



CABINET REPORT

Report Title	Community Forums June to November 2010
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AGENDA STATUS

PUBLIC

Cabinet Meeting Date:	15 December 2010
Key Decision:	NO
Listed on Forward Plan:	YES
Within Policy:	YES
Policy Document:	NO
Directorate:	Chief Executive's Office
Accountable Cabinet Member:	Cllr Paul Varnserry
Ward(s)	all

1. Purpose

- 1.1 Together with the attached Community Report, this report updates Cabinet on the progress of the Council in relation to equalities, diversity and the Community Forums in the second part of 2009-10 and makes some recommendations.

2. Recommendations

Cabinet is recommended to:

- 2.1 recognise and welcome the work and achievements of the Forums.
- 2.2 recognise and endorse the role of the Forums in assisting the Council to meet the new duties and requirements of the Equality Act 2010 and to become an Excellent council under the Equality Framework for Local Government.
- 2.3 recognise the project activities delivered under the Money 4 Youth scheme in the first part of 2010-11, and note that the scheme is likely to be coming to an end from March 2011.

3. Issues and Choices

3.1 Report Background

Update on Forums Activities

3.1.1 The attached Community Report prepared with Forums members, outlines some of the key projects and achievements of the forums over the period between June and November this year. As will be seen, this has been a very active period, and has included involvement of the forums in Council policy making and consultation on key current topics.

Equalities Requirements

3.1.2 In July 2010 the new Government confirmed implementation of the Equality Act 2010, mostly from 1 October 2010 and with further duties for the public sector and others providing 'public functions' from 4 April 2011. The new Act introduces new rights and responsibilities for people in respect of 'protected characteristics'. The new public sector duties will require this Council to

- ensure participation by under-represented groups;
- engage with communities to encourage participation, understanding and good relations;
- promote 'engagement with difference'; and
- ensure that the community is able to hold the council to account.

3.1.3 In parallel, as the Council progresses towards its ambition of achieving 'Excellent' status within the Equalities Framework, there is a need to demonstrate

- regular engagement with people in respect of 'protected characteristics';
- that their views inform Equality Impact Assessments and their review; and
- that the council measures their views in relation to how it provides and plans to provide services.

3.1.4 The forums provide networks supported by both relationships and technology which will help the Council to meet these challenges. Through the forums, the Council can work with the community to improve quality of life and life chances, identify where action needs to be taken to address adverse impacts of policies or practices, tackle prejudice, promote understanding and encourage under-represented groups to be active in public life and local democracy.

3.1.5 The new government's approach to equalities specifically values engagement with difference to support integrating and embedding equality in how services work. The forums are key to achieving this.

Money 4 Youth (Youth Opportunities Fund/Youth Capital Fund)

3.1.6 The 2010-11 'Money 4 Youth' round of grants is expected to be the last of its kind. The emergency budget in June 2010 led to a 50% cut in capital available to be spent on youth projects via the Youth Capital stream of funding. Cabinet should note that this will inevitably mean a reduction in the range of activities

which can be supported through the Youth Forum.

Use of 'Facebook' Social Networking

- 3.1.7 To respond effectively to the changes described above, the Council is having to make changes to the various established ways of working across all of its services. For the forums, one of the most significant has been the increasing use of the social networking medium 'Facebook' to reach more people – individuals as well as groups.
- 3.1.8 This is already proving very popular with local people, and not only young people. This is described in more detail in the attached Community Report (appendix 1). Through Facebook the Council is able to communicate and interact directly with many more individuals and groups than it could through formal minutes or informal newsletters – though both of these still have a place. By their nature the forums have different needs for communication, and so a variety of approaches are used within the resources available.

3.2 Choices (Options)

- 3.2.1 Cabinet is **recommended** to recognise and endorse the forums' work as described in the Recommendations. This official recognition helps the forums to be seen as an influential part of the Council's engagement mechanisms, and motivates those who take part.
- 3.2.2 Cabinet could decide not to recognise this work. This is **not recommended**, and would lead to a diminution of the forums' influence and harm the Council's ability to meet the equality requirements set out in this report.

4. Implications (including financial implications)

4.1 **Policy:** None

4.2 **Resources and Risk:** None

4.3 **Legal:** None.

4.4 **Equality:** Through the Forums' role the Council has access to a significant network to help meet the new equality duties and the Equality Framework requirements.

4.5 Consultees (Internal and External)

Members of Forums

4.6 How the work relates to current Priority Outcomes

4.6.1 Development of the Forums is a key project within the Assistant Chief Executive Department's Service Plan

4.6.2 NBC Corporate Plan priorities 2010-13: Priority 4 in particular

5 Background Papers

5.1 Community Report (appendix 1)

Lindsey Ambrose, Community Engagement and Equalities Officer, x7566

Appendix 1: Community Report

1. Fostering Good Relations and Understanding

a. Northampton Hindu Community Memories Exhibition

People from different groups within the Hindu community in Northampton worked with Jewish-heritage organisation Jtrails and young people of mixed and no faith backgrounds, to produce an exhibition which gives insights to the lives of Hindu people in Northampton since the 1970s through pictures and personal stories.

Reflecting their integration and wish to reach out to build understandings in the wider community in Northampton – and previous under-participation by Hindu people - the exhibition was first shown at the Heritage Open Days September 2010 in the Guildhall. Due to popular demand the exhibition then was shown during Navratri at University of Northampton's Avenue Campus.

Photos of the exhibition panels and some of the feedback received are included in a photo album on Facebook at www.northampton.gov.uk/dcf

The exhibition is now due to go to Northampton Museum in December, to be shown to national Hindu groups as an example of good working with a local council, and to be shown at Northampton College around Diwali time in 2011.

b. World AIDS Day

The Forums are supporting community-led activities to raise awareness of HIV and AIDS in Northampton. A dedicated web page on the NBC website provides details of activities happening in town: www.northampton.gov.uk/worldaidsday .

c. Young People of the Year Awards – Youth Forum Finalist

Callum Green, aged 15, from Northampton Youth Forum, was one of the youngest people to make it to being a finalist at the first Northamptonshire Young People of the Year Awards. He was recognised and rewarded with money to go to his nominated good cause – Cynthia Spencer hospice – for his work over the past few years volunteering with the Youth Forum on many projects and being a positive role model whose contributions to the community challenge negative stereotypes of young people.

d. Film Northants 2010 – Diwali Trailer and Helping at Awards Night

A film made by young people aged 12 -19 volunteering in a project with Northampton Youth Forum and Inspiration FM multicultural community radio was entered into the Film Northants 2010 competition. These were some of the youngest film-makers taking part. The film was a 'trailer' highlighting the 2009 town centre Diwali celebrations which people from different schools and backgrounds enjoyed together. The

film has since been sought for the MACE (Midlands and Central England) film archive as an example of life in the East Midlands.

Northampton Youth Forum got further involved by volunteering at the red carpet awards night. This was done to further their aim of showing young people in a positive light. The Youth forum members welcomed all the guests, video'd and photographed the evening's events, collected feedback and served the guests at a champagne reception – and even washed up a mountain of glasses. The small team who organise Film Northants were delighted by their help, posted positive feedback and photographs on their website and provided the young people with certificates for their records of achievement and portfolios to recognise their volunteering.

e. Anne Frank Awards 2010

Northampton Youth Forum recognised more unsung heroes from the local community – including young people and adults of all ages.

The Arts Council has commended the link created between Carnival and these awards for being a good opportunity to promote community cohesion.

f. Judging the Northampton Carnival

Members of Northampton Youth Forum acted as judges for the Carnival procession, giving a youth view as well as those of the adult judges.

g. Diwali in the town centre

Seven schools got involved this 10th year of celebrations in Northampton town centre for all the community to enjoy. The Youth Forum chose to fund the activities through Money 4 Youth. Together with funding from other sources, this enabled the whole Diwali story to be told for the first time and for lots of people of different ages, faiths and cultures to get involved in the celebrations.

2. Encouraging Participation by under-represented groups:

a. Northampton Youth Parliament and Encouraging People to Vote

Young people from the Arabic School, Duston, Inspiration FM and the Northampton Youth Forum are working together with NBC's Electoral Services team and the Association of Supplementary Schools to encourage people to register to vote and to use their vote. The young people are due to host a stand with a quiz they have designed about the importance of voting in elections at the Supplementary Schools concert on Sunday 28 November 2010.

b. Northampton Guildhall Leaflet

Young people from Northampton Youth Forum have continued to

challenge the idea that some adults have, that young people and 'heritage' don't go together. In surveys done by organisations like Northamptonshire Voluntary Youth Action, the wish for young people to get involved in heritage and related activities comes out consistently high. Young people on the Youth Forum developed a new leaflet with John Crake, using their own photographs and a magazine-style approach with simple language to make a bright, cheerful and easy-to-read self-tour guide leaflet. It was launched at the Heritage Open Days in September 2010 and has proven to be popular with all ages. The leaflet was made in both A5 and A4 sizes in case it might be easier for some people to read in larger print.

c. Heritage Open Days

Young people, older people and disabled people provided a great welcoming team at the Guildhall for the Heritage Open Days in September 2010. They welcomed over 1250 people on guided tours and the feedback was excellent – especially for the young guides.

Youth forum have now had some volunteers doing guided tours for a few years. This has built a family-friendly reputation which was reflected not only in comments on BBC radio Northampton by a representative from English Heritage, but also in the visitors – they included many more children and young people than in previous years. This increase in mixed age group was not reflected across all sites but seems to have been a specific outcome of the changes to involve youth at the Guildhall.

One member of the Youth Forum provided a dedicated help to the vintage bus tours throughout the weekend. During his first tour, he helped a man with a medical emergency, ensuring he got necessary medical assistance. Not fazed by this, he continued his volunteering on both Saturday and Sunday.

The Youth Forum's 'On the Trail of the Secret Jewish heritage of Northampton' leaflet proved to be very popular – and known about – to around 100 people who came specifically for the Jewish heritage trail walk. Once again, the turn out in Northampton was the largest for any Jtrails walk in the UK – so much so this time, that local archaeologist John Small and a Forums member were recruited urgently to take extra groups of visitors on the trail to meet the demand.

The Youth Forum's Jewish Heritage exhibition made with Jtrails, Northampton Museum and other community partners was shown in part at the Guildhall over the weekend.

Northants Black History Association came along too, with their largest exhibition to date, as part of the heritage offer reflecting Northampton's local communities at the Guildhall.

Renaissance Heritage Awards: Judging the all age categories

Earlier in the year, heritage experts Renaissance, sought the advice of Northampton Youth Forum on how to encourage young people to get involved in their awards scheme. One outcome was that Renaissance listened to what the young people said and created the position of a 'youth judge' for the non-youth categories of awards. They created a separate panel of mostly youth but with an adult too as Youth Forum suggested, to judge the youth category of award.

A member of the Northampton Youth Forum joined the adult judges for a 'roadtrip' to visit about 10 museums in one day, taking a full part in the judging process. She went on to give a speech about her experience and decision-making at the awards night at Kelmarsh Hall. As a result of this, she was offered the opportunity to do some work experience with the BBC to help her develop her interest in working in the media in the future.

d. Renaissance Heritage Awards: 'highly commended' for Youth Participation

Northampton Youth Forum was shortlisted as a finalist by the panel for the youth category of award and was 'highly commended' in the awards. A member of the Forum attended the awards night to represent the Youth Forum and collect the certificate. The award recognised the youth taking leadership roles in planning for the Heritage Open Days at the Guildhall and on the days themselves (in relation to September 2009).

The Chair of the Judges and Renaissance praised the Youth Forum for very cost-effective publicity approaches and innovation through the use of a leaflet which had brought together council, voluntary and community sector services offering activities through the summer holidays through to the Heritage Open Days and for the creation of a Facebook page with photographs including some of young people enjoying heritage places.

e. 'MUBU' Museum Buddy Project with Northants Museums Forum

One outcome of the awards was that Northants Museums Forum and Renaissance asked the Northampton Youth Forum to help them make the heritage sector in Northampton and county more welcoming to young people as guests and volunteers (hopefully to develop to keep sites going that currently relying on elderly volunteers) through providing youth perspectives and introducing youth-friendly publicity.

The Northampton Guildhall leaflet directly inspired one site to decide to recruit young volunteers to do something similar for them in time for summer 2011.

The young people held a workshop for Local Democracy Week to which they invited representatives from each of the museums/heritage sites they are working with. They shared with them what they felt had been the strengths, barriers and areas for improvement to help attract

young people to get involved. They shared some ideas for new approaches. The feedback from the heritage places was that this was very useful – a different perspective with things they could easily do to help encourage younger people of all backgrounds to visit and volunteer with them. The young people held a session to introduce the museum/heritage trustees and volunteers to using Facebook and You Tube and helped them to get started with using these social media.

The young people have been working on developing short films for each of 9 sites which it's intended will be posted to You Tube, the museums' own web pages, shown at a youth event in March 2011 and entered in Film Northants 2011 to help highlight the places featured to people working in the film industry (e.g. film location scouts) and those who may not be traditional museum visitors but may become interested in visiting as a result of seeing the films.

f. Children and Young People's Partnership Awards - Youth Forum finalists for Community Impact

The Northampton Youth Forum's work covering a number of projects over the past year or so, led to its being a finalist in these countywide awards. Some members of the Forum attended a youth-led awards night as a result.

g. Film Northants 2011: Development of Youth Participation and Award

Northampton Youth Forum want to use the insights they gained from being involved in Film Northants 2010, to help the team develop a more youth-involving approach for 2011. It's hoped that the young people will be able to encourage more young people to enter films and that there will be enough films from young people to enable a youth award category to be created.

Northamptonshire Enterprise Ltd ('NEL') are interested in this work too – and the possibility of highlighting films of local places on Facebook and their community TV channel. A meeting with Film Northants, NEL and the Youth forum is due to take place in December 2010 to move this forward.

h. Facebook pages to reach more people more effectively

The Forums had 'pages' created on Facebook – mostly at the end of August 2010. These were created in response to feedback from members of forums. They help to reach different people to the face-to-face and email forum networks. The following provides a snapshot:

Forum	Members (11 Nov 2010)	Weekly Views (11 Nov 2010)
Youth	277	145
Holocaust Memorial Day	54	88
Diverse Communities	53	86
LGB People (LGBTQ)	24	53
Disabled People	41	50
Pensioners	20	79
Gender Equality	28	19

During the school summer holidays weekly views on the Youth Forum page rose to 570 views per week, then dropped back when term began. The Facebook pages include some existing members of Forums and also people who may be interested in the news, surveys/consultations but who do not choose to get involved through meetings.

The Gender Equality Forum only exists as a Facebook page. It includes news relating to men, women and transgender equality.

The pages only take a few moments to check every day. Anyone can post news, events, consultations etc to them. From time to time feedback reveals people have acted on the posts to these pages and the monitoring mechanisms do show 'views', so it can be seen that posts are read. The pages do not offer the same quality of opportunity to dialogue or engage as more traditional Forum meetings and project activities, so cannot be considered a substitute for that type of contact, but they are complementing and increasing the reach of the Forums networks with youth, organisations and others.

An advantage they have over reliance on publishing minutes or newsletters to share news, is that they enable photos and real-time communication to help more people get insights and become aware of opportunities to have a say, participate etc in Northampton.

i. Skate Park Campaign Development Group

Northampton Youth Forum's priorities included the need for the council to do more to help skateboarders. They chose to use Money 4 Youth to fund an idea sent in by skaters in Northampton, leading to the skaters working with the council to tell the council what exactly they want from a skate park.

Northampton Youth Forum used their Facebook page to help spread the word about the skaters and their project. In October 2010, the skaters created a Facebook event about the Cabinet meeting at which a decision would be made about allocating £250K for a skate park. Youth Forum helped to post information about the event and encouraged people to go along to the Cabinet meeting to show support for approving the money for the skate park. On the night, skaters and supporters including many young people, attended the Cabinet meeting.

j. Northampton Heritage Trail and inclusion of DisabledGo in publicity

DisabledGo works in partnership with the UK's largest accessible leisure and accommodation online information provider. Now that the town (via NBC), hospital and University all have Disabled Go guides and the need to help disabled people and their friends, families and

carers be able to participate fully in public life and the local economy is supported by such guides, there was interest in making more of the Northampton DisabledGo guide. Northamptonshire Enterprise Ltd had noted it was included in the Heritage Open Days leaflets. It was identified that most of the venues which form part of the new Northampton Heritage Trail have DisabledGo access guides. This led to their interest in including the DisabledGo logo and links where possible in promoting the Trail.

k. Diverse Communities Forum visit to Northampton Museum

Responding to a concern raised about the lack of obvious 'welcome' for people from diverse communities in the Museum, the Forum arranged a visit to help identify opportunities for the museum to improve how it communicates to encourage everyone to feel part of the community it reflects – and to find out more about what it does already. A group including Hindu, Muslim, Indian, African-Caribbean and LGB people involved in working with diverse community groups in Northampton visited. The group had the chance to see behind the scenes in the stores and to find out about the collections which include many items relating to diverse communities – items being cared for well but not on show generally. The group was able to learn about how they can donate or ask to see objects.

The group considered the basic web publicity and noted that if the museum were to include some photographs in its web pages which showed people from a diverse range of ethnic and faith groups, this would help people to feel they would be welcomed as part of the community, not outsiders – currently the publicity seemed to be divided between 'host' community and 'the rest of the world'.

It was noted that the museum leaflets had some good images that did show a wide range of people.

The group was shown the People's Gallery and told about opportunities to be able to have community displays including films there. It was decided to have a Hindu exhibition in December, Inspiration FM in January and then from Holocaust Memorial Day a Jewish heritage exhibition.

3. Supporting NBC Consultations and Activities:

a. Byelaws

The NBC consultation about updating byelaws in the town centre was brought to Forum meetings, circulated by email and posted on Facebook. The Pensioners Forum as a group raised concerns that young people needed some skate facilities, not just to be told that they could not skate. The Youth Forum raised similar concerns, while accepting that there were safety issues which needed to be addressed. Both Forums noted that at some times of day, in some of the proposed

places, skating would not necessarily be a nuisance – they urged the council to take this into account. In the end, taking into account this and other feedback, the council amended its proposed byelaws.

b. Difficult Choices and Priorities consultation

This has been posted to all Facebook pages for Forums, circulated via email networks, and has been taken to Forum meetings to enable particular groups a safe space to focus on the potential impacts of the spending review and NBC decisions in relation to this, on older people, LGB people etc. A note has been included with Agendas inviting people unable to attend the meetings to request a copy of the consultation paper if they would like one to be able to take part in this activity.

c. Central Area Action Plan: update

The Forums have continued to be kept informed about this plan's development, with leaflets being circulated at meetings and people alerted to opportunities to discuss the plan with Planning Officers in November and December.

There has been some disappointment from some members of the Disabled People's Forum about the lack of any evidence that access issues have been taken into account in the plan. There is concern that some roads are difficult to cross and closure of underpasses will make things worse. Members of the forums have been encouraged to talk to Planning Officers about their concerns.

d. Facebook

Several NBC services – and some others e.g. NHS, Police – are now using the Forums Facebook pages to post news e.g. about sports, leisure and local area opportunities.

4. Working with the NHS and NCC: Northampton Older People's Health Forum

In summer 2010, the NHS Primary Care Trust ('PCT') and Northants County Council approached Northampton Pensioners Forum asking for them to become involved in work they wanted to do to create a forum dedicated to older people's health and well-being in Northampton as a partnership activity, funded by grants funding the PCT had received and with communications and admin dealt with by the PCT and NCC.

The Pensioners Forum was anxious that they do not lose or reduce existing opportunities they have to engage with NBC but agreed to support an initial meeting as a trial of what the PCT wanted to do. The initial event was organised had a disappointing turn out – though not much different to meetings in other parts of the county.

The NHS White Paper is a cause of concern to many members of the Pensioners and Disabled People's Forums and they were keen that while the

PCT has now had to begin transitional arrangements and cannot look to provide the older people's health forum in the long-term, there should still be opportunities to discuss changes about health, care and NCC budget meanwhile. So a further meeting, planned taking account of lessons learned from the initial experience, is due to take place in January 2011.

In addition, NCC has agreed to attend a Disabled People's forum meeting as part of its Assisted Transport Consultation and the Disabled People's Forum and Pensioners Forum have agreed to share invites to that meeting (which is also due to receive an item on Disabled Facilities Grants from NBC) rather than have two separate meetings on these topics of interest to both forums.

5. Northampton Disabled People's Forum discussions included:

a. National Blue Badge Enforcement Consultation

The Disabled People's Forum provided a response to this consultation.

b. Issues of accessibility at Northampton General Hospital

Issues about accessibility at the hospital have been a repeated feature of Forum meetings. The introduction of Disabled Go its hoped may help with some aspects – and the forum has noted that the Hospital has made good use of its DisabledGo guide by having each of its service areas featured in its guide form an action plan to address the barriers to access identified and improve its accessibility performance in future assessments (done each year as part of updating the guide).

6. Northampton LGB People's Forum discussions included:

a. NBC improved ways of dealing with hate crime reporting

b. Stonewall and equality practices by Human Resources at NBC

c. Hate crimes affecting LGB community locally

d. Lack of funding and venues for LGB people in Northamptonshire:
This issue is a cause of some concern as the groups are struggling to operate even in shared spaces. It's been suggested that it would be easier for councils and others to engage with LGB and T people if they were to fund more support services for them. As a group which is less visible and quite vulnerable, it may be harder to identify among customers and service users, who is LGBT, unless and until there is a stronger infrastructure in place for LGBT people in Northampton and county.

7. Northampton Pensioners Forum discussions included:

a. Increasing use of the internet and mobile phones by older people

- b. The wish to work more closely with NBC services to help review and develop services that take account of older people's needs

8. Forums and the future: discussions included:

- a. **Records of meetings to fit with ways of working effectively and how people like to communicate**

The Forums have been considering the issue of how meetings are recorded. This has been partly to do with the changes in the Equality Act and the new data publishing, partly to do with discussing what the council needs to show about listening to what people say to become Excellent under the Equality Framework. This has also been considered in terms of looking to use the most appropriate means to record things.

Different Forums have come to different views about what may be most appropriate for them. Some have been trying out what they think to see how it works e.g. to use Facebook. There has been some discussion about the new data requirements for councils not being published until December and a wish to consider this matter further once the new requirements are known.

The Youth Forum, in keeping with other youth organisations, has found that the use of Facebook and social media, has become very important – young people do not want newsletters or minutes but photographs of their flipcharts and what they have been doing, audio and video recordings are important and within the technical abilities of young people to produce easily. So they have decided not to have minutes or a newsletter but to post news to their Facebook page. They do want to be able to have a formal record of meetings sometimes when they think it's important – for example if they make decisions about their elections or about funding but they don't think it's helpful or good use of time and money to just make a written note otherwise and they don't think anyone would read it if they made a note.

The LGB People's Forum are also looking at using Facebook – and would like email too – for sharing news and opportunities from their meetings. They say for some people having the email information can help to copy and paste it to their websites etc to help spread the word about what the council is doing. Social media has seen the rise of a lot of LGBT groups from students to adults in Northampton and beyond who feel comfortable to communicate that way but who may not want to attend meetings in person. The forum feel that for some people face to face meetings are very important and it is a really good thing that the council hosts the forum as it is 'neutral' from 'politics' which might happen between community groups. So social media is additional, not instead of meetings. They want to be able to take part in consultations and to be able to do things which make a difference (for example the Forum is looking to create an online/digital exhibition about the experiences of the local LGBT community and help available for International Day Against Homophobia) and they don't think these need to have minutes if there is a consultation survey form or the project has

its own outcomes/records. They would like to use an action plan/decision sheet and to have their own survey sheets to give views on things where there are not consultation sheets provided – this should help provide measurable responses that can help the council see how it's doing on improving things year on year and can help feed into equality impact assessment creation and review.

The Diverse Communities forum: the members of this forum like to share news but often do not want to meet for a formal meeting. They like to work on particular projects or activities. Facebook and email seem to be preferred ways to communicate, but with meetings happening where there are important issues like the council budget to discuss.

The Disabled People's Forum: there is a mix of views. Some people like Minutes, others would prefer to have action plan/decision sheets and a means to record their views rather than just the 'gloss' of Minutes. What does seem to be shared is a wish to be able to have a strong voice and able to hold the council to account. Many people who attend the Forum meetings say they do not have email or internet access. The Facebook page for this Forum seems to be used mostly by people other than those who attend Forum meetings.

Pensioners Forum: discussions about internet use, revealed that many members of the Forum now do have or are seriously thinking about getting email and internet access. However, modern.gov standard emails with links to key documents can be confusing and social media can be daunting. Some people are starting to use social media sites. Some people would like Minutes, some are happy with the newsletter, others would be happy to move to action plan/decision sheets and a sheet on which their individual views can be captured to feed into council performance and improvement.

b. Equality impact assessments

There is interest in having closer working with council officers who are developing their assessments of how ways they work – or may work – will affect people. Some people have had occasional opportunities to work more closely with council services and have found this can be a good thing for the council and for them to feel more closely involved. It has been recognised that often the difference between discussions had now and what they'd need to be like to help develop or reflect on what an officer thinks are the impacts of a proposal are not really very different. The Pensioners Forum would like to have easier access to Equality Impact Assessments information to see about what they could ask to be involved with and when – what would work for the council and them.