

Extract of the minutes of the meeting of the Northampton Diverse Communities Equality Forum – 24 November 2011

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 deal 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.