

Northampton Borough Council

Northampton Diverse Communities Equalities Forum

Thursday, 19 January 2012

People at the meeting: Cllr Suresh Patel (Chair)
John Rawlings (Chair)
Ann Timson, Individual
Anjona Roy, NREC and Dostiyo
Alaa Abouzanad, Northants Assoc. Supplementary Schools
Morcea Walker, Northampton Carnival and Northants Assoc. Supplementary Schools
Michael Greenfield, Northants County Council
Jenny Campbell, Inspiration FM Radio
Gracie Okusanyo, the Link
Sharon Stringer, NBC and NCC
Pawel Kuc, Polak Northampton
Emilia (student)

Officers at the meeting Lindsey Ambrose, NBC
Dale Robertson, Northampton Borough Council

1. WELCOMES AND INTRODUCTIONS

Cllr Suresh Patel welcomed everyone to the meeting.

2. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Sean Silver, Zahira Case, Christiana and Samuel Owusu-Akuffo.

3. MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING

Gracie Okusanyo said she would like to suggest some changes to the minutes in respect of the Link and that she would send these by email. [As at 28 Feb 2012 nothing has been received from her.]

4. NBC BUDGET CONSULTATION

A powerpoint presentation was shown which went through many of the budget options forming part of the council's budget consultation.

People then gave feedback. There were comments in particular about the need for the council to have due regard in considering the equality outcomes and impacts of options.

It was suggested that in some other areas, development of enterprise zones has been associated with equality targets to ensure that certain numbers of jobs might go to people with disabilities, youth etc.

There were concerns whether there were cumulative or linked impacts between options for changes to CCTV and stopping funding towards 3 Police Community Support Officer posts. There was some concern about the Northamptonshire Police overall staffing diversity profile and the extent to which ethnic minority and LGBT people were confined to being identifiable in the PCSO roles rather than across the force – and the impacts that cuts by Police, the County Council and NBC might have on the diversity profile.

There was some concern that in developing neighbourhood planning approaches, due regard should be had to the need to engage with communities of interest who might have small voluntary sector organisations with addresses in the town centre e.g. c/o Northampton Volunteering Centre yet which might have client bases around the town.

There was some interest in seeing the Council supporting activities such as Northampton Carnival and Diwali in the town centre.

There was some concern about the potential impact of changes to concessions for non domestic rates and how this might affect voluntary sector organisations already under financial pressure – and whether this could lead to the cessation of groups representing particular communities of interest.

There was some concern about how the hardship fund to help people tackle rat problems would work.

Note further to the meeting

After the meeting the comments were passed into the consultation feedback and where appropriate officers updated their Equality Impact Assessments for particular budget options in light of the comments made, along with other feedback received during the consultation. The revised equality impact assessments were then published together with the original ones some days ahead of the council meeting at which councillors would be looking to set the council's budget.

5. HATE CRIME- UPDATE WITH PARTICULAR REGARD TO SCHOOLS AND MULTI AGENCY WORKING.

Mr Greenfield from Northants County Council explained that his service area looks to receive reports of hate incidents – but not hate crimes – from schools.

They use the definition that a hate incident is any incident perceived to be motivated by hate by the victim or anyone else.

Mr Greenfield said that reports of hate crime should be made directly to the Police.

The County Council used to ask schools for monthly paper updates. The system was not as robust as was wanted. So Jo Wood the anti-bullying co-ordinator and Mr Greenfield rewrote the policy and have undertaken some activities with schools to encourage them to report hate incidents – but not hate crime – electronically and categorising the incidents according to whether they are to do with race,

religion/belief, LGBT, disability, gender, transgender or some other type of bullying. NCC's role was to disaggregate the data and send it to the Police for their use.

A DVD had been made to help schools prepare to meet their public sector equality duties.

Work had been done with Capita to create a new system for use by all the schools as Capita were already providing finance systems for schools.

The new computer system went live in September 2011. There were some problems with it and some schools continued to use the paper system. More information was sent to schools including asking them to report even nil returns rather than to make no report at all.

Countywide community safety priorities for the year ahead were due to recommend domestic violence, tackling reoffending, drugs and alcohol, crime prevention and hate crime as priorities. At Northampton level there was interest in also adopting domestic abuse and serious acquisitive crime as priorities.

Mr Greenfield and Jo Wood were now working with schools identified as having high incidences of bullying and data was starting to be sent to the county council.

Mr Greenfield explained that the county council is using the "STOP" programme – teaching children and young people that when incidents happen to them several times on purpose that they can report them as bullying.

Locally there was area-based working. If a youth was identified as being a victim then it was possible to tap into multi-agency monthly meetings. There could also be support put into schools to help deal with bullying. It might be possible to fund some diversionary activities.

There is also work done on looking at how to prevent incidents by having 'healthy schools' and 'anti-bullying awareness' programmes. School governor training started in 2011 and more was due to happen in 2012.

Anjona Roy suggested that in terms of benchmarking its performance now the county council should look back to when it had a racial incidents officer and that the county council might consider working with Northants Rights and Equality Council ("NREC"). NREC had received reports of children from different schools in the community, including primary school age children bullied by secondary school age children. There was a perception that the Police regard such incidents as low level so that they don't want to respond. An example was given that a parent who tried to persuade a Police officer to respond was threatened with a harassment order.

There was a wish for an annual report to governors about levels of incidents and reports made within each school.

There was a concern that more needed to be done to help schools who want to make reporting hate crime one of their equality objectives to be published by April

2012.

There was interest in whether NREC or other people or organisations might become OFSTED Consultees.

The following link was identified to be included in these Minutes:

<http://www.northamptonshire.gov.uk/en/councilservices/educationandlearning/parents/anti-bullying/pages/professionals.aspx>

Some members of the Forum referred to cases parents had asked them to help with. A common issue seemed to be the lack of awareness of any central point to refer concerned parents to for help – and a reluctance merely to provide them with a link to a website.

Morcea Walker referred to the youth-led Stamp out Hate Crime campaign which had been initially looking at raising awareness of what hate crime is and how it can include hate incidents and bullying. She said that there is a lack of awareness among parents. She had noticed that when the youth forum have been explaining what hate crime is, then other young people and parents understand, but it seems to be for the first time – that they have not understood information from the county council or schools before that point. She also raised concerns that the reporting system was expecting too much from staff in schools to be able to categorise hate incidents and types of incident in order to receive and pass on reports and wondered if this might be a barrier to effective reporting.

This view was echoed by another member of the forum who felt that more needed to be done if school teachers were to understand what hate crime is, the culture and diversity of victims. There was a view that more needed to be done to raise awareness within the school community at all levels that everyone has their own perceptions and prejudices which contribute to learned behaviours. There was interest to know how the county council measures the understandings teachers have of pupil behaviour, diversity and hate crime – not just hate incidents.

There was a concern that more needs to be done to raise awareness among youth of the impact of behaviour on other youth.

There was a concern that in some cases people from Polish backgrounds are not identified as victims of racism because they are seen as being white.

6. TAXI AGE POLICY CONSULTATION

The Forum received information about the taxi age policy consultation which is looking into whether there should be any change in the rules about the maximum age of vehicles which can be used as private hire cars.

7. COMMUNITY INFORMATION EXCHANGE

Morcea Walker reported that Northants County Council had agreed to continue paying the salaries and building costs of the supplementary schools to the end of March 2012. Then they would make a grant to the Association of supplementary schools as a start up grant. There were about 5 schools with pupils taking GCSE exams. Visits were being made to rationalise how schools would so that the Association could take them into a healthy situation from April 2012. There were ongoing efforts to find other funding.

Gracie shared some information about various Link meetings coming up.

Zimwomen shared about their event for parents and children on 14 February at the Doddridge Centre.

Pearls of Peace advised they were holding an International Women's Day event on 8 March 2012 to which all women were invited.

It was noted that Northampton Youth Forum were at the memorial concert for Natasha Warnes at which there was a lot of interest from attendees of all ages in the Stamp out Hate Crime campaign and a pledge-board was signed.

8. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

There was no other business.

9. ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION AT THE NEXT MEETING

There was interest from the Forum in receiving updates from Northants Police in relation to hate crime and to stop and search at the next meeting.

10. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Date of next meeting: 15 March 2012 at 6.30pm at Northampton Guildhall