

Northampton Borough Council

Northampton Diverse Communities Equalities Forum

Wednesday, 6 June 2012

1. WELCOMES AND INTRODUCTIONS

Cllr Suresh Patel (Councillor Co-Chair) and John Rawlings (Community Co-Chair) welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Other attendees at the meeting introduced themselves. They included: Matthew Toresen (FAN Northants and Northampton Volunteering Centre), Neelam Aggarwal-Singh (Northampton Indian Hindu Welfare Organisation and Northampton Inter Faith Forum), Dana Hannon (Northampton LINK) Jenny Campbell (Inspiration FM Radio), and Lindsey Ambrose (NBC).

2. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Alaa Abouzanad (Northants Association of Supplementary Schools), Morcea Walker MBE, Christiana and Sam Owusu-Akuffo Mr C Mistry (IHWO) and Ajaib Hussain (Northampton Carnival Archive Project).

3. MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING

The Minutes were agreed as a fair, true and accurate record of the last meeting.

It was noted that Cllr Patel, John Rawlings and Lindsey were due to follow up with the Police about future involvement with the forum.

4. NORTHAMPTON CARNIVAL ARCHIVE PROJECT

It was noted that the Northampton Carnival Archive project is funded by the Heritage Lottery. It's about collecting, capturing and sharing about people's experiences over the years of taking part in, watching etc the Northampton Carnival. It's part of an initial pilot which could go national if successful.

Anyone with photos or memorabilia who would like to have them added to the digital archive being created, or who might be interested in opportunities to volunteer with the project, should contact Ajaib Hussain. Email: ajaib@carnivalarts.org.uk.

5. COMMUNITY INFORMATION EXCHANGE

There was none.

6. INDIAN HINDU WELFARE ORGANISATION AND TEMPLE PROJECT UPDATE

Neelam kindly provided an update on the Kutumbh centre project. She noted that the media had been highlighting the temple aspect but that this was just one small part of the project. The bigger part of the project is for a community centre and facilities for everyone to enjoy. The project included "sympathetic housing" (a new

term for what people might think of as 'sheltered housing').

The Indian Hindu Welfare Organisation ("IHWO") had been required to do lots of surveys over the years for Natural England and others. IHWO have been delighted with the support from Northampton Borough Council over recent years and also from West Northants Development Corporation.

One challenge had been persuading the planning officers that there was genuine intention to involve the wider community. It had helped to be able to give examples of inclusive work IHWO have already been doing such as Diwali celebrations in the town centre.

Funding for the temple is to come from community donations.

The housing element will not just be for Hindu people. People in the Hindu community have friends of other faiths and cultural backgrounds and this should continue for people in sympathetic housing, as in other housing.

The Chairs congratulated IHWO on their progress so far.

7. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Jenny Campbell was interested in having the forum obtain statistics from Northants County Council about raising attainment of Black African-Caribbean students in Northampton only.

Jenny also said she would like to have statistics for hate incident reporting from Northants County Council – and specifically would like the forum to seek an update from the manager who attended a forum meeting a few months ago.

Neelam raised concerns that the state education system approaches do not always support high-achieving pupils to stay above other children in their performance and so may not be meeting the needs of more able children. She was concerned whether improving pupil performance only prioritised the needs of children who fell so badly behind average performance that they became 'cause for concern'. Neelam suggested more resources may need to be put in to help more able and achieving children continue to stay ahead.

It was noted that in Northampton there were major changes underway and due to take effect by September 2012, being the creation of more academies. Such schools are not subject to local education authority control in the way the schools had been to date. Like special schools, private and independent schools, academies would not be required to comply with Northants County Council hate crime reporting systems or other policies and approaches. From September almost all of Northampton's secondary schools would be academies. There was some concern about how meaningful it would be to invite only the county council to talk about matters which would imminently be the responsibility of the schools themselves, not something the county council could address. Cllr Patel agreed to speak to Northants

County Council about their attending a future meeting of this forum.

8. ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION AT THE NEXT MEETING

It was noted that the Housing officers would like to bring some important consultations about future housing allocation, tenancy strategy and sheltered housing to the next meeting of this forum. These policies might have some specific relevance to diverse communities. It was agreed to invite them.

There was some discussion about how items come to be on Agendas and some concern that recently some items had felt imposed on the forum, rather than reflecting a balance of issues raised by the community and issues the council would like to bring. It was noted it is important that the community are able to have a say in forum meetings where possible about what goes on Agendas. It was noted that when this is not possible, the Co-Chairs of the Forum need to make decisions for the Forum.

There was some discussion about how members of the forum would like to be consulted and then, rather than self-help to the results of consultation available on the website, to have officers bring specific answers on specific points they had made back to forum meetings. This was acknowledged as a good and valuable point. It was noted too that in the case of some consultations, the forums are just one group consulted and officers and councillors have to have regard to the views of many more people too so that, given limited resources, it is not always possible to provide specific responses to individuals at any single meeting which has been part of the process of consultation. It was also noted that the officers who had brought the Budget Consultation to the forum were unable to return to provide feedback as they had both lost their jobs as a result of the decisions made in the Budget Consultation. It was noted that in the Budget Consultation specific points about questions raised by the forum had in some cases been addressed in the individual equality impact assessments done as part of the budget consultation and which remained available on the NBC website.

9. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting would be 18 July 6.30pm at Northampton Guildhall and would include the Housing items.