

NORTHAMPTON BOROUGH COUNCIL
DIVERSE COMMUNITIES EQUALITIES FORUM (RACE
EQUALITY FORUM)

You are invited to a meeting to be held at the Holding Room, The Guildhall
on Thursday, 29 May 2008 at 6:30 pm.

D Kennedy
Chief Executive

AGENDA

1. Welcomes and introductions
2. Apologies
3. Minutes of Race Equality Forum meeting - 6th March 2008
4. Matters Arising not already on the Agenda
5. Objectives and ideas for work plan for Diverse Communities Forum 2008-9
6. Plan for community co-chair elections
7. Northampton Islamic Association: introduction and update
8. Northampton carnival 2008: update
9. Community information exchange
10. Two items for discussion at the next meeting
11. Any other business
12. Date of next meeting

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Date: 14 May 2008

Dear Forum Member

Changes to the Forum

Responding to concerns raised both by some members of the Race Equality Forum and others who have not felt able to attend, views were taken from people who involved in race equality work tackling hate crimes, equality and diversity work, community groups and faith groups in Northampton. It became apparent that the Forum's name and objectives were problematic in their wording and their constraints. Despite the good intentions which had led them to come into being, they were not well understood and were acting as barriers to some people participating in the forums discussions and work.

A new draft set of objectives, based on the old ones but specifically taking on board points people had mentioned e.g. welcoming newly arrived communities, faith communities and diverse communities was therefore put forward. Views were taken on the draft from both members who regularly attended Race Equality Forum meetings and those who were interested but felt excluded as things stood. The name "Diverse Communities Forum" and the revised objectives seemed to be what people felt would more likely help other people understand and feel welcomed to participate, share information and dialogue with the Council and each other about their needs and its services.

The Council has other forums for communities of interest e.g. Disabled People's Forum, Pensioners' Forum and Youth Forum. These will continue to offer a space for people to meet with the community to discuss needs of these particular groups. The Council intends to maintain such spaces for particular groups to be able to discuss their needs.

Since the last meeting an opportunity arose at short notice for the Council to be able to respond to the feedback it was receiving from the community, through changes made to the Council's constitution which allows for the Council to have Forums. The Council took the opportunity to respond to the feedback and suggestions people have given by creating the Diverse Communities Forum as a successor evolving from the Race Equality Forum. Its work should be developed through creating an annual action plan - to help ensure that specific issues members would like to explore can be identified, agreed and acted on e.g. via project working or specific meetings as happens with other forums.



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I enclose a copy of the amended objectives for the new Forum and will be pleased to discuss further about the future work of the Forum, Community Co-chair elections etc when we meet. I am also happy to talk to people individually about any particular queries or concerns they may have about the change but hope that this note will reassure that the changes have been made to add value and enhance, through listening to community members, rather than to take anything away. As this new Forum is continuing and building on the former Forum, I will be continuing as Councillor Co-Chair, to give continuity.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in grey ink, appearing to read "Scott Collins".

Cllr Scott Collins, Councillor Co-Chair of Diverse Communities Forum and Faith Champion

Diverse Communities Equality Forum:

Aims and Objectives

Objectives

1. The Forum seeks to equalise access by people of all ethnic and cultural backgrounds to the services and benefits provided by the Council by:
 - 1.1 providing information about those services and how to access them;
 - 1.2 identifying barriers to access to services which adversely affect groups or individuals of any ethnic, faith or cultural background; and
 - 1.3 promoting two-way dialogue between the Council, its members and senior officers of the Council and representatives of:
 - 1.3.1 ethnic and culturally diverse communities
 - 1.3.2 newly arrived and emerging communities
 - 1.3.3 faith communities
 - 1.4 promoting community cohesion through working in ways which promote and support effective relationships and engagement between the Council and the community.
2. To provide a Forum in which:
 - 2.1 The above-mentioned community groups can express their needs for, and their views on, services provided by Northampton Borough Council and its partners through a range of meetings, events and other means.
 - 2.2 the Council can consult representatives of the above-mentioned communities on policy and service delivery issues including in relation to impacts on the above-mentioned communities
 - 2.3 members of the Forum can feed into national and regional consultations
 - 2.4 groups and agencies can exchange information about their own activities and plans
3. For members of the Forum who have internet access, there is the opportunity to keep informed and share information about community events, consultations etc via the group emails.
4. The Forum may from time to time
 - 4.1 operate sub-groups or project work groups e.g. to focus on interfaiths work;
 - 4.2 work with other groups including other Forums e.g to encourage participation in local democracy through supporting work led by Youth Forum in October each year; e.g. to raise awareness of suffering in the past and today in situations of war and discrimination through active involvement with the Holocaust Memorial Working Group.