

NORTHAMPTON BOROUGH COUNCIL

DIVERSE COMMUNITIES EQUALITIES FORUM (RACE EQUALITY FORUM)

Tuesday, 30 September 2008

PRESENT: Councillor Scott Collins (Chair);
John Rawlings (Co-Chair)
Morcea Walker NCC – CYPS
DS Paul Colhoun Northants Police
Lisa Knight NCC – HIV/Sexual Health Community Team
Lindsey Ambrose NBC
Thomas Hall NBC
Abade Ahmed Somali Community
Mustafa Abdalla Ogaden Community
Gordon Osborne Northants Fire and Rescue Services
David Wiseman Faithworks, Northampton
Jenny Campbell Inspiration Radio
Jo Darby NBC

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies had been received from Neelam Aggarwal.

2. WELCOMES AND INTRODUCTIONS

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting. Mustafa Abdalla was attending his first forum meeting as a representative of the local Ogaden community.

3. MINUTES

The Minutes of the last meeting were agreed as a true record.

4. MATTERS ARISING NOT ALREADY ON THE AGENDA

There were none.

5. CO CHAIR ELECTIONS - UPDATE

As the only applicant for the position of Co-Chair, John Rawlings was duly welcomed to the role for the forthcoming year.

6. FAITH CHAMPION - UPDATE

Councillor Collins reported that his role as the Council's Faith Champion had been well received and he had continued to engage with a variety of groups. There had also been interest at the recent Lib Dem conference, when he had spoken to colleagues about his role. He would be feeding back information to Cabinet and Council in the near future and he was confident that the role would grow.

Rev Wiseman announced the launch of a 'street pastors' initiative on October 17th at 7.00pm at College Street New Testament Church of God, following which it was expected that 12 street pastors would be going out into the town every Friday night from 8pm to 4am. He also mentioned an inter-faith forum event involving a walk around Pitsford reservoir from 2.00pm on 19th October to help people to understand the significance of water in various faiths.

John Rawlings then expressed concern that the published attendance list included a lot of Christian church representatives, but they had not been coming to the meetings.

ACTION: The Clerk was to investigate the way that contact information was published on the website and make necessary alterations.

Abade Ahmed wished everyone a happy Eid and reported that 1000 Somalians had celebrated the end of Ramadan in their community centre in Clare Street as well as the Collingwood Business Centre.

Jenny Campbell from Inspiration Community Radio was pleased to announce that the radio station had recently been awarded a 5-year licence by OFCOM after 12 years of campaigning. It was hoped that the established community ties would be strengthened as they joined a network of over 100 community radio stations in the UK.

7. GCSE AND SATS PROGRESS IN NORTHAMPTON SCHOOLS

Morcea Walker reported that the full results analysis was not yet ready, but she would produce a more detailed report at the next meeting. She was intending to focus on Key Stage 3 or 4 for mapping and using comparisons year on year. She would be looking at the nature of the school rather than specific ethnicity or gender issues. Northampton itself had 5 schools last year not delivering the Government minimum requirement of 30% A* - C in 5 GCSEs including maths and English. Some Primary schools had also failed OFSTED and were causing concern. Morcea was currently working on a project with white working class boys as they were performing poorly. She then went on to describe some of the strategies and specialist projects that some schools had in place particularly for the integration of Asian, black and eastern European children. However, some equalities issues relating to children's achievements were not confined to race. Many low achievers were capable but not performing owing to peer pressure and a lack of 'cool' in appearing bright.

For future reporting, it was requested that data relating to admissions and exclusions be produced to show how minority communities were represented. Thomas Hall suggested that a report might identify certain pressure points and figures would show a pattern for one identified group so that the forum could address appropriate action. There was concern that parents were not adequately involved in these specialist strategies and it was made clear that it was the responsibility of individual schools to ensure that parents were engaged.

Action: Morcea Walker to produce appropriate reports on GCSE and SATs results when the figures had been ratified.

8. HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL, KRYSTALLNACHT, ANNE FRANK FESTIVAL - UPDATE

Lindsey Ambrose reported on progress for preparations for the Ann Frank exhibition, which was coming to the town from 2nd to 26th February 2009. There was to be an event on 10th November to commemorate Krystallnacht and highlight human rights abuses in contemporary situations. Northampton Town Football Club was staging an event, as well as an eco-friendly balloon launch on 21st February and this would involve a number of activities focusing on Jews and others whose lives had been affected by the Holocaust. Sean Silver was co-ordinating an exhibition around the theme and there were to be resources for schools being made available.

Lindsey further reported that there were already some good quality nominations for the following year's Ann Frank awards.

9. LOCAL DEMOCRACY WEEK - UPDATE

An Overview and Scrutiny Task and Finish group had been looking at events for the week. One of these was to be a Big Brother style event with six councillors standing up and putting together manifestos directed at young people. There had been a perception that, owing to the average age of the Councillors being 57, they might not have an insight as to what young people needed. The event, reaching its climax on 18th October, was being supported by the Police and was to include steel pans, and a Venezia procession with dancers. Interviews with councillors would link to the Holocaust and the week of events would look at a number of faith and equality issues.

Lindsey reported back on the recent successful Pensioners' event that had included activities such as speed dating and using graffiti to promote ideas and concerns.

10. MONEY 4 YOUTH - UPDATE

It was reported that the deadline for bids for funds for projects in 2009/10 was 27th February 2009. There were several projects already in the consultation stage and it was hoped that this would increase.

11. INFORMATION EXCHANGE

World Aids Day

Lisa Knight, from NCC HIV/Sexual Health Community team, spoke of her involvement with a small community group, SOLAR, in relation to work for World AIDS Day. With 80-90 new diagnoses every year, she was working to raise the profile of the disease and highlight available sexual health services, particularly in the town's growing African community. She then described some plans to draw attention to World AIDS day, including an idea to paint the town red by decorating key buildings with red ribbons. Thomas Hall offered the forum's support for specific issues and it was explained that the main focus was to raise awareness for the prevention and treatment of HIV and AIDS.

Lisa explained that this year would see the 20th World AIDS Day and Northampton Town Football Club was going to hold an eco-friendly balloon launch with information in their programme including quotes from players and other community members designed to get behind the message. There were problems in putting the sexual health message into schools because a lot of teachers were not comfortable with the subject. In line with strategies in the USA, it was pointed out that church communities were in favour of trying to push the message of abstinence. Lisa then described work she had done in a village in Ghana where she helped to set up a project to help address the issues surrounding HIV.

Other Events and Information

In a bid to raise money for a Hindu temple, the Northampton Hindu Welfare Organisation was to hold a Bhoomi Pujan ceremony on the proposed site on 19th October, on which date there would also be a Divali show at Spinney Hill Hall organised by the Patel Samaj organisation.

A Polish evening was to be hosted at the Guildhall on 14th October to encourage interaction and good relations between eastern European communities.

Forum members were again reminded of the Water Walk to be held on 19th October at Pitsford Reservoir.

The Stronger, Safer Northampton Partnership (SSNP) had secured funding from the Racial Equalities Council to open up a route for the reporting of racial incidents.

Jenny Campbell was in the process of publicising a website to showcase the work being done, particularly for young people, by Inspiration Radio and publicity material was to be

distributed to forum members in due course.

Rev Wiseman announced that events were being planned during the first week of November to commemorate the landing of HMS Windrush and several senior members of the Caribbean community were to be invited for a meal.

To commemorate St Francistide, there was to be a special church service on 5th October at Christchurch to which pets were being invited.

Thomas Hall commented on the large number and variety of events being planned and wondered if there could be a central programme using a partnership approach to look at the support being offered at the different faith festivals. It was suggested that there be liaison between Ian Redfern at the Borough and Sue Grace from the County Council to achieve this.

12. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

There was none.

13. ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION AT THE NEXT AND FUTURE MEETINGS

- Further update on BME housing issues
- Invitation to Ian Redfern, Head of Culture and Leisure NBC
- Jenny Campbell to talk about the support of the community by Inspiration Radio.

14. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

6.30pm – Wednesday 3rd December 2008

<TRAILER_SECTION>

The meeting concluded at Time Not Specified

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