

Northampton Diverse Communities Equalities Forum

on Thursday, 26 September 2013 at 6:30 pm until not later than 8:00 pm

in The Holding Room, The Guildhall, St. Giles Square, Northampton, NN1 1DE.

Agenda

1. **Apologies, Welcomes and Introductions**
2. **Minutes & Matters Arising from last meeting (31 July 2013)**
Terms of Reference attached
3. **Consultations - Improving the Town's Parks: Cllr Elizabeth Gowen**
4. **Discussions/Event Planning**
 - a. Housing - Allocation of accommodation and impact on BME groups of housing allocation policy: Nicky McKenzie, Housing Choice & Resettlement Team Leader
5. **Planning the work of the Forum for 2013/14 incl Items for discussion at the next meeting**
6. **Community Information Exchange**
7. **Date Of Next Meeting**
Thursday 21 November 2013 at 6.30pm in the Holding Room, Guildhall

Map and directions at: www.northampton.gov.uk/guildhall

For more information about this meeting please contact:
Keith Mitchell, Community Engagement Manager



keithmitchell@northampton.gov.uk



Tel: 0300 330 7000



More information about the Forum generally is at: www.northampton.gov.uk/forums



Facebook page: www.northampton.gov.uk/dcf

Please note that this Forum is supported and funded by Northampton Borough Council. The Forum may work in partnership and collaboration with other community groups, councils and local services from time to time. The views expressed and decisions taken by the Forum are not necessarily those of Northampton Borough Council.



NORTHAMPTON
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Agenda Item 2

NORTHAMPTON DIVERSE COMMUNITIES EQUALITIES FORUM

31 July 2013

NOTES/ACTIONS

In Attendance: Keith Mitchell, John Rawlings, Anjona Roy, Jenny Campbell

Apologies: Cllr Malpas, Nick Stevens,

Notes: Sue Ousley

	Agenda Item	Action
1	Apologies See above	
2	Welcome and Introductions Nick Stevens sent apologies due to ongoing illness. The Chairman sent apologies also due to a misunderstanding over the date of the meeting. In the absence of other members it was agreed that the meeting would be informal and any items requiring action only would be addressed. It was also agreed the minutes would be agreed at the next meeting.	
3	General Discussion KM explained his role as an interim officer between the departure of Joe Biskupski and the recruitment to the new posts. He explained the duties he will be responsible for and advised that he reports to Steve Eley, Head of Communities and Environment, including Environmental Services. In future there will be six forums as a new Women's Forum is being set up. A copy of the departmental structure was requested to see how these groups sit within the Division. Keith will distribute this. JC asked what powers the forums have? She felt that she had joined a group that would take action on issues but nobody appeared to be clear on what the forum can actually do. KM will seek clarification on	 KM KM

Agenda Item	Action
<p>the issues but the forums do not have responsibility to ensure actions are carried out but this can be requested of officers. The Terms of Reference for the group need to be reviewed - project work could be undertaken, exchange of information and responding to consultations.</p> <p>JR advised that they have the ability to request consultations be undertaken and KM advised that this should be a two way process. AR commented that the group needs to show that it is a forum where actions will be taken and this is perhaps why membership has dwindled.</p> <p>AR commented that the same discussion had taken place at the last meeting and having some power can influence issues. When issues are discussed, this becomes a forum view and can lead to more leverage and activity within groups.</p> <p>The group needs to recruit more members to be effective and AR felt a re-launch was required. She also questioned why there was no budget for this forum as others had one. She also felt the launch should focus on specific issues.</p> <p>JC stated the meeting was an opportunity to raise questions. She felt it was good that the Police do presentations but that sometimes the data is not fully understood by members. Perhaps a working group for stop-and-search could be set up and AR stated she had been invited to the next meeting of the Police group on this.</p> <p>JC requested KM find out about a budget.</p> <p>JR commented that a lot of groups do not share information regarding common problems and to work well this needs to happen with NBC and the Police being asked to identify problems. .</p> <p>AR felt this was the only forum of this sort that the public have and members would not know Steve Elsey and what he does. It was felt that if the Borough feels the group is not serving any purpose, the group could be disbanded. KM reassured that this was not being considered. NBC facilitates these groups and it provides a two way dialogue.</p> <p>Discussion took place on the Terms of Reference and it was agreed there were no changes required at the present time.</p>	<p>KM</p>

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<p>Discussions on the name of the group also took place. It was felt that the general public would not necessarily associate themselves with 'Diverse Communities'.</p> <p>JR spoke about the report produced by Emma Arklay and the figures contained within it which show more recently arrived communities now in the town. As more communities arrive in the town, NVC literature will need to reflect this.</p> <p>JR also commented that Cllr Malpas's influence with his political party could be useful in the future.</p> <p>With the suggested re-launch of the forum, KM will speak to NVC regarding promotion of the group and other opportunities to grow the group to fulfil the aims and objectives of the group.</p> <p>AR reported that as from today there would be no immigration service provided by NREC but they are hoping to tie up with the private sector to provide a service but this would mean a charge. A free pro-bono service is to be launched on 21 August at which the High Sheriff is attending and an invitation to this group is extended.</p> <p>The next meeting of the group will be Thursday 26 September and KM will report on actions and AR will advertise via Facebook and Twitter.</p> <p>JC offered a slot on the local radio to KM to promote the group and production of the TOR is required in formats ethnic groups will understand and that they would be able to ask direct questions of the group.</p> <p>Links with the new university buildings should be explored to understand what the students are learning which could provide a link with the services NBC offers. KM asked what could be done with the information and it was felt it could shape council services.</p> <p>AR will bring compliance information contained in a recent NREC report to the next meeting. Transparency within the NREC report is required and this is now an opportunity to change it so it is agreed by all parties.</p> <p>JR raised the issue of zero-hours contracts which is causing concerns. He asked whether the Borough uses zero hours contracts and KM will find out. It was felt that ethnic communities could be impacted by this</p>	<p>KM</p> <p>KM</p>

	Agenda Item	Action
	and it should be an agenda item in future.	
7	<p>Items for Discussion at next meetings</p> <p>September – NBC Housing allocation policy</p> <p>November – Stop-and-search – Nick Stephens/Adam Simmonds/Andy Cox</p> <p>January 2014 – Schools – NCC Education rep</p>	
8	<p>Date and Location of Next Meeting</p> <p>Thursday 26 September 2013.</p>	

DRAFT

Diverse Communities Equality Forum

Objectives

1. The Forum seeks to equalise access by people of all ethnic and cultural backgrounds to the services and benefits provided by the Council by:
 - 1.1 providing information about those services and how to access them;
 - 1.2 identifying barriers to access to services which adversely affect groups or individuals of any ethnic, faith or cultural background;
 - 1.3 promoting two-way dialogue between the Council, its Members and senior Officers and representatives of:
 - 1.3.1 ethnic and culturally diverse communities;
 - 1.3.2 newly arrived and emerging communities; and
 - 1.3.3 faith communities; and
 - 1.4 promoting community cohesion through working in ways which promote and support effective relationships and engagement between the Council and the community.
2. To provide a Forum in which:
 - 2.1 the above-mentioned community groups can express their needs for, and their views on, services provided by the Council and its partners through a range of meetings, events and other means;
 - 2.2 the Council can consult representatives of the above-mentioned communities on policy and service delivery issues including in relation to impacts on the above-mentioned communities;
 - 2.3 members of the Forum can feed into national and regional consultations; and
 - 2.4 groups and agencies can exchange information about their own activities and plans.
3. For members of the Forum who have internet access, there is the opportunity to keep informed and share information about community events, consultations etc via the group emails.

4. The Forum may from time to time
 - 4.1 operate sub-groups or project work groups e.g. to focus on inter faiths work; and/or
 - 4.2 work with other groups including other Forums e.g to encourage participation in local democracy through supporting work led by Youth Forum in October each year; e.g. to raise awareness of suffering in the past and today in situations of war and discrimination through active involvement with the Holocaust Memorial Working Group.

SCRUTINY PANEL 1 – IMPROVING THE TOWN’S PARKS

1 JULY 2013

DRAFT CORE QUESTIONS – EXPERT ADVISORS

The Scrutiny Panel is currently undertaking a Review looking at improving the town's parks and is focussing on improving community engagement within the town's parks. A series of key questions have been put together to inform the Panel's evidence base.

- Which park do you use most often and why?
- Which of the facilities provided in the town's parks are used the most?
- What facilities and services do you feel would bring people into parks that might otherwise not use them?
- Do you feel there are any barriers that stop people from using the town's parks?
- What other services do park users want from the town's parks?
- Are you aware of, and do you use, a local play area in your neighbourhood?
Do you know how well this is used and why do you think this is?

It is initially proposed that Park Management Committees are established in Abington Park, Delapre Abbey and the Racecourse, however it is suggested that this initiative is extended further if there is strong evidence of community support. It is proposed that membership of Park Management Committees will be drawn from elected Members, representatives from key community groups (including Friends Groups) and members of the public who are recognised as being active in each of the parks.

- Who should be a key representative on the new Park Management Committees and why?
- In your opinion, what should be the key roles of the Park Management Committees?

Housing Allocations

Housing Stock

We retain approx. 12,000 council dwellings.

Housing Stock is spread right across the town. There are no areas really without any stock, although villages etc have much less stock now due to Right To Buy (RTB).

We have no plans to build/acquire, but Localism does allow Local Authorities more freedoms on budgets, and so ring fencing could be removed in the future.

There is a stock options project going on at the moment regarding the future management/ownership of the stock, but tenants are involved in the project.

Housing Policy

The Housing Allocations policy is available on line. The NBC pages have a guide.

http://www.northampton.gov.uk/downloads/file/5550/housing_allocation_policy_agreed_december_2012

The Housing Allocation policy was changed following a 12 week consultation. It was agreed by Cabinet and the implementation began in Jan 2013.

The changes were necessary due to welfare reform and the Localism Act. The Localism Act gave local authorities greater powers to determine their own schemes.

The main changes to our policy were around local connection which was changed from 6 months residence in the town to 3 years.

Also council tenants were not allowed access to the register unless they could demonstrate a reasonable preference.

The eligibility for property types was also changed in line with the welfare reforms and the Local Housing Allowance rates.

Impact on BME

The changes that could impact BME groups are the local connection policy and those families who are socially overcrowded both in private or council tenancies, as only those who are statutory overcrowded are allowed access to the register.

Homeless legislation is different – to be discussed at September meeting.