

NORTHAMPTON BOROUGH COUNCIL

DIVERSE COMMUNITIES EQUALITIES FORUM (RACE EQUALITY FORUM)

Thursday, 29 May 2008

PRESENT:	Councillor Scott Collins (Co-Chair)
	Lindsey Ambrose Area Partnership and Forums Co-ordinator, NBC
	Jo Darby Meetings Services Officer, NBC
	Ted Hale Northampton Faiths Forum/Churches Together
	John Rawlings Individual
	Chhotubhai Mistry Vishwa Hindu Parishad/IHWO
	Abade Ahmed Somali Community
	Abdirahman Abdi Community Development Worker (MH)
	Caroline Evans Floating Support Worker – Bromford Support (MH)
	Sukhy Garcha Floating Support Worker – Bromford Support (MH)
	Jenny Campbell (Co-Chair) Inspiration FM Community Radio
	Morcea Walker NCC – Children and Young People’s Service
	David Wiseman Northampton Faithworks/ Area Dean, Northampton

1. WELCOMES AND INTRODUCTIONS

The Chair welcomed everyone to the newly convened Diverse Communities Equality Forum and invited those present to introduce themselves.

2. APOLOGIES

Apologies had been received from Chris and Sam Owusu-Akuffo, Paul Colhoun, Neelam Aggarwal, Rev Marian Taylor and Val Dumbleton. The Forum was concerned to hear of Val’s recent injury and asked for their best wishes to be forwarded to her.

3. MINUTES OF RACE EQUALITY FORUM MEETING - 6TH MARCH 2008

These were agreed as a true record.

4. MATTERS ARISING NOT ALREADY ON THE AGENDA

Item 5 – Festival of Wellbeing

This had been well attended and successful and had been followed the next week by similar event on the Racecourse. There had also been positive recent events involving the Somalian community and other faith groups. It was reported that the St Patrick’s Day celebrations at the Guildhall had also been enjoyable and very well attended.

Item 9 – Items for Discussion (Update on black children’s achievement in schools)

Further to a request for an update on the achievement of black children in local schools, Morcea suggested that it would be more useful to give an overview to the Forum annually in September. By then, the SATs, GCSE and A Level results would have been collated and the statistical information would be more relevant. She went on to explain about a parents’ seminar at the Guildhall on 21st June, targeted at the black community, to inform parents about the work being done to address issues of underachievement in BME communities. There was concern that such information was not communicated widely enough and it was noted that the individual Governing Bodies of schools were responsible for the way in which their school’s parents were engaged and informed.

It was proposed that the Forum’s meeting in September be a themed event concentrating on educational matters with a particular focus on the achievement of children from minority

communities. It was suggested that teachers and others involved in education and raising awareness of equalities issues in schools might be invited. It was also suggested that children who had achieved well at school might also be asked to attend.

5. OBJECTIVES AND IDEAS FOR WORK PLAN FOR DIVERSE COMMUNITIES FORUM 2008-9

Lindsey informed the group that the meetings for the following year were to be on 30th September, 3rd December, 5th March and 14th May. However, there were other events planned that were relevant to the group, such as the Ann Frank and Holocaust memorials in the New Year.

Rev Hale reported on a meeting of the Faith Forum at which new members who were Buddhists had been enthusiastic about holding an inter-faith event. He asked if the group would be interested in supporting such an event and, after discussion, it was suggested that the Great Hall could be used, possibly in October, and various faith groups could be invited to showcase their activities, for example, drumming, singing and dancing. Rev Hale then went on to describe the make-up of the Faith Forum and explained its connection with Churches Together in Northampton. The Forum itself comprised one or two representatives from a wide variety of faiths and included Jewish, Islamic, Hindu, Christian, Sikh and Buddhist members. Public events involved around 120 – 130 people from across all faiths. The remit of the forum was to explore other faiths and to engender understanding, tolerance and community fellowship across the many different faiths represented in the town. To encourage young people to become involved, a faith development worker was going to be employed. Rev Wiseman spoke of an arrangement to send people away to train as intercultural leaders for the benefit of their communities and it was suggested that one of these people might be invited to give details of this at a future meeting.

In relation to activities connected with the Ann Frank and Holocaust memorials, there was again concern that the focus might be too historical and it was considered to be important that people understood the relevance to current concerns. Morcea pointed out that there had been displays and drama productions locally that had helped put the message out that the Holocaust was not only a Jewish issue. Lindsey pointed out that the imminent publicity of the Ann Frank awards should also help change people's perception and highlight the universal lessons for today about the Holocaust Memorial. Further to comment about the commemoration of the abolition of slavery, it was noted that a national 'day' was scheduled for 23rd August.

Lindsey asked forum members to decide on topics that they would like to explore at future meetings and let her have any relevant information. Abade mentioned an activity that had been arranged to celebrate the anniversary of Somalian Independence in July. Lindsey and Abade agreed to look at whether the Guildhall might be able to offer a suitable venue.

There was a request for the theme of the December meeting to focus on the work of the police and how they engaged and managed issues and relationships relating to diverse communities. Specifically, information was sought on incidents of knife crime and the different types of crime encountered in the BME community. It was suggested that Ron Frater (Community Liaison Officer and Chair of the county's Black Police Association) and Davina Logan (Deputy Chief Constable and Chair of the Equality Steering Monitoring Group) be invited to address the meeting. There was also a request for an update on hate crimes and there was an expression of appreciation for the commitment to the Forum of Detective Sergeant Paul Colhoun.

It was agreed that other meetings themes would be decided upon during the course of the coming year.

6. PLAN FOR COMMUNITY CO-CHAIR ELECTIONS

It was agreed that Lindsey would administer the nominations and elections to appoint a community co-chair for the group by post. She offered assistance to anyone who wanted to submit a nomination but had difficulties writing down their manifesto in English. It was agreed that the elections process would take place with the announcement of the election result being made at the September 2008 meeting.

7. NORTHAMPTON ISLAMIC ASSOCIATION: INTRODUCTION AND UPDATE

Abade explained that the newly formed Northampton Islamic Association had been set up to encourage positive interaction between Muslims and non-Muslims. One of the organisation's aims was to build a new, large mosque in the town that was not just a place of worship but that also had the facilities for Islamic study and community activities for people of all faiths. He explained that the smaller existing mosques served the separate Muslim communities and were only open for times of prayer and that a larger one was needed that could be open all day for larger-scale communal worship and events. The Chair pointed out the need for religious and community buildings to be part of the town's infrastructure as it grew and became more diverse in terms of its population.

8. NORTHAMPTON CARNIVAL 2008: UPDATE

Morcea outlined the events of the carnival weekend, which was to start with musical performances in the Market Square on Friday 13th June. On Saturday 14th June, there was to be a number of performances and events at Delapre Park, with the highlight being the carnival parade through the town centre. Following the parade there was to be an announcement about the Ann Frank award winners and Lindsey gave brief details of some of the nominees. On Sunday 15th June, activities were to return to the Market Square, with the focus being on the performance of different styles of dance.

9. COMMUNITY INFORMATION EXCHANGE

- There were to be celebrations, a parade and the switching on of Diwali lights in the town on Saturday 25th October.
- Chhotubhai Mistry had details of youth-based activities including Money 4 Youth funded Bollywood dancing classes that had started at Lodge Farm. There were still places available for this activity and anyone interested could contact Neelam Aggarwal Singh for further details.
- To commemorate the 60th anniversary of the docking of SS Windrush in 1948, there was to be an event on 22nd June. Rev Wiseman and Morcea had details, which would be circulated to the group in due course.
- Also on 22nd June, there was to be a walk from Northampton to Wicksteed Park involving around 200 young people from different communities. As well as the walk, there was to be a programme of activities at Wicksteed designed to bring people together.
- Abade and Abdirahman described a community engagement project going ahead in July in which the focal point would be the support of people suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder.
- Morcea announced a conference to be staged at the University of Northampton on 12th July being organised through the Northampton Black History Group.

Forum members were asked to supply Lindsey with further information of these events so that it could be distributed to the rest of the group.

10. TWO ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION AT THE NEXT MEETING

This had been addressed elsewhere.

11. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

NBC Consultations

It was noted that relevant items for consultation could be brought to the forum from where joint or individual responses could be agreed.

Heritage Open Days – 12th to 14th September 2008

Members who wanted to take part in this event and had faith or other interesting buildings that could be opened for viewing by the public were asked to contact Lindsey or Councillor Scott Collins as soon as possible with details.

12. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

6.30pm – Tuesday 30th September (Education Theme)

6.30pm – Wednesday 3rd December (Police Theme)

The meeting concluded at 20.15

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