

Northampton Borough Council

Northampton Diverse Communities Equalities Forum

Thursday, 15 March 2012

People at the meeting: Councillor Suresh Patel
John L Rawlings (Co Chair)
Anjono Roy (NREC and Dostiyo)
Lindsey Ambrose (NBC)
Keith Mitchell (NBC)
Penny Mould (NCC)
Barry Hansford (Northampton College)
Adabe Ahmed (Somali Community)
Alaa Abouzanad (Northants Association of Supplementary Schools)
Gracie Okunsanyo (Northampton Link)
Northamptonshire Association for the Blind Representative)

1. WELCOMES AND INTRODUCTIONS

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting. Everyone introduced themselves.

2. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Matthew Toresen (Northampton Volunteering Centre and FAN Northants), Christiana and Samuel Owusu-Akuffo, Sergeant Amanda Di Rienzo and other Northamptonshire Police colleagues, Cllr Winston Strachan, Morcea Walker MBE.

3. MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING

The Minutes were agreed.

There were no matters arising.

4. HATE CRIME UPDATE

It was noted that there was only one officer on duty covering hate crime for the county on evening of 15 March 2012 and so the Police were unable to attend this meeting.

It was noted that the Stamp out Hate Crime campaign had progressed well, with the Northampton Youth Forum being awarded a countywide youth award for "Outstanding Contribution to Anti-Bullying". The young people had been presenting about the campaign to young leader awards nights around the county in response to enthusiasm about the work from young people and leading to further interest in the campaign.

What had begun as young people introducing other young people to the concept of hate crime and that it includes bullying, has begun to move on from that initial

awareness-raising as young people continue to drive activities and change in schools. The week of 19 – 26 March would be an anti-bullying week at Weston Favell Academy, organised by the students, including Stamp out Hate Crime and a showing of the exhibition the young people had created which features local people's stories of experiencing and surviving hate crime and includes information about a number of ways to report hate crime online and otherwise. Moulton College had shown interest with their student association organising an initial pledge sign-up, their multi-disciplinary welfare team staff identifying that they could work with the Stamp out Hate Crime campaign to support students reporting and well-being, and their college Police officer identifying she could use the campaign to help her in encouraging students to report incidents.

The exhibition at the museum had been well received leading to interest from a number of organisations in working together. Copies of the exhibition made by the young people were being made, with one set to be provided to the Northants Police to support their community engagement and work on tackling hate crime.

The elephant for the Safari Northampton small sculptures exhibition was ready and in temporary residence in the Guildhall, having been painted by local artist Lee Burrows.

The young people on youth forum would be meeting soon to look at how to move the campaign on, working with other interested organisations. They had already accepted a number of invites for community events in the summer to help get their message out to people. They felt it was important to raise awareness to help people recognise what hate crime is and what its impacts and consequences could be – in case this could help make safer cultures in organisations and prevent incidents happening. They wanted to look more at reporting going forward and recognised feedback from some young people about wanting schools to do more.

Anjona Roy noted that across the county there was a mixed picture of hate crime and hate incident reporting coming through from schools. It was not clear the extent to which schools might be dealing with hate crime and incidents internally and not producing reports to go beyond the school. She noted that Paul Burnett at Northants County Council had some years back given a commitment for annual reports about hate crime to go to school governors.

The issue that the County Council had told this Forum they only wanted to collect hate incidents and not hate crime reports via schools, was noted.

There was some discussion around how as a parent a member of the forum had not felt involved by their child's school when they had reported hate crime to the school and externally about an incident at the school.

It was noted that Northampton Borough Council had taken into account the work of the forum, Overview and Scrutiny, the youth forum and other evidence, in deciding to make hate crime one of its priority equality objectives under the public sector equality duty. This reflected a commitment to being publically accountable – with annual updating to be provided on progress against the objective each year.

5. NORTHAMPTON BUS INTERCHANGE PROJECT OUTLINE DESIGNS FOR PLANNING

Members of the Forum reviewed the images of the proposed bus interchange design and gave feedback.

There was concern that the hours of staffed operation are limited with closing at midnight, and that the location of the interchange is close to The Drapery which is a known hate crime hot spot. There was some concern to at the proximity to the major gay bar in town and whether people would feel scared of being seen coming and going from the venue and potentially being targets of hate crime.

It was suggested that the interchange and the Council should take steps to mitigate the risks of exposing people to becoming victims of hate crime and to help keep them safe in the event they became a victim or witnessed an incident. Staffing and information showing commitment to stamping out hate crime, encouraging people to report hate crime etc were suggested as possible steps within action that might be taken to do this.

6. INTERNATIONAL DAY AGAINST HOMOPHOBIA:UPDATE

As in past years the community and Northampton LGBTQ People's Forum had agreed to organise a ceremony at 11am in the courtyard of Northampton Guildhall to mark this event, including making one minute's noise on Thursday 17 May 2012.

FAN Northants will be taking a lead in this ceremony.

It's hoped as many people as possible will attend.

If anyone would like to speak at the ceremony please contact Lindsey Ambrose.

There is limited space for community displays. If any organisation would like to have a stand please contact Lindsey Ambrose.

Lindsey: tel/text: 0779 53 33 687 or email: lambrose@northampton.gov.uk

7. COMMUNITY INFORMATION EXCHANGE

Northampton Carnival Archive Project – exhibition now on at the People's Gallery in Northampton Museum and Art Gallery. Anyone with any stories or objects or photos from past carnivals please share them with the project team.

Community Centres

The forum was advised that progress had been in handing community centres over to the local community to run. To date 9 had been transferred to be run by the community. Another 6 were due to go through before end of March, then another 6 over the coming months.

Governance Review

Keith outlined the opportunity for all electors to have a say whether they want a local council to be set up. He explained that this might be called a “parish council” or “community” or “neighbourhood” council – all these terms describe similar things but “parish” may be perceived as overly Christian or old-fashioned by some people who would prefer the other terminology.

If people would like to see a local council created they need to do so using a petition. Any individual can set up a petition. There’s help e.g. petition forms. People in the community can get other people to sign it. The signatures need to be from registered electors in the local area for which the council is requested. They can’t be on several different petitions.

Once handed in to the Northampton Borough Council the petitions will be validated against electoral role. If they are found at 27 April 2012 to exceed the threshold of that area – generally 10% - they go forward as valid petition – which means they go to the full Council.

There’s then a second stage which is a referendum, due for 15 November 2012, the same day as the Police Commissioner’s referendum. So all electors can vote in each area – a simple “yes” or “no” to having the proposed local council established. If there’s a majority in favour on the day the proposal will go forward to have approval for the local council being set up. Individuals then stand as parish councillors in May 2013. The parish precept will be set by Northampton Borough Council for the first 10 months or thereabouts. The new local council will then set its own precept for 2014-15.

There is a web address www.northampton.gov.uk/cgr . Information there includes the proposed timetable, petition forms, information about possible parish council powers. E-petitions for people to sign electronically and the possibility for people to set up e-petitions online themselves. There are ward maps available. Petitions may seek parish councils for part of a ward, a whole ward or going across more than one ward – all the petitions so far have been set up by NBC and/or NCC Councillors and they often have close links to local residents associations.

There are 7 parish councils already in Northampton, mostly in the south of the Borough and on the outskirts of Northampton. They offer a range of services, often currently just a few of what they could potentially do.

On the "You Decide" form you can put your name down as if signing a petition by sending the form to NBC.

The 10% required to get a referendum for an area ranges between 250 and 660 signatures of individual electors.

Parish councils in Northampton currently have a precept of £20 to £100 per registered elector per year. So people have to pay more tax if they have a parish council. Most petitions so far submitted are looking for about £1 per week per registered elector.

Some parish councils choose to pay for staff/roles such as a "PCSO" (Police Community Support Officer), Environmental Warden and Parish Park Warden. Some have volunteers doing roles. Community centres may be owned and run by parish councils. Some might pay for equipment or apparatus such as MUGA. Duston has – imminently – a sports and leisure complex and hopes to develop St Lukes into a day nursery. Some run community events and organise tree planting. Some do road signs, park fencing, community clean ups and reviewing planning applications.

There was some concern about the ability of parish councils to have due regard to the needs of everyone in their local community.

There was some concern about the potential impact of parish councils on the town's population overall – for example if people in more affluent areas of the Borough were able to afford a parish precept and had skills which helped them to be parish councillors, might this lead to better-off areas being better lit and better serviced, while areas with more poverty and which might include significant numbers of people from ethnic minority backgrounds, might be less well served where their local residents could not afford to pay for extra services. The forum was interested in seeing and understanding what equality impact assessment was being done as part of the governance review. Keith Mitchell agreed to bring this back to a future meeting of the forum.

There was some concern about the scope of powers of parish councils. It was suggested that those in the town already had come about due to formerly rural

nature of the areas concerned. It was noted that parish council powers traditionally were suited for rural communities e.g. provision of graveyards and allotments, matters which these days in Northampton might need to be looked at in a townwide way.

There was a suggestion that adding in a third tier of council to Northampton was not necessarily helpful and one view was that it would be preferable to look at a unitary Northampton council instead.

Northampton General Hospital

Several members of the Forum reported concerns about changes in how appointments were being managed at the hospital. If people were unable to make a time given to them, it seemed that they were unable to rearrange but simply found the appointment was cancelled and they were moved to the back of the queue and might have to wait several weeks or months for another chance to be seen. For people with conditions which needed regular monitoring this was a particular concern.

Agreed: Gracie from the Link to look into this

Northampton Link

Gracie handed out information about the upcoming meetings and events.

Pearls of Peace

Shared information about their upcoming coffee morning and encouraged more people to get involved.

Councillor Empowerment Fund

Cllr Suresh Patel reminded people to look out for the new financial year's councillor empowerment funds which enabled councillors at both Northants County Council and Northampton Borough Council to look to help local communities.

8. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

There was none.

9. ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION AT NEXT AND FUTURE MEETINGS

The first half hour of the next meeting would be a public debate about "Northampton Alive" and led by the Leader of Northampton Borough Council.

There would be a further discussion about the Governance Review, to include looking at the equality impacts of parish councils in a town and regard had to this within the Governance Review.

The Police would be invited again to send someone to update on hate crime and an officer to talk about their stop and search practices (in particular to update on progress made in disproportionate stop and search of ethnic minority people compared to the picture 4 years ago).

10. DATE OF NEXT AND FUTURE MEETINGS

The next meeting of the forum is 17 April 2012 at 6.30pm at the Guildhall.

The next meeting after that is 6 June 2012.

Dates of meetings can be found at www.northampton.gov.uk/meetings

The meeting concluded at Time Not Specified