

Northampton Borough Council

Northampton LGBT and Q People's Forum

Tuesday, 13 November 2012

1. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION

Councillor Co-Chair of the Forum Anna King introduced herself and everyone introduced themselves.

People at the meeting included representatives of Northampton Outlaws Rugby Football Club, Deafconnect, Lesbian Line, Steven from Northampton Pride and Councillor Matt Lynch from NBC's Scrutiny Panel.

Joe Biskupski from Northampton Borough Council was in attendance, and prepared the notes of this meeting.

2. APOLOGIES

Barry Hansford and Matthew Toresen

3. MINUTES OF LAST MEETING AND MATTER ARISING

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

4. SCRUTINY REVIEW (RETAIL EXPERIENCE) CONSULTATION

Councillor Matt Lynch explained to the forum members that the work of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee was to look issues affecting the people of Northampton. He said that the Members of the Scrutiny Panel 2 – Retail Experience would be producing a report which would show the opinions of the public on their retail experience in Northampton and would examine what improvements could be made.

A list of questions had been circulated to members of the forum with the agenda. Members of the forum discussed the questions.

Question 1: Please supply details of your shopping experience in Northampton.

- Some shops are hard to locate. It would help to have more maps or audio-visual devices.
- Parking in Northampton is hard to find and is expensive.
- There is lots of traffic in Northampton, making it difficult to drive in the town, and motorists frequently park on double yellow lines, thus contributing to the congestion. There should be better "no parking" signage, and this should be enforced more rigorously.
- In view of competition with Milton Keynes and Leicester, a park-and-ride scheme would help attract shoppers into Northampton.

Question 2: What do you feel would enhance the retail experience to attract new visitors / shoppers and increase the number of return visits to the town centre?

- Not enough is made of Northampton's older buildings. The town's heritage needs to be enhanced.
- Northampton lacks "personality", compared to towns like Milton Keynes and Leicester.
- The town centre needs a lick of paint; currently, many buildings in the town are very grey.
- Local artists could create artwork on display boards outside buildings.

Question 3: Do you feel communication levels from the Borough Council regarding new town centre developments are effective and why?

- Communication via Forums is good.
- Communication with visitors needs to be improved.
- Councillor Lynch asked whether members of the Forum were aware of the Love Northampton website. Many of the Forum members were aware of this, and felt that this was a good way of communicating.

Question 4: What would you like town centre to look like in 5 years' time?

- It is fine to preserve buildings, but the town does need a focal point.
- The Market Square is dated, and needs rejuvenating. The Square would benefit from a focal point, such as a fountain.
- Some members of the Forum said that they used the market; one member said that they used it for buying vegetables.

Question 5: Has there been any occasion where you have used the Internet to buy any item and why?

- Most members of the forum said that they had bought things on the Internet and over the telephone. It is much easier and more convenient to use these methods. However, for more expensive products, it is good to see them before purchasing.
- Internet shopping and retail shopping are two different activities.
- There are lots of specialist shops in St Giles Street; would always buy such items in person.
- There needs to be a specific Northampton identity or theme for signs, perhaps with a unified colour or design.

General comments:

- Communication within the Grosvenor centre is difficult. Mobile phones do not work there. It would be good to have Wi-Fi in the shopping centre.
- Northampton would benefit from a major shopping centre such as the Westfield centres in London.
- More people should be celebrating Northampton's heritage (examples include the double helix and Charles Bradlaugh). Public art could make Northampton more attractive to visitors and shoppers. The recent Pride of Lions display was attractive.

The Chair thanked Councillor Lynch for attending the meeting, and suggested that any further feedback from the Forum members would be forwarded on to him.

Councillor Lynch thanked members of the Forum for their contribution this evening, and informed everyone that the next meeting of the Scrutiny Panel will take place at 6pm on 5 December. At the end of the process, the Panel will make recommendations to the Overview & Scrutiny Committee, who would, in turn, make recommendations to Cabinet.

5. PLANS FOR WORLD AIDS DAY ACTIVITY – SATURDAY 1 DECEMBER 10am TO 1pm AT NORTHAMPTON GUILDHALL

The Mayor has confirmed his attendance, as have the Youth Forum. Space has been booked in the Guildhall Courtyard and the Court Room.

The event, which is being coordinated by the Council's Events Team, will include a short speech by the Mayor and a candle lighting ceremony.

Lee asked whether a sign language interpreter could be booked for the event. Joe will arrange this.

6. OPPORTUNITY TO WORK WITH ARTIST GERALD PORTER

Anna King said that Gerald Porter was unable to attend this evening's meeting.

7. COMMUNITY INFORMATION EXCHANGE

Northampton Pride: Steven is seeking to establish a Pride committee, to take forward the organisation of a Pride event in Northampton. He will contact Matthew Toresen for assistance in this.

Steven said that any Pride event needs to be inclusive, and needs to involve, among other, people who are deaf.

Breon said that in the London Pride event, there is a signer on stage.

Lesbian Line: Lesbian Line are organising a number of events over the next few weeks.

On 24 November, a women-only disco is being organised. Tickets are £6 on the door or £5 if purchased in advance.

On 24 November, Lesbian Line is organising a walk. Further details can be found on their website.

The usual drop-in sessions are continuing at the Lesbian Line offices on Hazelwood Road (at Northampton Women's Aid).

Northampton Outlaws: The rugby club is seeking sponsors, and is speaking with Ben King regarding funding. A number of social events are planned, and a Christmas party is a possibility, subject to the availability of venues.

Deaf LGBT group: Lee said that a LGBT group for deaf people is planned in the New Year. There is a need to break down barriers within this community.

Lee will be working with Matthew Toresen to establish this group.

8. ITEMS FOR NEXT AND FUTURE MEETINGS

Northampton Pride

9. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

The next meet of LGBTQ Forum is scheduled for Tuesday 29 January 2013 at 6.30pm in the Guildhall.

An all-Forums budget consultation meeting will take place at 5.30pm on Tuesday 22 January 2013 in the Guildhall.