

# Northampton Borough Council - Northampton Women's Forum

Tuesday, 26 March 2019

## WELCOMES, INTRODUCTIONS AND APOLOGIES

### 1. WELCOMES, INTRODUCTIONS AND APOLOGIES

**ATTENDANCE:** Pauline Woodhouse (Chair), Michael Macleod (MM, NBC), Rachel Duncan (RD, NDAS), Alpa Dave (AD, Job Centre), Debbie MacColl (DM, NBC), Neelam Aggarwal-Singh(NAS, IHWO), Irene Bianchi (IB, Aquarius), Hilary Haynes (HH), Cllr Danielle Stone (DS, NBC), Rachel Packman (RP, Police), Morcea Walker (MW, Individual), Anjona Roy (AR, Dostiyo), Kate Scott (KS, Friends of Palestine), Ruba Imam (RI, Individual).

### 2. MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING

NAS - St Andrews mentioned about the possibility of free rooms as the weekend but there has been no response. Gujarati School.

DS – Supposed to be transferring to the Barrack Road, this could make the numbers drop a lot more. Billing road sounded like a great offer.

MW – I found that an odd offer having worked there previously.

St Andrews also have a lot safeguarding issues.

The position of the schools is never going to be right for this community.

DS – Academisation has made working with schools very difficult.

NAS – she said she had various rooms.

DS – there's a crisis, we need 150 more school places than we've got. Academies are one reason why this does not work. Existing schools are now being pressurised to expand. Thousands of head teachers have protested.

MW - Supplementary schools have been set up not only for specific communities, they're also for the disadvantaged and some people cannot even make it to the schools due to cost.

RP - I had the same experience with a community group who wanted a space to meet to get their group up and running.

DS – ANSS are looking after nearly 2000 children and have been rejected for more funding. It is not a statutory service.

MW – GCSE's help schools get points.

DS – children from supplementary schools are great learners and schools are benefitting from their grades.

NAS – we are currently doing fundraisers for the schools but everyone is struggling at this moment.

DM – NBC are helping fund a staff member at VIN who is in post to help community groups, may be worth contacting her.

AR – the reality is it is a lot harder in Northampton currently than most other places in the country. Funding for voluntary organisations has been cut massively and you can only do so much with coffee morning etc. Even with VIN they are also struggling, trying to help other struggling organisations.

NAS – IHWO are currently at Weston Favell parish hall but not sure what will happen with that building as it is council owned.

DS – how do we present the needs of those children which connects with other people’s agendas? Mother tongue learning is very beneficial to the individuals and the wider community.

Many cultures are losing the ability to talk in their native language.

NAS – It would be helpful if the person from VIN could help with more practical things such as filling out forms.

There is a meeting for the supplementary schools at Weston Favell Library next week.

**ACTION:** DM to invite Alison to WF Library meeting.

NAS – would be helpful for a demo from VIN to show exactly what they can offer to these groups.

DS – each supplementary needs to become their own entity in the minds of funders as they do not like funding umbrella organisations.

### **3. RUBA IMAM - GUEST ADVOCACY OFFICER FROM EAST JERUSALEM**

Here from Jerusalem, advocacy officer – not a lawyer.

Here through women’s exchange. Second time here, first time was in 2013 as a student.

Palestinian women affected by many policies in Jerusalem.

War in 1967 - legal status of Palestinians in Jerusalem.

Can revoke citizenships and the Palestinian person does not have the same rights. Been ethnic cleansing in the past, similar to this happening now through law. Palestinians have to prove that Jerusalem is the centre of their life and if they. There is also a separation wall which separated families.

Freedom of movement is something all Palestinian residents suffer from. It especially has an impact on women.

Westbank/Jerusalem marriage would mean paying for fees and family unification, and would have to pay double. Children who have a parent from each side could possibly be separated from their families. If child has to stay on the Westbank with the mother and the father is in Jerusalem, this puts more of a burden on them as they have to care for that child alone.

Residency of the families can be revoked due to punitive measures and behaviour of other family members, they can also have health benefits revoked.

There are many restrictive conditions which makes many people’s lives difficult. Their choices are to leave or to stay in the city without any rights.

Q: What’s a day in your working life look like?

A: Centre is based in old city, usually do not go there but now I have to pass through the checkpoints every day on the way to work. Soldiers everywhere with guns, who ask for ID to see if you have ID. Working with women who have these issues, I feel it is very inhuman.

Q: Who is doing this now?

A: Danielle Stone, Kate and Kate Scott.

Q: Are the UN helping you in any way?

A: There is not much action to protect the civilians and to protect their women and families. It is the Israeli judicial system. As Palestinians we think there should be more accountability.

Q: Is it correct that all transactions in Hebrew which many people do not speak and the second language is Russian?

A: Yes, everything official is in Hebrew. Law passed (Jewish Nation State Law), Jerusalem is only for Jewish people who speak Hebrew. There are more and more laws being passed that promote discrimination.

AR: It is amazing to hear from Palestinian people, social media allows us to do this. What we can do is to boycott and disinvest in those people involved with the Israeli state, for example we will not buy and Hewlett Packard products. Is there anything other places can do?

RI: Yes, there are products which are made in illegal settlements on the west bank and the fine print does not say this.

Q: Do you have any ideas of anything we could do to help?

A: I have postcards from people which can be forwarded to MP's etc.

DS: Ruba has raised issues which include women, would it be possible for us to write to someone, such as a Women's Commissioner or someone in a similar position, to write about the amazing journey that Ruba has had and that we are showing support and solidarity.

**ACTION:** Forum to write letter to Women's Commissioner.

**ACTION:** Letter to Ruba?

Postcards were passed around to forum members.

**ACTION:** KS to send MM information, to be sent out to DCF too.

**ACTION:** Disinvestment policy to be suggested to the borough council.

#### **4. INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY RECAP**

DS: Could not make it but heard it was a really great day from multiple people.

Forum members spoke about how good the fashion show was. It would be nice to see if there could be a diverse element added to it, especially in the 70's part.

Was at another event which was about women being in 'male dominated' occupancies and how they have succeeded.

The Rock Choir were great once again.

Q: How diverse were the rock choir?

A: Mainly if not all white people.

We had the classical Indian dancers who were brilliant.

MW: If we do that then we need to provide opportunity for other ethnic groups.

Maybe next year we can look at having a different choir, maybe the Derngate community choir?

MW: I said we could try different groups.

DM: We need names and contacts and we can invite them, just as we did with the Indian dance group.

DS: I think it would be great if we could invite women from all ethnicities who could be involved. For example Zimwomen or the Sikh women of the town to drum or welcome people into the day.

DM: We have also go other rooms so we can do workshops also.

NAS: We looked into having different things such as a slideshow of previous years on the big screen.

DM: Yes, we looked into it but we couldn't have performers on and the screen down, so it would have had to be operated on by the Guildhall office staff member who can't leave the office that much.

It could be on a plasma somewhere else, this is an option.

NAS: The shortlisted women were so touched to be nominated.

PW: It is good recognition.

IB: The stands are also very powerful and shouldn't be underestimated what they bring to the day.

NAS: We had so many women one year who were selling Saree's and they were very pleased to show people how to wear them etc.

DM: What about the food/drinks? With the contract that the Guildhall/NBC have, we cannot have anyone prepare hot food, that's why we had cakes and cold drinks etc.

PW: I think it is very good because it is donations which helps those families who are strapped for cash.

DM: Yes, it also means we do not have to take any money out of the budget to pay for catering as they are there to raise money/awareness.

PW: We could have the diverse communities to do a fashion show next year, to show some traditional clothes.

NAS: Yes we need to start planning earlier.

DM: Yes we should work on throughout the year, it also might be the last one we have, will definitely be the last one under the Northampton Borough Council Banner.

We also used these IWD 2019 pledge sheets which were pinned on a board in the Court Room, very

positive messages on there.

## **5. COMMUNITY INFORMATION EXCHANGE**

DS: secretary of Northampton Town of Sanctuary. Lots of issues, especially mental health and trauma.

Diversity Forum hosting a story listening event 16<sup>th</sup> in refugee week. Doesn't have to necessarily be a story about why they are a refugee. It can be about them being back home or their lives now. There is a brilliant artist at the university who will bring her art work and talk about that.

If there is anyone who may want to take part in the story telling, please contact MM.

Deco is showing a documentary – the human flow – 19<sup>th</sup> in refugee week.

NAS: It may be worth contacting Suzanna storey.

PW: Suzanna is aware of this event as she attended the last diverse communities' forum with Aideen from Town of Sanctuary and also two male refugees.

MW: 3<sup>rd</sup> april, food poverty network/end hunger meeting. To send to MM for circulation.

AD: Job centre, to help women get back into work, large proportion of the JC register is some sort of barrier. Such as health issues or being a lone parent. We are trying to encourage employers that there are ways these people can be employed if they can help support these individuals on that register.

Work in a team of 4 so it will be different people at these meetings.

DM: We have days of action coming up and it might be good to get you out to people in the community with us on those.

MW: The good loaf now have All Saints Café, going to be open 7 days a week but closing at 3:30pm. It will soon be staffed by local women who have come through the programme but from the start they will not be there.

AD: Also present talks and help people with Universal Credit, it is now completely live.

If it is better for us to come to the parish hall for example then we can accommodate that. We will run the session however suits the needs of the audience.

RD: Strategic Director at NDAS – recently replaced Ann Bodsworth.

Trying to look at things like income generation and where we can build and help partners, what we may have done prior and we are not doing now. We know we need a strategic plan.

DS: This is the number one priority.

Raised £16,500 out of £100,000, proactively looking at accessing more money and strengthening our services.

NAS: I would like to have

DS: BME women's needs are not being met with regards to violence and domestic issues.

**ACTION:** Rachel Duncan to be added to a future agenda to talk about the current state of NDAS.  
Maybe the one after May when the plan is finalised

**ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

**ITEMS FOR FUTURE MEETINGS**

**DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The meeting concluded at Time Not Specified