

Northampton Borough Council

Northampton LGBT and Q People's Forum

Tuesday, 13 March 2012

People at the meeting: Councillor Anna S King (Chair)
Matt Hammond - MWSP

Matthew Toresen NVC and FAN Northants
Chris -an Individual
Lesbian Line Rep

Officers at the meeting Keith Mitchell
Lindsey Ambrose

1. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

Cllr King introduced herself: Northampton Borough Councillor for Phippsville, also Councillor Co-Chair of Northampton Youth Forum. Her “daytime work” is a youth worker.

Everyone introduced themselves.

2. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Gracie Okusanyo from the Link and Barry Hansford from Northampton College and Community Co-Chair of the Forum.

3. MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING

The Minutes of the last meeting were agreed as an accurate record.

It was noted that the feedback the forum members had given on the Northampton Borough Council budget options had been passed to service areas. The authors of the equality impact assessments had reviewed and if appropriate, revised, the equality impact assessments in light of the feedback. They had noted the perceptions of linked impacts between some options. Some changes had been made to the options presented to the Councillors at the Full Council meeting, for example the addition of a neighbourhood warden. It had also been agreed that the relevant service areas would pass on feedback to relevant other services, in particular the Northamptonshire Police, so that as decision-makers on say Police staffing, they could have due regard to the comments.

The Stamp out Hate Crime campaign had been continuing. The Northampton Youth Forum had won a countywide youth award for “Outstanding Contribution to Anti-Bullying” work. Moulton College Student Association had become involved, leading to a Stamp out Hate Crime stand at their recent well-being week and news feed from the Facebook page linked through to their student ‘moodle’ computer system. Moulton College had expressed an interest in joining this Forum. Moulton College had identified that the Stamp out Hate Crime campaign could help them to prevent and tackle hate crime and homophobia.

4. NBC STONEWALL WORKPLACE INDEX ASSESSMENT

The Forum noted that Northampton Borough Council takes part in the Stonewall Workplace Index Assessment for Diversity Champions – to help employers ensure their services to both internal and external customers are LGB-friendly.

Northamptonshire County Council does not take part in this scheme but schools under its control can access help from Stonewall as it has signed up to their School champion's scheme.

In the past year Northampton Borough Council as a whole had been assessed in comparison to other diversity champions in Stonewall's scheme for the first time. The findings had been discussed with Stonewall to help the Council consider room for improvement and actions for improvement.

The Council had scored particularly well, above even top 100 employers, for its community engagement – specifically the forums, the events they organise with the community such as for World AIDS Day and Holocaust Memorial Day in the Guildhall courtyard, and for the use of Forums pages on Facebook. The contribution of Cllr Palethorpe as the then Leader of the Council and Co-Chair of the Forum with a good record of attending meetings and speaking in the community on LGB equality and against homophobia had also helped the council to do well. The Council had solid scores too for its equalities policy work. There had been no LGB discrimination tribunal cases.

Areas for improvement included increasing LGBT disclosures in staff and councillor equality monitoring, staff engagement and bullying prevention.

The forum discussed these and members of the forum shared some ideas for how the Council might look to improve in these areas.

- Staff diversity group: the Lesbian Line representative noted that Northampton General Hospital had a good response by not labelling their staff diversity group as "LGBT ". Instead they had made it general staff diversity and gradually grown the confidence for people to come out if they wished. Other members of the forum said they would welcome that approach too. It was noted that the gay-straight alliance approach avoids self-labelling; not everybody wants to be 'out' and declare themselves in every situation of their life so the words equality and diversity might be better descriptors – people feeling safer and more comfortable to attend.

One suggestion was that the unions might be involved to organise small events with the staff diversity group. Again Northampton General Hospital was suggested as an example the council might look to learn from.

It was noted that St Andrews Hospital seem to have an active staff group and that the NBC Community Engagement and Equalities Officer was in touch with her about this.

Conversation moved on to the use of logos in all kinds of literature and contexts for council services as a means to create an environment in which promoting LGB equality was the norm and expectation of staff, contractors and customers.

Discussion with the Head of Landlord Services about possibly including the Stonewall Logo in the new tenants handbook was one example. One of the members of the Forum said that he is a tenant and has always been treated well by the Council.

A member of the Forum said they had been to see the Stamp out Hate Crime exhibition and had been very impressed with it, how positive it was and with the cyberbullying film it included.

Lindsey thanked the Forum for their very helpful ideas and said she would mention these in her meeting with the Head of Human Resources later in the month which was due to look at Stonewall and the Council.

5. NBC EQUALITY STRATEGY:UPDATE INCLUDING CORPORATE EQUALITY OBJECTIVES

It was noted that Cabinet had now approved the new Northampton Borough Council equality strategy "Our Approach to Equalities". This is available online at www.northampton.gov.uk/equalitystrategy.

In deciding on what corporate equality objectives to set, regard had been had to the interest of the forums in hate crime as well as the work by Overview and Scrutiny and the Community Safety Partnership priorities consultation. This had led to the decision to include hate crime in the objectives.

The other objectives were around having a modern and diverse workforce; and providing fair, inclusive and accessible services with particular regard to the Gateway service.

Currently service planning was under way across the Council. All services had been asked to consider and advise what they would set as service level objectives and measures for each of the above corporate equality objectives. During the year their performance against these would be monitored. At the end of the year the equality strategy would be updated to reflect work done and still to be done.

6. PLANNING FOR INTERNATIONAL DAY AGAINST HOMOPHOBIA AND TRANSPHOBIA (17 MAY 2012)

The International Day Against Homophobia and Transphobia is Thursday 17 May 2012.

The Forum agreed that as in past years there should be a ceremony in the courtyard bringing together community organisations, individuals, councillors and people working for the council.

They agreed that the ceremony should take place at 11am, to be finished by not later than 12 noon, with tea and coffee provided.

A display stand would be requested to enable FAN Northants, Lesbian Line and Stamp out Hate Crime and other local groups to be able to share information about their services.

The ceremony would be led by a volunteer from FAN Northants.

The ceremony would include one minute's noise.

Cllr Anna King would be one of the speakers.

Other invitees would include staff diversity groups from various organisations, the Mayor of Northampton, the Leader of the Council, NBC councillors, union representatives, a Fire engine to use its sirens in the one minute's noise and a Police motorbike.

Lindsey would put some emails out to staff and notes on Facebook to help identify people who would like to come along and be involved.

7. COMMUNITY INFORMATION EXCHANGE

Community Centres

The forum was advised that progress had been in handing community centres over to the local community to run. To date 9 had been transferred to be run by the community. Another 6 were due to go through before end of March, then another 6 over the coming months.

Governance Review

Keith outlined the opportunity for all electors to have a say whether they want a local council to be set up. He explained that this might be called a "parish council" or "community" or "neighbourhood" council – all these terms describe similar things but "parish" may be perceived as overly Christian or old-fashioned by some people who would prefer the other terminology.

If people would like to see a local council created they need to do so using a petition. Any individual can set up a petition. There's help e.g. petition forms. People in the community can get other people to sign it. The signatures need to be from registered electors in the local area for which the council is requested. They can't be on several different petitions.

Once handed in to the Northampton Borough Council the petitions will be validated against electoral role. If they are found at 27 April 2012 to exceed the threshold of that area – generally 10% - they go forward as valid petition – which means they go to the full Council.

There's then a second stage, which is a referendum, due for 15 November 2012, the same day as the Police Commissioner's referendum. So all electors can vote in each area – a simple "yes" or "no" to having the proposed local council established. If there's a majority in favour on the day the proposal will go forward to have approval for the local council being set up. Individuals then stand as parish councillors in May 2013. The parish precept will be set by Northampton Borough Council for the first 10 months or thereabouts. The new local council will then set its

own precept for 2014-15.

There is a web address www.northampton.gov.uk/cgr. Information there includes the proposed timetable, petition forms, and information about possible parish council powers. E-petitions for people to sign electronically and the possibility for people to set up e-petitions online themselves. There are ward maps available. Petitions may seek parish councils for part of a ward, a whole ward or going across more than one ward – all the petitions so far have been set up by NBC and/or NCC Councillors and they often have close links to local residents associations.

There are 7 parish councils already in Northampton, mostly in the south of the Borough and on the outskirts of Northampton. They offer a range of services, often currently just a few of what they could potentially do.

On the “You Decide” form you can put your name down as if signing a petition by sending the form to NBC.

The 10% required to get a referendum for an area ranges between 250 and 660 signatures of individual electors.

Parish councils in Northampton currently have a precept of £20 to £100 per registered elector per year. So people have to pay more tax if they have a parish council. Most petitions so far submitted are looking for about £1 per week per registered elector.

Some parish councils choose to pay for staff/roles such as a “PCSO” (Police Community Support Officer), Environmental Warden and Parish Park Warden. Some have volunteers doing roles. Community centres may be owned and run by parish councils. Some might pay for equipment or apparatus such as MUGA. Duston has – imminently – a sports and leisure complex and hopes to develop St Luke’s into a day nursery. Some run community events and organise tree planting. Some do road signs, park fencing, community clean ups and reviewing planning applications.

In response to questioning about how minority interests such as those of LGBT people would be taken into account in how these new councils might work, Keith confirmed that at this early stage the need for future parish councils to be set up to work with due regard to the equality duties had not been considered. He advised that he thought it would be a matter for the Lead Petitioners to decide about addressing if they got the go ahead to set up a new council. Keith noted that as Northampton Borough Council’s timetable includes providing some initial support to help the new local councils get started, he would add to the timetable that, if a local council got the go ahead, the relevant people would be encouraged to have due regard to the equality duties and inclusivity from the outset - which is due to be from January 2013. That might include conversation with the forums.

Bus Interchange Design Options

Matt Hammond shared plans under development. He explained that he was in the process of stakeholder and public consultation to get different views to inform the

plans.

The proposals for a new bus interchange came about due to the proximity of existing bus station to the shopping centre and proposals to extend the Grosvenor Centre over the existing bus station site. The town can't move forward in attracting major retailers currently due to space. Subway access currently provided is not good, the escalators can be an issue and crossing the road is dangerous.

Other sites had been looked at:

- Upper Mounts: considered but too far from town centre so rejected.
- Ladys Lane: considered but again too far and some access issues too so not viable.

So the Fishmarket site was chosen. It's not without its issues but best of the options available.

Subway to Mayorhold will need to go as it is not possible to provide current gradient requirements for disability access across the site.

The kebab shop next to the Bear pub is due to stay. The two properties next to kebab shop (numbers 5 and 7) will go. Work is ongoing with English heritage: currently it is proposed to retain the facades of the buildings as part of the heritage of the town – part of the front of the interchange.

There is due to be a new road along Alley Road round the back of the Chinese restaurant.

The planning proposal is due to go in 2 April 2012 to NBC; potentially to Planning Committee in July 2012; and if all goes well work should start with demolition in August/September 2012 and the start of building towards end of year so the interchange can be up and running the following year. As soon as that's done Legal and General can get on with development of Grosvenor Centre.

Bus stops will be in the interchange and along the Drapery to MacDonalds. Buses will always go from the same place to help people know where to find them.

Street lighting has still to be considered. NCC policy applies outside. Inside the bus interchange will only be operational till about midnight. Outside of those times it'll be covered by CCTV linked to the hub at St John's car park but street lighting will be important. Much of the land is NBC and that may help.

Matthew from FAN said he was struck that the new bus interchange will be directly opposite the Boston Clipper, the big gay bar. Hundreds of people everyday will be hanging around bored waiting for buses and watching the pub and the people coming and going from it. The Boston has been located in a relatively private road. The interchange would change that dramatically.

It was noted that out of the 6% population thought to be LGB far fewer people are out – people might be inadvertently outed or perceived to be gay and thus placed at

risk of homophobic attack if they are seen coming and going from a 'gay bar'. One member of the forum had been somewhere else where there was a similar situation and people became scared in case they might be seen. Another member of the forum reported having a similar experience in Birmingham where the main gay bars and taxi companies were located on the same street – it had created issues people had to cope with.

There was some discussion of what might be done to help keep people safe. Matt agreed that there could be notices within Bus Interchange to raise awareness of and help report hate crime, helpful numbers etc to help people if they have concerns. Matt noted that there would also be help points including a small facility for staff on site, but said much of the site supervision would rely on the CCTV link to St Johns.

In response to questioning from the forum Matt explained there would be no provision for drivers. They will go in and out again. For National Express anything else will happen at their depot in Far Cotton. They are looking at acquiring property nearby to have a canteen etc. So far as Stagecoach is concerned, Victoria St is intended as a hub for long distance coaches plus a couple of stops within the interchange for picking up people who might be changing from a bus to the coach.

The stops in the street will have covered shelters. There is no intention to heat any of the new interchange area.

A member of the forum said people's safety remained a concern for him – especially getting from one place to the other – say if someone was coming from out of town and wanted to get to the Boston safely.

It was noted that Bounds taxis will stay where they are. Parking will be enforced in the area. Bounds has no parking there anyway as it's all double yellow lines. Bounds are happy as they expect to get extra traffic from people using the bus interchange.

Lesbian Line

Their disco had raised £400 which would be used towards the costs of their rent and telephone. The next disco would be 30 June at 8pm at Lings Forum. The Lesbian Line representative said they found it to be a good venue as it only costs £75 and the staff are good. Lesbian Line will sell tickets in advance and on the door and have just started an online paypal facility.

FAN Northants

Matt T shared a print out of FAN events:

- art exhibition 1st June – 14th July in the People's Gallery upstairs in Northampton Museum and Art Gallery. The space has been booked. The group has got a copy of "Forgotten Fairytales". They would like to hear from anyone interested in exhibiting. The exhibition has been timed to coincide with the traditional "Pride" season and is hoped will be upbeat.

- the group is about to book stand at Carnival which is the afternoon of 9 June at

Delapre Abbey park

- Cabaret has been booked – a summer equivalent of the Christmas ball. Adults only. 20 July. Performance artists include Christopher Green www.christophergreen.net and Rosie Lugosi. Funding has been applied for from Big Lottery and if the group gets that they hope to drop the ticket price down to help make the event more accessible to people.

- Umbrella Fair – 18 and 19 August. The group is hoping to have some councillor sponsorship. Northampton Youth Forum will provide a Stamp out Hate Crime stand and lend their rainbow flag bunting for the marquee. It is hoped to organise some activities for people to enjoy as well as food.

- Other plans in development include a library event and book club. One member of the forum offered to speak to Northampton Literature Group about any possible links through them which could help. Some workshops “in conversation with...” are also being planned.

- FAN would really like to get some display equipment so they can promote selves as the lack of having this is a bit of a barrier.

Dragon’s Den at Northamptonshire County Council

There was discussion about the process for the Big Society Fund and the robustness of any Equality Impact Assessment, training and support in relation to equalities and diversity public sector equality duties and good practice for the panel members. There was concern about some stereotyping comments and challenges about the community rather than the application or applying organisation. FAN had written to Cllr Kirkbride making it clear that while they were not asking the panel to overturn their decisions, they were asking that they address the process so people aren’t subjected to stereotypical comments from business leaders. FAN had cited NBC identifying the need for training for their CEFAP Panel as comparative and contrasting good practice. They felt the NCC EIA for the Big Society Fund had not picked up on the need for training. Cllr Kirkbride was understood to be preparing a response. FAN said they would update the forum in due course.

Northampton Carnival Archive Project

This is the first project of its kind in the country. An exhibition about the project and history of the Northampton Carnival is now on in the People’s Gallery at Northampton Museum and Art Gallery.

The project is looking to hear from people who have objects, photos or just stories about the Carnival past and present.

8. ITEMS FOR FUTURE MEETINGS

It was agreed that the next Forum meeting would include items as follows;

- Northampton Alive: a 30 minutes presentation and debate about the regeneration of Northampton from 6.30pm to 7pm open to the public and facilitated by the Leader of the Council

- Review of IDAHO
- Umbrella Fair update
- Councillor Empowerment Fund update
- FAN exhibition update

9. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of this Forum would be 22 May 2012.

The meeting concluded at Time Not Specified