

Northampton Borough Council

Northampton LGBT and Q People's Forum

Tuesday, 22 May 2012

1. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

Cllr Anna introduced herself and everyone introduced themselves.

People at the meeting included representatives of Lesbian Line and Matthew Toresen (Northampton Volunteering Centre and FAN Northants).

2. APOLOGIES

Apologies included from Barry Hansford (Community Co-Chair of this Forum) and Morcea Walker MBE.

3. MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF 13TH MARCH

Everyone agreed the notes of the last meeting were accurate and fair.

4. MATTERS ARISING NOT ALREADY ON THE AGENDA

There were no matters arising.

5. NORTHAMPTON ALIVE

Cllr Mackintosh, Leader of Northampton Borough Council, presented the Northampton Alive video about key regeneration projects taking place and updated about the enterprise zone recently created in Northampton to help businesses and growth in the town.

More information about this can be found at www.northampton.gov.uk/northamptonalive

Forum members then asked questions and the Leader answered them.

Q: With regard to the high-speed railway line to be created. How will the new fast-track train service affect us?

A: It won't go through Northampton, just the county. The reason to invest in Northampton station is the high-speed line should free up some capacity on our existing line by taking some passengers. So we can improve what we've got. The possibility of reopening the closed local line would be difficult – especially towards Bedford end of the line. If the university announce tomorrow they're going to the enterprise zone we'll need to look at transport and infrastructure arrangements around and across the town – they've a vested interest in improving the quality of welcome people get when they come here.

Q: Who will own the Grosvenor Centre?

A: Legal and General own current site and NBC will long-term lease the new land to be occupied to Legal and General. There will be better lease arrangements. The Leader's discussions with business have been, and are often still, about the lack of large rental spaces and lack of footfall in the town centre. Improving quality of retail space and including larger sizes for shops should enable some existing retailers to relocate – and then to attract others to backfill the gaps they leave. We should be looking to create a nice boutique offer – improvements to parking and bus passengers in town centre should help. We need to keep working with our partners to help this to happen.

Q: When will Greyfriars be demolished?

A: Bus interchange design proposals go to Planning Committee next month. If approved the Secretary of State will give an order to go ahead with the demolition of Greyfriars. Work should start quickly on the bus interchange.

Q: With student accommodation being built on St John's open air car park, will there be enough car parking in town?

A: The Greyfriars building has an out of use car park due to acid dripping on to cars. The Grosvenor centre rebuild will have new improved car parking. St Johns is only 150 spaces in the open air car park. Looking across whole town we have spare capacity currently to absorb that demand. As we go forward, a number of the Northampton Alive projects have parking e.g. railway station, and this will need to be kept under review in relation to changing demand.

Q: The old city wall? It's a fantastic feature – will you make something of it?

A: We want to preserve the Castle. We think when we excavate Fish market we will find synagogue and want to preserve it. It's very important new station will be called Castle station. We want people to appreciate that the trial of Thomas a Becket took place in Northampton when they come here. We're working with the local Jewish community to ensure we excavate, understand and preserve the synagogue we believe to be under the Fishmarket. We're talking to Friends of Northampton Castle and they've got some exciting plans we're looking to support.

Q: Will the market square have a market?

A: Part of the issue is footfall. Relocating the bus interchange should bring more footfall to the Drapery and the market square. The council is interested too in working with market traders to improve the offer to customers in the Market Square.

Q: In Milton Keynes a poster went to all the schools with a vision for the future and the youth felt very positive about it as it encouraged them to have a sense of belonging to, and pride in, the place where they were growing up. The Northampton Alive posters are very grown up. What's been done to engage young people in Northampton Alive and interest in the future of the town?

A: Northampton Youth Forum met and discussed Northampton Alive. They were

very positive about things and had a great vision for the future of the town in which they wanted heritage reflected as well as the modern opportunities these projects offer.

6. REVIEW OF IDAHO

Members of the Forum noted the excellent turnout for the IDAHO – so many people they had lost count at about 60 people. It was the highest turnout so far. There were more inputs by local services and local LGBT groups than in previous years. Involvement by representatives of My Big Gay Family and Progress was welcomed.

The event was compered by Cllr Anna King, the Co-Chair of this Forum who is also the Council's Assistant Cabinet Member for Community Engagement and the Councillor Co-Chair of Northampton Youth Forum. Leona from Northampton Youth Forum co-compered and had spoken about personal experiences of friends due to bullying and homophobia, including a young person who had committed suicide.

It was noted that it would be good to get more schools involved. The Forum discussed whether, if logistics of getting pupils out of school in this traditional exam period was difficult, whether it might be possible for schools and colleges to make one minute's noise at school as part of showing support for the IDAHO.

At the event at the Guildhall international sportstar and former Kingsthorpe College student, Ben Cohen, had provided a personalised video message for people attending the IDAHO. In the message he talked about losing his father due to a homophobic attack and about how he had gone on to set up the Stand Up Foundation to tackle bullying and homophobia globally. Ben's message also included the results of the Stamp out Hate Crime campaign's "Name that Elephant" competition. The young lady who had suggested the winning name, it was understood, had been delighted to find out via a video message from Ben. She and her proud mum and her partner were due to meet the elephant and to be recognised during the Anne Frank awards slot on the stage at Northampton Carnival in June.

After the event, video and photographs had been posted on Facebook. As a result some people had tagged themselves, liked them and some new members had joined the Forum and Stamp out Hate Crime pages.

Stonewall's Diversity Champion scheme co-ordinator and assessor had followed the video and photographs from the IDAHO and been very positive about the work done in Northampton.

Another result of the IDAHO was interest from Ben Cohen in the work being done by the Forums. This had led to Cllr King, Morcea Walker MBE and Lindsey Ambrose meeting Ben to look at how work by his Stand Up Foundation might be developed in schools and other organisations across the county, with the forums helping to reach people and encourage them to get involved. Plans were in the early stages but progress so far had been positive.

Members of the Forum welcomed this news.

7. UMBRELLA FAIR UPDATE

Matthew had met with Ian Bates and Sean Silver about having LGBT area. This year the fair is due to be split into villages each with its own theme e.g. youth, craft, and, among others, LGBT. Ian had said he was happy to have FAN and LGBT community groups on board.

FAN are looking at how best to proceed about marquees. They were exploring whether to hire or buy a marquee. There was some interest in a bright pink one on eBay. An advantage of purchasing a marquee could be to enable FAN to lend it the Umbrella Fair as part of hire out the fair does all year to keep it in constant use and benefit to people in the community as groups would be able to put it up and take it down for free. The marquee requirements overall are likely to be quite large as got Corby progress, the Northampton Forums including Youth and Stamp out Hate Crime, book club etc are all due to be included.

There is interest in arranging some performance activity.

People will bring their own food or can buy it from vendors on the site.

Action: L Ambrose to lend FAN the rainbow flag bunting.

8. COUNCILLOR EMPOWERMENT FUND UPDATE

NBC councillor empowerment fund from start of this financial year gives each NBC cllr £3K for projects to benefit their local area – groups in or working in the local area. People can approach any relevant councillor if want help.

It could be for events e.g. barn dance, bike for PCSOs, events etc.

Cllr King and Lesbian Line to meet to discuss further.

9. FAN EXHIBITION UPDATE

FAN are getting art in from LGBT artists around the county.

INVITE TO FORUM MEMBERS: The exhibition opens a week on Friday 1st June with a private view, including refreshments, from 6pm – 7.30pm at Northampton Museum and Art Gallery, Guildhall Road.

Agreed: This forum to pay for refreshments as part of supporting this community activity. Matthew to speak to Mark Walker at Leopolds about whether he can provide the required food. Anticipated 30 people to cater for.

10. COMMUNITY INFORMATION EXCHANGE

Lesbian Line are homeless since Platform 51 closed. Temporarily fortnightly in the Labour Club. More discussions to be had with Women's Aid about possible hire of their facilities.

Lesbian Line disco and quiz are going ahead. A book club has now been established. There was a very good turnout of about 20 people at a Lesbian Line monthly event recently at a local venue. There have been no bad experiences at venues recently. There are 2 walks now happening every other weekend in Northampton and Milton Keynes.

Matthew met with Dan from the Gay book group in respect of FAN organising literary festival type activities through their Lottery funding. There is ongoing discussion of venues and activities. The festival is due to be the weekend of 14, 15 and 16 September.

Agreed: Cllr King and L Ambrose: Forum to publicise at Heritage Open Days at the Guildhall (the previous weekend).

FAN Cabaret night is confirmed at Picturedrome. FAN have found it very easy to use eventbrite - saving the group having to issue tickets etc so reducing cost and administration time. Tickets are due to be only £10 thanks to some of the Lottery funding helping to keep prices down. There will be food available at the venue that people can buy over the counter rather than being provided within the ticket fee.

Agreed: Cllr King and L Ambrose to pass on invite to councillors and staff at NBC.

There was discussion that future forum meetings might include some at the Northampton College to help encourage LGBTQ people there to become involved and potentially help the college in meeting their needs. It had been arranged for a Forums stand to be at the Northampton College Freshers Fair too. The first meeting at the College would be in September or later.

Agreed: to hold some future meetings of the Forum at Northampton College.

Lowdown to start LGBTQ youth group, hopefully within a couple of months. Access via the Lowdown.

Agreed: The Forum networks to circulate information when it's available.

11. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

FAN are having stand at Carnival in which any LGBT groups can include information. Due to lack of a base, Lesbian Line can't print their information currently but have got the artwork done.

Agreed: Forum to print 50 Lesbian Line leaflets for Carnival – Lesbian Line to email Cllr King and L Ambrose.

12. ITEMS FOR FUTURE MEETINGS

Housing allocations scheme and tenancy strategy for July meeting if possible.

13. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

3 July 2012 at Northampton Guildhall

The meeting concluded at Time Not Specified