

## **Northampton Borough Council**

### **Northampton LGBT and Q People's Forum**

**Tuesday, 28 January 2014**

Present: Barry (Co-Chair\*, Northampton College), Philip (SOLAR), Wendi (SOLAR), Lee (Northamptonshire Deaf LGBT), Carole (Lesbian Line), Jeanette (Lesbian Line), Nicola (Lesbian Line), Katie (Interpreter, Deaf connect) Matt (Interpreter, Deaf Connect), Ian (Umbrella Fair Organisation), Rob (Police - Hate Crime Team), Matthew (FAN), Michelle (Community Member), Liz (Beaumont), Stephen (Northampton College), Alice Morgan (NBC\*\*), Vicki Rockall (NBC).

(\*Chaired the meeting)

(\*\* took minutes)

#### **1. WELCOMES, INTRODUCTIONS AND APOLOGIES**

Apologies received from Cllr. King, Lyndsey Ambrose and John Leivers.

#### **2. MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING**

Minutes of the last meeting were agreed as a true record.

#### **3. NORTHAMPTON BOROUGH COUNCIL BUDGET 2014/15 - CLLR. BOTTWOOD**

Cllr. Bottwood gave an explanation of the background of the budget and the funding gap. Cllr Bottwood also highlighted to the forum that simply putting up Council Tax would not solve the gap, as putting up 1% would not go very far at all. If Council Tax is put up more than 2%, this has to go out to a Referendum. To cover the deficit, the Council would have to put Council Tax up by 16%. Therefore, NBC have proposed a 0% Council Tax rise, and has explored other options for closing the gap.

The 'Budget in a Minute' outlines these proposals and can be found here <http://www.northampton.gov.uk/budget2014>

#### **Forum Responses**

##### Staff Terms and Conditions

Ben raised concern over the staff terms and conditions - low wages are seriously affecting the lives of staff, made worse by the pay freeze of government workers. Ben argued that this affects the quality of the service provided, and will make it difficult to employ high calibre staff, along with the risk of losing more of our good staff. Ben also raised concerns over the loss of 'perks', such as the 'Car user allowance'.

Cllr Bottwood reminded the forum that, as a local authority, NBC are accountable to

the electorate and have to ensure value for money. As a result, harsh decisions have to be made unfortunately. To draw upon the Car Users Allowance raised by Ben, this was taken out of staff terms and conditions years ago in industry. Staff using their cars claim back petrol, which includes cover for wear and tear and insurance.

### Business Incentive Scheme

Ian asked what NBC's view was on community groups being able to fill the empty shops in addition to the Business Incentive Scheme Business Incentive Scheme.

Cllr Bottwood advised that it would be best to invite the appropriate Cabinet member to answer this question.

### Car Parking

Ben agreed that the Car parking proposal would have a positive impact on the LBG community, as often car parking charges are a barrier for people to attend LGBTQ events/activities in the Town Centre. However, it was suggested that a reduced cost of a day's parking may be more effective in making the cost more reasonable.

Cllr. Bottwood advised the forum that Cllr. Hadland has listened to lots of people, consulted and spoken to BID for this car parking proposal. Also, it is businesses that are driving this proposal. Again, Cllr. Bottwood suggested that it may be useful to invite Cllr. Hadland to the forum to discuss as it may be an issue that has not been raised before.

### Other

Michelle asked Cllr. Bottwood how many LGB people would be found in Northampton if a referendum went out around a Council Tax increase. Also, it was questioned whether impact assessments were available for these proposals.

Cllr. Bottwood was not sure of this figure at the meeting, but the data is known by NBC. Vicki advised that Silvina Katz, Corporate Policy and Consultation manager deals with issues such as this, and that impact assessments are available from NBC.

The forum **AGREED** to invite Cllr. Hadland to the forum for the next meeting.

It was **AGREED** that first Alice and Vicki would circulate an overview of the responsibilities each cabinet member has. The forum then will invite the member along who will be able to answer the specific questions that the forum has. Cllr Bottwood also said that from visiting all the forums, it is also clear that an explanation of how the local authority works would be very useful.

Cllr. Bottwood said to the forum that he would be happy to come to another meeting

in the future if the forum has any questions around his portfolio (Finance).

#### **4. SOLAR PRESENTATION**

Wendi introduced Phil, the new LGBTQ Rep for SOLAR. Wendi also reminded the forum that SOLAR is on Facebook, Twitter and Linked in, so please link with them.

The aim of SOLAR is to support those living with HIV across the community and to reduce transmission of HIV. As Northampton is the second worst town in the UK for late detection, it is very important that we encourage regular testing. Early detection has a dual impact - early treatment, and better quality of life.

The work of SOLAR has a huge impact on Health's budget. SOLAR are running their program called 'cHIValry', which aims to encourage people to make the right choices. 6 SOLAR volunteers have just finished training for rapid HIV testing in the community. Now, SOLAR need to source funding to buy the rapid testing packs, and are currently working with health partners and other sources of funding to cover this. Wendi asked attendees of the forum to spread the word through their networks, and asked to suggest any events and organisations which may like to arrange SOLAR to visit to do the testing.

There is going to be a programme of testing sessions called "R U Positive?". SOLAR are also working in partnership with Sunrise and LASS who have also done all of their training.

Michelle asked whether it is true that the majority of people with HIV are heterosexuals. Wendi said that this is difficult to answer as the majority of people do not know that they are positive. However, it is true that the greatest increase has been in heterosexual women.

Michelle also raised the difficulty around the 'Have you ever been tested for HIV?' question. Matthew raised that with some insurance, people are still sometimes forced to say whether they are a gay man and been tested for HIV.

Ian asked what the factors are that contribute to us having such late detections. Some of the factors include:

- Access. Having spaces outside of clinical organisations is very important, and there needs to be more non clinical testing spaces.
- Fear. Many people are put off the test due to the stigma which surrounds it. This links to the problem of a lack of outreach. There needs to be a constant presence and working towards de-stigmatizing test, not just WAD.

It was suggested by an attendee that the forum get tested to reduce stigma. However, many members were unhappy with this and it was agreed that it could not be expected for anyone in the forum to be tested so publically.

It was agreed however by the forum that attendees would take this to their own organisations and networks. It was also highlighted that this is not only important for the LGBTQ community, but wider communities also.

## **PLANNING THE WORK OF THE FORUM**

### **WAD FEEDBACK**

It was suggested that this year we have a WAD event in the evening, around 5:30pm time so that people can attend after work, and then include a networking, social element afterwards. Vicki **AGREED** to feed back this to Cllr. Mackintosh

Vicki told the forum that the directive of the Leader is that NBC is to hold a civic ceremony which is respectful. However, it should not be a problem to have an arrangement for the evening instead to accommodate for those that cannot make it in the day due to work.

Organisation. It was suggested that we have a cross-forum working group/consultation group for planning WAD 2014.

### **FEBRUARY 14TH EVENTS**

LGBTQ health and wellbeing event. Unfortunately John was unable to attend the meeting and sent his apologies, but there will be more details sent electronically to pass on networks. There will be stands and many organisations represented there, from a stand on Heart Health, all the way to adoption and fostering.

FAN Valentines event. NN Café, from 7pm, networking, quizzes etc. From 9pm there will be a 'murder song karaoke' event. Flyer for this will be circulated soon.

### **UMBRELLA FAIR AND PRIDE**

Ian said that they are hoping to have a bigger LBGT presence at the Umbrella Fair this year. The forum is planning to have 2 tents – one for a community space with stalls etc. and another for performances. There will be a Picnic area also, and are aiming to create an inclusive space. It has also been suggested that Carnival floats are involved – nothing has been actioned yet, but proposing to talk to Carnival Organisation to see if they would like to parade through Umbrella Fair, ending at LGBTQ area.

The date for the Umbrella Fair is the 16/17 August.

Pride was discussed, and it was agreed that having a 'Pride' element at the umbrella fair may build up community participation, make more of a visible presence and act as a spring board/foundations for a future Pride event. It was also suggested that LGBTQ events could take place in the run up to the Umbrella Fair to further encourage momentum.

## **6. TAKING THE FORUM FORWARD**

Barry discussed with the forum that at the Co-chairs meeting with the leader last week it was agreed that, although by default all forum meetings are public, it may be at certain times the forum may want a closed meeting. It may sometimes be appropriate that things discussed are kept within the forum to avoid 'out-ing' attendees etc. If any forum members have concerns around whether meetings are open or closed, please email Cllr King, Barry, Vicki or Alice and we will address your concerns. It was suggested that we need to think as a group how we would do this in the future, and that this may need to be built into the code of conduct.

## **CODE OF CONDUCT**

This document has been introduced for all forums. It has been created as a reminder for attendees of the forums of the appropriate behaviour within a public meeting, and also as a tool for the Chair to use if needed. It was agreed that some forums do need this more than others, and that the LGBTQ forum doesn't seem to have problems in terms of behaviour of attendees. However, for consistency, it has been agreed that the code of conduct will be used across the forums in case a circumstance arises. Please contact Vicki if you have any queries or questions about the document.

Michelle raised concerns over one point in the Code of Conduct which states "As an attendee you must... Contribute positively to discussions concerning the issues of the meeting". It was felt that this poses a difficulty when engaging with the LGBTQ community and LGBTQ issues.

Vicki reminded the forum that this is not to enforce only positive opinions or views, the forums are there for debate and discussion and for all to state their views. The Code of Conduct is a tool for the Chair to be able to say when something isn't acceptable. Barry reinforced this, and said that the document is about being respectful, to make sure that things are done in such a way in the forum that moves things forward.

Ian asked whether the document has been agreed for implementation, or whether it is still in consultation. Vicki advised the forum that this has been agreed by the co-chairs and leader, but please get in touch with one of the co-chairs if you have any issues.

Ian suggested a change in the language used for the code of conduct. It was recommended that 'Couch' words are used, such as '*Look* to contribute positively'. Also, it was requested that something about the responsibility of the chair to be supportively encouraging and enabling is included.

## **ACTION PLANS**

It has been suggested that all forums develop action plans to cover the key areas they wish to address and work on through the year. NBC aim to introduce these across all of the forums to create action and activity focus. Supporting key NBC events, such as IDAHO and ICOD, could be included in this as a key action for the year for the forum. It would be really positive to see more partnership working and involvement of relevant organisations that are present at the forum when planning these events.

Ben said that there were action plans made last year – Vicki and Alice to look into this. The forum agreed that we should give a substantial amount of time at the meeting to develop action plans for the year.

## **DRAFT EVENTS CALENDAR**

A draft copy was circulated to the forum. The idea is that this will cover all forum events, meetings and key days that the forums recognise. We hope that this will illustrate the overlap between forums, and present opportunities for partnership working between the forums, as well as with other organisations who attend the forums.

## **7. COMMUNITY INFORMATION EXCHANGE**

- QFilms. New LGBTQ Film night at Errol Flynn Film House.
- Lyndsey Ambrose has been encouraging people from St. Andrews to come to forums, and details of the LGBTQ Film group have also been circulated.
- Corby network launched. This is a network rather than group, so it is less formal, more relaxed and more fun. This is at the Old Library in Corby. 25 people attended the launch event, from a broad spectrum of the LGBTQ community. All welcome to come along and visit. Please also promote network in your organisations and the Corby Network will return. Additional leaflets, business cards and posters are available. Also please find the Corby LGBT Network on Facebook - please like and share.
- Lesbian Line – Wednesday night drop in. This has expanded very quickly and is very well attended. Hoping to do some social things, info to follow.
- Liz – sits on the East midlands forum, which is an attempt to get the East midlands LGBTQ communities to talk to each other. However, this is really underfunded. The forum is looking to build a website for partnership working between different counties, and want to look at hate crime as a project. It would be good if this forum would get in contact with East midlands forum.

Meetings are going to continue, and the next one in April. For more details, please contact Liz directly.

- Stephen – ‘That’s Show Biz’, show put on at Northampton College, and is running this Friday until next Wednesday. SB happy to give all further info if needed.
- New coffee group in Northampton, which is held on the first sat of every month. More info on FAN website.
- New group Synergy at Market Harborough, Ben has further details.
- Curry night, this Friday. All welcome, in Rushden at 7:30. Liz has further details.

## **8. ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

Holocaust Memorial Day - It was suggested that NBC have a memorial for gay people who suffered in the Holocaust in addition to the black triangle for Holocaust Memorial Day. It was also raised that people affected by the Holocaust also included the disabled, travellers, etc. We must remember all.

The forum agreed that the venue and times were ok for forum meetings.

The forum also agreed that only use first names would be used in minutes.

## **9. ITEMS FOR FUTURE MEETINGS**

Action Planning

Invitation to Cllr. Hadland to discuss the Regeneration and Enterprise projects included within the budget consultation.

## **10. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

Tuesday, 11<sup>th</sup> February, 18:30-20:30 in the Holding Room, The Guildhall.

The meeting concluded at 20:30