parking on pavements and the inconvenience caused to disabled people and A Roy explained that there was legislation to support such issues, with a statutory requirement for the County Council to carry out an equality impact assessment relating to highways enforcement matters. In fact, local authorities were required to carry out an equalities impact assessment on every policy and every amended policy. This meant that budget cuts, which would inevitably cause policy change, should generate new assessments. Individuals with a complaint could apply to complete a questionnaire (RR65) to generate an investigation and take forward discrimination issues.

The Chair commended A Roy for the work of the NREC and thanked her for her useful and informative update.

## **5.1 BME HOUSING STRATEGY**

Alice Arden, NBC Housing Strategy Enabling Officer, distributed copies of a draft housing strategy and action plan that was addressing equalities issues in Borough Council housing. A questionnaire had been circulated to tenants to find out their needs. Research included questions about preferred language and methods for communication, disability adjustments and ethnic groups. There had been a good return and initial analysis showed a worrying shortage of larger (4/5 bedroom) affordable housing. Although there had been approximately 30% return on the questionnaire, which was considered good for this type of investigation, there was concern that people with language or reading difficulties might not have been able to complete them.<sup>1</sup> However, the tenants association N-TACT was likely to have proof read and approved the questionnaire before distribution.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> **Subsequent to the meeting, the following information has been provided with regard to the return rate for the questionnaire:**

We currently have 6060 customer profile questionnaires returned, this is a return rate of 49%. Although this is exceptionally good we are going to be undertaking some more work to try to increase the return rate still further. Profile information from the forms is being uploaded to IBS (IT system). This will allow us to run reports and will flag up on the system where we should be considering individuals specific needs in the course of our day to day contact.

<sup>2</sup> **Subsequent to the meeting, the following information has been provided with regard to the way in which the questionnaire was devised:**

Customer profiling is considered good practice and is something a lot of organisations including local authorities do. Our questionnaire was put together having considered best practice examples from other housing organisations. The N-TACT committee were not directly involved but we did consult with the N-TACT plain language group on the draft form.

A Arden then described the proposed changes in the allocation of housing, whereby the previous points system was to be replaced by a banding system. The proposed Choice-Based Letting scheme would allow prospective tenants to have the opportunity to register an interest and then bid for the available property, based on their circumstances.<sup>3</sup>

In drawing up a revised housing strategy, A Arden explained that the team had looked at issues covering the delivery of housing services, black and minority ethnic (BME) matters, private sector enforcement and tenant participation. The document needed to be in place, fit for purpose and complied with so that the Council could deliver what was needed. All equality strands had been taken into account. The document was to be taken forward to the Housing Strategy Board the following month.

L Ambrose explained that the Borough Council was progressing through the required levels to achieve the Equalities Standard, which was a standard recognising the importance of fair and equal treatment in local government services and employment.

## **5.2 SINGLE EQUALITY SCHEME CONSULTATION BY NBC**

L Ambrose distributed copies of the Borough Council's draft Single Equality Scheme, which was a document focusing on all strands of equality under one umbrella and relating specifically to Northampton. The document was currently out for consultation to find out what people wanted and the deadline for comments was 31<sup>st</sup> January 2008. Comments could be made on line at: [http://www.northampton.gov.uk/downloads/SES\\_Consultation\\_response\\_questionnaire.doc](http://www.northampton.gov.uk/downloads/SES_Consultation_response_questionnaire.doc).

## **6. FACE TO FACE AND SIDE BY SIDE**

The Government had launched a consultation document entitled: "*Face to Face and Side by Side: A framework for interfaith dialogue and social action*".<sup>4</sup> The consultation paper was seeking views on the development of a framework for partnership to support increased inter faith dialogue and social action. The consultation was looking at how local authorities would increase working with faith communities and implementation of the recommendations from the consultation was expected to be happening before the end of 2008. L Ambrose quoted statistics from the document, which demonstrated the diversity of faith groups in Great Britain. There was a need for meaningful interaction and understanding and this could be helped if activities and events were run by minority or faith groups and open to everyone. It was noted that the census statistics had grouped together all types of Christian, Hindu etc rather than breaking down into finer details. There was a lengthy discussion around the crossover between race, religion and belief. The general feeling was that, irrespective of race, religion, belief or any of the other minority labels, there was a general lack of respect within and across communities. The need was for education, empowerment and understanding of each other's culture, background and traditions. It was noted that to really understand others and work towards mutual respect as individuals in one overall community, sometimes people needed to look at both faith or belief and ethnicity together.

L Ambrose described how the Money 4 Youth project was involving a variety of different groups in joint projects generated by young people and which were intended to engage all sections of the community in mutually beneficial activities.

L Ambrose referred back to the consultation document and highlighted the sections to be

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<sup>3</sup> **Draft Allocations Scheme and Draft Access Strategy available on application from L Ambrose tel 837566.**

<sup>4</sup> **Document and Consultation Form available on application from L Ambrose tel 837566.**

addressed. The Chair urged forum members to ensure that they completed the consultation forms and returned them by 7<sup>th</sup> March 2008.

## **7. HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL UPDATE**

L Ambrose updated members about the Holocaust Memorial event, which was to be held during the afternoon and evening of 27<sup>th</sup> January 2008. Posters and flyers had been produced to publicise the events.

## **8. MONEY 4 YOUTH UPDATE**

L Ambrose explained that the Youth Forum was considering projects to benefit young people and the community and would be making decisions on the allocation of the Money 4 Youth funds in March so people were advised that if at all possible the young people they worked with who may want to send in forms should do so before 15th February 2008 so as to be included in the first shortlisting for 2008-9 financial year.

## **9. INFORMATION EXCHANGE**

- 1 The India Hindu Association was about to launch a bhangra and bollywood project funded by Money 4 Youth and based in Northampton East; Talking With Hands Cinema was about to start a tapestry project involving deaf and blind young people in making a tapestry about the history of the deaf community in Northampton and county and then to make a DVD to share the results and help other young people, community groups and professionals to better understand themselves and each other's needs.
- 2 Representatives from the Bromford Housing Group, who were attending the meeting for the first time, distributed leaflets about their service, which was for the support of people with mental health problems in housing. The main aim was to assist people make the step from supported housing to independent living. They were particularly keen to encourage ethnic and other minority groups to access their services and were eager to learn about the needs of the various ethnic communities in the town. They could be contacted by e-mail on [Michelle.Burgess@bromford.co.uk](mailto:Michelle.Burgess@bromford.co.uk), [Kat.Westhead@bromford.co.uk](mailto:Kat.Westhead@bromford.co.uk) or [Amylouise.White@bromford.co.uk](mailto:Amylouise.White@bromford.co.uk) and were hoping to attend future forum meetings.
- 3 Jim Lillis announced a 'Northamptonshire Well Being Event' in April 2008.<sup>5</sup>
- 4 The Irish Support Group had some young people who were looking to make a Money 4 Youth application jointly with a Hindu organisation.
- 5 A photographic exhibition entitled 'Faith to Faith' was being shown at the Northampton Museum and Art gallery from 8<sup>th</sup> January to 22<sup>nd</sup> February. It featured the work of a group of Catholic, Hindu, Jewish, Sikh and Muslim teenagers from five London faith schools. The themes were faith, community and tolerance.

## **10. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS**

The next meeting will be on Thursday 6<sup>th</sup> March 2008.

The meeting concluded at 21.05

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<sup>5</sup> Details and information form attached.