

Northampton Borough Council

Northampton Diverse Communities Equalities Forum

Wednesday, 5 June 2013

Attendees:

Cllr Malpas – Joint Chair
J Rawlings – Joint Chair
I Agbemenyele
A Roy (NREC)
J Campbell
N Stephens – Police
A Abouzanad
E Arkley – NBC Planning Officer
J Biskupski (NBC)

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Eileen Armah.

2. WELCOMES AND INTRODUCTIONS

Everyone introduced themselves.

3. MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING (14 MARCH 2013)

Anjona Roy repeated her query of whether the following reference in the minutes of 24 January 2013 was correct: “The PCC is planning a formal review of ‘stop and search’ within his first year in the post”. Anjona added, will he do something by the end of the first year?

4. FAITH COMMUNITY & PLACES OF WORSHIP AUDIT AND NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Emma Arklay, Planning Officer, NBC, presented the report.

The following points were noted:

- Collaborative: Planning, Community Engagement, NIFF
- Focused on Northampton – Related Development Area
- Methodology
 - Review census data – changes in population structure
 - Review planning policy
 - Review planning applications
 - Community engagement
 - GIS Analysis
- Demography – changes in faith groups – doubling of Muslim groups, Hindu

- Growth in RC, Pentecostal
- Fall in COE
- Christian is largest religious group
- All faith communities engaging with communities – not just on a religious basis
- Synagogue – main space for 150 people.
- Hindu community – currently travel at the moment
- Meeting needs – possible solutions
 - Hired facilities
 - Extending existing facilities
 - Conversions or change of use
 - New developments in the strategic 'Urban Extensions' (but most needs are in the centre of town)
 - New developments elsewhere
- Recommendations
 - Supplementary Planning Document – help & advice
 - Joint working
 - Directory of facilities
 - Record vacant D1
 - Training on engaging with the planning system
- Only skimmed the surface
- Will let forum know when it will be published

Question/Comment (Anjona) – How much understanding do you have of the history of faith groups and planning process, and the discriminations faced, both in the 1970s and more recently? The Planning Committee comments about “offensive prayer notice”; need “faith spaces” in SUEs; need education among decision-makers; some politicians using inappropriate language.

Response (Emma) – we are aware that there has been a history and it is important that this is collaborative research. The research is led by Planning – good first step to have evidence.

Comment/Question (Anjona) – chronology needed. What about the Supplementary Planning Guidance? From equality perspective, need to have regard for humanist or atheist approach.

Comment (Christopher) – concerned about Anjona’s term “political hatred”. He would hate to feel that there are councillors who have that sort of political hatred.

Comment (Jenny) – if comments were made that were offensive in Planning Committee, we should have officers to confirm that.

Comment (Nick) – where did the demographic data come from? The latest census. However, the administrative boundaries changed, making it hard to compare. Can make the slides available to David.

Comment (Nick) – Somali community needs premises. The Council Planning department is not good at engaging with minority communities.

Question (John) – is the facility for men only?

Answer (Nick) – he has only seen men. He does not understand the question.

Comment (John) – vast difference within groups (Christian).

Response (Emma) – the study is looking at both worship facilities and community needs.

Comment (Joe) – methodology – did not capture all the data.

Comment (Ivor) – the findings are familiar, and the study is good.

Comment (Anjona) – important to share this information with other parts of the Council; death and bereavement, housing.

Response (Emma) – yes, she is aware of this need. Joe was invited with this in mind. There will be staff learning sessions throughout NBC.

Comment (Christopher) – it is important to learn lessons from the past and find a better way of dealing with them.

Comment (John) – general fear or phobia by white population.

Comment (Jenny) – councillors need to have an understanding. One would expect them to have an understanding of policies.

Comment (Anjona) – because Planning Committee is adversarial it can be an awful atmosphere.

Question (John) – what next? Is it a case of faith groups saying that they want a piece of land?

Response (Emma) – does not know; early stage of Development Plan. What will happen is policy guidance (Oadby and Wigston).

Comment (Alaa) – sometimes a small space precludes women to get involved at times.

5. PLANNING THE WORK OF THE FORUM FOR 2013

Need to better promote the work of the forum.

Comment (Jenny) – we need to be clear about what this forum is about.

Comment (Anjona)

- Stop and search
- Councils Equalities Data and Objectives
- Housing

- Central Area Development (?)
- Welfare Reform

Comment (Nick) – if there are lots of people here the police can better share information. Wants to go to our distribution database. The group needs to be pro-active – eg ask people such as police to explain things (eg, stop and search). Invite to people to consider what we want from the forum.

Comment (Jenny) – Hate Crime in schools. What's being done? Who is at fault?

Comment (Christopher) – need to pick two substantive items to consider for next meeting:

- Can extend beyond the weekday meeting – can go out to different places.
- Our power is about our message.
- We can invite the County Council or other agencies to come and discuss things.

Comment (Anjona) – we have a TOR with the constitution.

ACTION: Joe to send out TOR with the minutes of the meeting

Comment (Anjona) – not all doom and gloom. The Borough is the only group of Diverse Communities. *Need to have more communication.*

Comment (Jenny) – need to consider whether it is effective.

Comment (Jenny) – “Stop and Search” needs to be included as one of the themes plus “Ethnic minorities updates”, “Hate crimes”, “BME achievements”. Need to publicise.

6. COMMUNITY INFORMATION EXCHANGE

Comment (Nick) – Police starting a campaign for Muslims to report hate crime; a range of ways to report it. Aware that anti-Muslim attacks are unreported.

Commissioner is encouraging a campaign to look from perspective of victim's voice.

The Woolwich attack has had impact in Northampton. Worries among local Muslims and Hindus about backlash.

No incidents in Northampton – no rise in reported hate incidences.

Mick Stamper is the new commander in Northampton.

Fay Tennett – still Head of Community Engagement.

Sue Ward retiring.

Memorial procession in town on Saturday. Not an official EDL demonstration – the organiser has some links with EDL, and majority were EDL or EDL sympathisers.

7. ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION AT THE NEXT MEETING

- Focus on Schools
 - Figures on achievement of BME Groups in school.
 - Hate Crime in schools.
- Housing
 - allocation of accommodation
 - impact on BME groups of housing allocation policy.

November – Stop & Search – invite Nick Stephens

Comment (Anjona) – co-hosting event of Hope Not Hate about dealing with EDL. Also report on BME achievements.

8. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The date of the next meeting is Wednesday 31 July 2013 6.30pm. This will take place in the Holding Room, Northampton, Guildhall.