

Northampton Borough Council

Northampton Diverse Communities Equalities Forum

Thursday, 24 November 2011

People at the meeting: Councillor Suresh Patel – Co Chair
John L Rawlings – Co Chair
Alaa Abouzanad, Chair of the Northants Association of Supplementary Schools
Gracie Okusanyo Northamptonshire Link
Cllr Brendan Glynane (Chair of Overview and Scrutiny Committee)
Morcea Walker - Individual
Alaa Abouzanad - Northants Assoc of Supplementary Schools
Pawel Kuc - PolakNorthampton
Matthew Toresen - FAN Northants
Jake Fisher - Northampton Youth Forum
Chris Mistry - Indian Hindu Welfare Organisation
Anjona Roy - NREC
Abade Ahmed - Somali Community
Sue Ward - Northants Police
Rachel Packman - Northants Police
Zahira Case - Pearls of Peace and Northampton Islamic Association

Officers at the meeting Thomas Hall
Lindsey Ambrose

1. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

Cllr Suresh Patel, as Chair, welcomed everyone to the meeting and everyone introduced themselves. Pawel Kuc who provides the website Polak Northampton was welcomed to this as his first meeting.

2. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from: Rashmi Shah, Mr Habibi from the Afghan community; Amarjit Atwal from Northampton Sikh Community Centre and Youth Club; Neelam Aggarwal Singh from Northampton Indian Hindu Welfare Organisation; Samuel and Christiana Owusu-Akuffo; Cllr Winston Strachan; Suzy van Rooyen from Crime to Christ; Jatish Shah; and Daniel Wilkinson of Northampton Youth Forum.

3. MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING

The Minutes of the last meeting were accepted, subject to noting that apologies from Mr C. Mistry should have been included.

4. STAMP OUT HATE CRIME CAMPAIGN UPDATE

Jake Fisher, a member of Northampton Youth Forum who attends Weston Favell Academy, presented the Stamp out Hate Crime campaign the young people are leading.

The campaign was partly inspired following the suicide due to bullying and in particular cyberbullying of a local teenager, Natasha Warnes, in summer 2011. Young people had approached Northampton Youth Forum asking them to do something to help raise awareness of bullying and hate crime, to do something to help people in schools be more aware of their rights and to help schools take the issues seriously. The campaign has a Facebook page which launched in September 2011 (www.facebook.com/stampouthatecrime) and an ordinary web page which includes some free resources, online survey links and links to useful organisations (www.northampton.gov.uk/stampouthatecrime).

The campaign recognised that these are difficult times with reducing public sector resources and funding for local community organisations, all of which may impact on roles that may currently help with some of the issues relating to bullying and hate crime. So the young people wanted to make it easy for people to get involved.

The campaign starts by seeking to raise awareness that tackling hate crime including bullying is everyone's business. The Facebook page acknowledges that with what Facebook identifies as around 13,000 young people aged 13 to 19 in Northampton area, many youth will be using social media – so there is no point saying not to do so. Rather, the Facebook page is able to show through videos, links and news about how to recognise cyberbullying, tips for staying safe online and otherwise, stories of inspirational youth projects and survivor stories, news about changes to the law and people held to account for what they have done. It seeks to win hearts and minds.

The campaign recognises that with changing and wide ranges of services, different organisations may want and need different approaches such as individual school reporting mechanisms and policies. Young people on youth forum have begun working with their headteachers, school presidents, school councils and others to get people on board and identify what for them locally will help to get people to be less likely to bully and harm others and more likely to report things sooner. It is hoped that often it might be simpler and less costly in all ways if people speak up sooner, rather than feeling that they should have to put up with things. The campaign recognises that although young people can often be perpetrators of hate crime including bullying, many young people are unfamiliar with the concept of hate crime or its consequences. The campaign aims to educate them.

The young people are working on an exhibition, which should be available after April 2012 to go to schools and organisations in the community. Featuring local people talking about experiences of hate and bullying, sharing about the pledges people of all ages and from lots of community groups have made about wanting to stamp out hate crime, and encouraging people to report hate crime including bullying.

There is due to be an initial exhibition in the People's Gallery at Northampton Museum and Art Gallery in late January to early March, as part of recognising

Holocaust Memorial Day and LGBT History Month, and a chance for people so far involved to be able to see what has been happening and how very many people share the wish to stamp out hate crime.

There is due to be a small elephant as part of the Safari Northampton public art project in summer 2012.

Jake described significant changes, which have happened, at his school as a result of himself, Daniel and other young people asking for change. There has been excellent support and welcome for the young people's interest from the teaching staff. Changes have been made to improve reporting within the school, commitment given for the school to gain anti-bullying accreditation working with the county council, young people and teachers have taken part in photo shoots to create images for the campaign, a whole school pledge sign-up is planned of around 1300 signatures and the young people have been given budget and encouraged to raise awareness of the campaign using web presence for the school. There are some thoughts about having a particular day each year as a 'Stamp out Hate Crime' day to provide a focus for this area of work. Jake has been looking to make contact with Northamptonshire Police so that young people can understand their role better and how to report hate crime to them. Jake felt he had gained a lot in confidence through his involvement in this work.

It was noted that some other schools are also making changes. It was noted that young people involved can claim volunteering awards from vinspired for anything from 10 hours upwards.

Cllr Patel congratulated Jake on his achievements.

Agreed: that on behalf of the Forum L Ambrose would write to the school to pass on the appreciation for the work Jake had done and the school's response to it, also expressing the hope that this work could inspire other schools across Northamptonshire to get involved too.

Anjona Roy said she was concerned that agencies should follow up when things are reported to them, making sure that the right people are involved and take the right actions. She said there was very low reporting of incidents from beyond Northamptonshire Police since the changes which had reduced former multi-agency working arrangements. She felt it was important that agencies reported properly in order to build on the work the young people were doing. She said no agencies should feel they could just say "ignore it and it will go away".

John Rawlings said that bullying is a big spectrum and very difficult to address. He felt the campaign was exciting as it was getting debate going in schools, making it harder for things to be brushed aside. John suggested the youth forum might challenge other schools to get involved by saying for example that Weston Favell Academy is being inspirational in doing what it has and asking them what they could do too.

Cllr Brendan Glynane welcomed the fact that the Northampton Youth Forum is

working with Jo Woods and the anti-bullying work she is doing for Northants County Council in the education area.

There was interest in understanding the lack of young men signed up to the Facebook page and how this seemed to reflect verbal feedback from discussions with young men in their teens. Jake said that many young men do not like to accept that they are the weaker one, to admit that something has happened to them. They fear that to do so might damage their “street cred”. They fear that being seen to support the campaign might lead some people to ask whether they are only involved because they are a victim. They needed to see more men as role models. The campaign was using a lot of men in the photos of people in Stamp out Hate Crime T-shirts, posting about the ‘Real Men’ campaign about domestic violence, and male celebrity stories to help challenge the stereotype and fear perceived.

Matthew Toresen said that FAN Northants would be willing to talk in schools.

Anjona Roy said that NREC would be willing to support activities.

Anjona Roy said that people working in Education don’t attend or send casework to meetings of the countywide hate forum. The only ones referred were coming through NREC itself. She expressed a fear that if people report and do not get the right results they may be put off reporting again as it takes a lot of courage to report hate crime and bullying. She felt it was important that work to tackle hate crime should include promoting 3rd party or anonymous reporting and the ability to simply log incidents so that even if someone did not want further action taken at one point, later on there would be an evidence trail to help take further action.

John Rawlings asked about the need for schools to recognise that people who bully may themselves be suffering from bullying or other harmful situations. Jake explained that at his school this was recognised. People identified as bullying were referred to counsellors to see if there was a bigger picture and anything that the school could do to help them, besides dealing with the incidents which had prompted concerns to be raised.

It was noted that lots now happens with school governors too.

It was noted that the Stamp out Hate Crime campaign was due to have a stand at a concert to be held on 12 January at Cripps Hall Theatre in memory of Natasha Warnes.

5. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY :HATE CRIME PROJECT

Cllr Glynane introduced the work done by Overview and Scrutiny for Northampton Borough Council. The Committee provides a system of checks and balances on what the Council does. In this case it is looking at hate crime and hate crime reporting and how it might be improved.

Cllr Glynane took the Forum through the core questions the Committee was using to

help it gather information.

How can Northampton Borough Council ensure there is more reporting of hate crime?

Suggestions included that: staff should be trained to look out for hate crime, to understand that members of the public might not realise something happening to them might be a hate crime and staff should help to identify that it might be a hate crime; NBC should work with other agencies such as Northants County Council, Northamptonshire Police and community groups to solve things the Council can't solve on its own; people working for the Council need to have confidence of their managers that they can ask questions and have support of 'the system'; communication and good relationships with people in the community are important as some people's experience was that people they know who have used NBC's frontline services did not know how or where to report hate crime and would find it helpful to be able to know easily that they are meeting the right person to tell about hate crime and racism.

Concern was raised that in the past there had been an Equality Monitoring Group with Northants Police which involved lots of people in helping and advising the Police to identify issues as hate crime. This had helped groups feel confident about there being a real commitment from the Police. It was suggested that there is a vacuum now the Police are not doing this and that this is not helping the Council.

How can awareness of NBC at all levels be raised within NBC?

Suggestions included to consider hate crime awareness and reporting within appraisals; services should share examples of incidents dealt with in recent months or years, to learn from both good and not so good practice; training and internal messages to staff should seek to go beyond just delivering the intellectual message that this is something people should do.

Barriers to reporting hate crime within NBC?

Suggestions included people do not know who to go to; poor experience in the past; getting adequate commitments from contracted out services; recognising that the council still has responsibilities even if it outsources services; more awareness of how to deal well with issues in relation to private hire vehicles; and looking to do more about disability discrimination issues in licensed premises; tackling the use of homophobic language e.g. "that's so gay" and gay jokes are used frequently in some organisations without people realising the significance and potential impact it can have on workplace culture or individuals; recognise that some people won't buy into 'you should report this' and need to understand emotionally why this is important.

What could Overview and Scrutiny champion?

Suggestions included: given the collapse of multi-agency working it is up to each organisation to police itself so O&S could do some qualitative and some quantitative

data gathering and analysis so that year on year it could request reports from the various NBC departments and services, for example asking each to come up with 1 incident dealt with well and 1 incident not dealt with so well and to say what learning the department or service had from this. The report could include monitoring how many reports involved other agencies.

Should there be an annual report about tackling hate crime?

Yes.

6. NORTHAMPTONSHIRE ASSOCIATION OF SUPPLEMENTARY SCHOOLS

Alaa Abouzanad, Chair of the Northants Association of Supplementary Schools provided an update about their work.

There had been a parents conference in October 2011 with attendance by about 70 people. This had included a conference with Nikki Taylor about university and a presentation by a headteacher of a primary school encouraging parents to involve their children in extra-curricular activity. The Stamp out Hate Crime campaign had a stand and people were encouraged to get involved with Northants County Council anti-bullying work too.

The Association had received a "QISS" (Quality in Study Support and Extended Services) award. This accreditation recognised their work with mainstream schools.

Discussions with Northants County Council about the funding situation had been continuing. Currently it was understood that the county council funding would end at the end of March 2012.

A business plan was being worked on to support continuation of the Association's work. It was suggested that this might include some activity to let people outside of the schools know what they do.

Anjona Roy suggested the Association might have regard to work Andy Pilkington at University of Northampton had done on under-achievement of black and minority ethnic groups a few years ago and at what the picture is now.

An Annual Dinner was planned for 18 December 2011 and all members of the Forum were invited.

7. NORTHAMPTONSHIRE LINK

Gracie introduced the work of the Link.

The service has a focus on Health and Social Care services, involving the public in their development. There is a committee of volunteers from a broad range of backgrounds.

Gracie's role is "Community Network Research Officer". This means she looks at gaps and experiences of services that people tell Link about.

There are 3 main areas of work:

- health
- mental health
- enter and view training in which volunteers look at quality in care homes and other frontline care services, speaking to residents, users, carers and families to find out what can be improved.

The Link can request information from any relevant services, which must then respond to the Link within a certain number of days.

The Link has a database of community groups and local organisations, even if they only meet informally monthly in a local pub.

Where people report experiencing difficulties with services, their concerns go to the Link's working groups. As a widespread issue, they become a priority with the Link able to contact managers and if necessary elevate issues to directors.

The Link is looking for more representatives to get involved in its work from diverse communities and younger people.

The Link is based in Northampton Volunteering Centre.

Action: Gracie, Anjona and David Ward to liaise about making referrals to NREC

8. NORTHAMPTON BOROUGH COUNCIL: APPROACHES TO GRANTS FUNDING AND COMMISSIONING:UPDATE

Grants funding: The Partnership Fund

Thomas Hall, Head of Policy and Community Engagement, outlined that the Partnership Fund currently has £550,000 in 2011-12. The amount of money in the fund in total next financial year will depend on what councillors decide when they set the Budget for the Council in February 2012.

The Partnership Fund has broad criteria that organisations need to satisfy. It funds services to provide information, advice and guidance on a variety of things such as debt, benefits, and legal rights; activities to encourage people to get involved in public life who would otherwise be isolated; and vulnerable groups.

Applications for the next round of funding would be welcome from 1 Dec 2011 to 16 Jan 2012. Information and forms would be published at www.northampton.gov.uk/partnershipfund on 1 Dec 2011.

During the period in which applications would be welcomed, there would be advice and training available to organisations – to help them make the most of the opportunity and to check that their applications are complete.

Decisions about the funding awards are made by a panel that includes people from

the community. It is known as the “CEFAP” Panel. It is due to meet in February 2012 to make recommendations. The Northampton Volunteering Centre supported NBC recently did some diversity training for the Panel to help them make effective decisions.

Thomas said that the Partnership Fund process had been considered through equality impact assessment. He said that individual decisions to award, and not award, would also be subject to equality impact assessment. Members of the CEFAP Panel had asked for training to ensure they made decisions as transparently and correctly as possible.

Commissioning

The Council had little control of what people might choose to apply for as grants. Some communities which might benefit from funding may not send in applications. The Council is aware that there are areas of need. Commissioning is a way of trying to make sure that someone is addressing the needs, even if it is not Council staff who are doing the work but instead the work is done by community organisations.

In looking at using a commissioning approach, NBC wants to learn from the successes and failures of other organisations. It does not want to damage the voluntary sector. It wants to be fair to smaller organisations as well as bigger ones.

A small group of councillors is looking into this and due to complete their work by the end of March 2012. There is no ‘in principle’ decision as yet to use commissioning – that should happen in spring 2012 – and various forums could be used to inform the decision-making. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee produced an initial Equality Impact Assessment. It will need to be consulted on along with proposals for commissioning. It refers to good practice and pitfalls elsewhere.

9. COMMUNITY INFORMATION EXCHANGE

Indian Hindu Welfare Organisation: Diwali festival in the town centre went well. The date of the next Diwali festival is 10 November 2012.

Equality and Human Rights Commission: an investigation has been launched looking at recommendations they made about migrant workers in the meat industry. Contact Anjona Roy at NREC for more information.

NREC Dinner: rescheduled, date and time tbc.

Beth Shalom Holocaust Memorial Centre Trip: a free trip organised by the Dialogue Society still had places available.

Pearls of Peace: a family event was to be held soon including parental advice sessions and discussions to help muslim families support their children in schools in relation to the Christmas festival.

Arabic School: had held a celebration event

Zimwomen Multi-Cultural Fundraising Fashion Show: this was being organised with students from University of Northampton. Stamp out Hate Crime campaign were due to have a stand and do a pledge sign-up at the event.

Changes to BBC Northampton radio: Morcea Walker as a Regional Audience Member for BBC Northampton outlined proposed changes which would remove Northampton local content at various times during the week including afternoons, Sunday afternoon/evening and Saturdays. Instead Radio Cambridgeshire would be broadcast. This could mean loss of special interest programmes and loss of opportunities to promote local community events. More information via www.bbc.co.uk/bbctrust

Agreed: L Ambrose would post information about the upcoming events and BBC Radio consultation on the Forum's Facebook page immediately after the Forum (www.facebook.com/NorthamptonDiverseCommunitiesForum)

10. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

There was none.

11. ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION AT THE NEXT MEETING

It was suggested that items for discussion at the next Forum meeting might include Taxi Age Policy Consultation, NBC Budget Consultation and finding out more from Northants County Council about how hate crime and bullying are dealt with in Education given concerns raised earlier in the meeting.

12. DATES AND VENUES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

Dates of the next meetings would be 19 Jan 2012 and 15 March 2012, both at 6.30pm until about 8.30pm at Northampton Guildhall.

The Schedule of Council meetings for the next Mayoral year (running from about May 2012) would soon be due to be set. The Co-Chairs would be invited to consider any dates proposed by the Council for these Forum meetings and to alert to any known clashes. This is sooner than some groups will know whether events they want to organise can go ahead. So, while the Council wants to avoid changing set meeting dates, were Forum members to become aware of events etc which clashed in the coming months as, for example, funding to do things was confirmed, it would be helpful if people would let L Ambrose or the Co-Chairs know as early as possible so that consideration can be given, ideally involving regular forum attendees, about changing dates of meetings.